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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

“Always Seen, Never Seer”:  
Ailbhe Smyth’s Feminist Poststructuralist Essay  
“The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”

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## ABSTRACT

This B.A thesis is focused on the analysis of the essay of the Irish feminist Ailbhe Smyth “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”. It is developed on the basis of the two set objectives presented in the introduction. The first one is to associate the essay with Irish feminism. The presentation of the mythical Irish figure of Mother Ireland, in which Smyth pays special attention, is one of the clearly facts that makes the essay to fit within Irish feminism. The second objective is to make the essay fits within poststructuralist feminism. The fragmented style of writing is common in postestructuraslism and it is the way in which Smyth presents the essay, thanks to the inclusion of a multiplicity of voices of Irish feminist writers. The conclusion reached is that both set objectives are finally fulfilled, and as a consequence, the analysed essay could be defined as an Irish postestructuralist feminist essay.

Keywords: Ailbhe Smyth, The Floozie in the Jacuzzi, feminism, Irish, Mother Ireland, postsctructuralism.

Este trabajo está centrado en el análisis del artículo de la feminista irlandesa Ailbhe Smyth “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”. Ha sido desarrollado en base a los dos objetivos presentados en la introducción. El primero de ellos es asociar el ensayo con el feminismo irlandés. La presentación de la figura mítica irlandesa de 'Mother Ireland', en la que Smyth presta una atención especial, es uno de los claros hechos que hacen que el ensayo encaje en el feminismo irlandés. El segundo objetivo es hacer que el ensayo encaje dentro del feminismo postestructuralista. El estilo de escritura fragmentado es común en el postestructuralismo y es esta en la manera en la que Smyth presenta el ensayo, gracias a la inclusión de una multiplicad de voces de escritoras feministas irlandesas. La conclusión alcanzada es que ambos objetivos son finalmente alcanzados y como consecuencia, el ensayo analizado podría ser definido como un ensayo irlandés postestructuralista y feminista.

Palabras Clave: Ailbhe Smyth, The Floozie in the Jacuzzi, feminismo, irlandés, 'Mother Ireland', postesctructuralismo.



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## INTRODUCTION

In the Irish culture, women have always played a passive role, being considered as simple images or symbols of the Irish nation. From the very first myths, women were simply represented as goddesses, whose beauty and sexuality were stressed, leaving aside their feelings or thoughts. One of the most representative myths of the Irish culture is Mother Ireland and this will figure prominently in a seminal essay by Ailbhe Smyth, one of the most relevant and active figures within the current feminism in Ireland. The present paper is based on the analysis of her little-known essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” (1989). She envisions the myth of Mother Ireland in a sculpture erected in Dublin and writes about it with the purpose of breaking with the unreal vision of women portrayed in myths. Smyth employs a very particular way of writing, called *l’écriture féminine*, that allows her to introduce a multiplicity of female Irish voices.

The analysis of this essay has been developed with the purpose of proving two main different hypotheses. Usually, feminism is studied in three main waves, that appeared during the nineteenth and twentieth century, depending on the different interests that women were having. Taking into account this classification, the first of these hypotheses states that Smyth’s essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” can be classified within the third Irish feminist wave, because of the issues covered. The poststructuralist literary criticism, which emerged in the same period that the third feminist wave, provided it with new characteristics. Here is where, the second hypothesis is created, which says that the essay has poststructuralist hints.

The interest on Irish poststructuralist feminism has generated that some scholars have written previously about this topic. Despite this, it is necessary to underscore that they have not analysed the essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” by Smyth in depth, but instead of that, they have been limited to including it their introductions. They have simply made reference to Smyth and to her essay, providing basic notions about them. This has been the case of Birgit Breninger with her book *Feminist Perspectives on Cultural and Religious Identities: Rewriting Mary Magdalene, Mother Ireland and Cú Chulainn of Ulster* (2012), which is mainly focused on the role of women in the Irish myth of Mother Ireland. Margaret Kelleher

in her monumental *The Field Day Anthology and Irish women's Literary Studies* (2003) was interested on how the image of women through history has been based on myths, making a revision of the connection established between women and the Irish nation. In that book, the feminist Ailbhe Smyth is also named together with others feminist writers. Both writings, the one of Breninger and the one of Kelleher can be considered a starting point for the analysis of the selected essay.

In order to prove the hypotheses previously presented, this B.A thesis is structured in three different chapters. The first chapter, with the name of "Irish Feminism", is based on a summary of the historical overview of the three feminist waves in Ireland. In this first part, there is also a review of the location of women from the beginnings of Irish culture, paying especial attention on the figure of Mother Ireland. The next chapter, "Poststructuralism in Irish Feminism", contains a brief introduction to the poststructuralist way of thinking, based on Derrida's theory. In this way, it is possible to analyse how poststructuralism has influenced Irish feminism. Finally, the last chapter, "The Floozie in the Jacuzzi and Irish poststructuralism", introduces the essay, and both parts in which Smyth's essay is divided are analysed taking into account all the previous information. The methodology employed to develop this B.A thesis has been based on a study done through a close reading process, that has made possible a historical and cultural contextualisation.



# **INTRODUCTION TO IRISH FEMINISM: THE CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF IRISH WOMEN**

## **1. Historical Overview of Irish feminism**

Women have suffered through history the lack of equality and the lack of rights in different spheres of society, where they were treated as the other and located in an inferior and overshadowed position regarding men. They have not had the possibility of taking control of power, just because women have been seen by men as not having the capacity to do it, and they were simply reduced to passive and sexualised figures, having domestic labours as their main commitment. This situation was not specific of a particular place, but it was present in most of the developed European countries.

Focusing specifically on the situation of women in Ireland, Irish women have also suffered all this lack of social recognition and the impossibility of reaching some essential political and social rights. Being conscious of this historically inferior position that they occupied and the stereotypical fictitious image developed in many fields (literature, history...), Irish women started to raise their voices, to act, and to reveal themselves at the end of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the first claims for the right of women to vote. To do so, they initiated different movements and organisations, basically formed by women of the middle classes, typically well-educated. From then on, women's fight started to take hold during the whole twentieth century with the purpose of showing their capability to be active in different traditional men's tasks and to fight for their social, political and economic rights, which were not accessible for them at that moment.

Over time, historians have established three main Irish feminist waves, in order to differentiate the numerous women's movements that were created during the nineteenth and twentieth century. This differentiation was also made taking into account the different interests that Irish women shared during those years and how they were changing as women were getting stronger and starting to express their purposes. To understand how the first and the second feminist waves emerged, it is important, in the case of Ireland to contextualise the

situation of women within two main Irish historical facts: The War of Independence (1919-1921) and the Civil War (1922-1923). Ireland was formally annexed to the United Kingdom in 1800, which means that from that moment on, it was no longer considered an autonomous kingdom. Tired of the English repression, which began with the plantations in the seventeenth century, one of the most important political purposes of Ireland started to be achieving independence. These issues were not only a male concern; many Irish women's movements, that were emerging at the same time as the pre-suffrage movement in England, were involved in political issues. In the same way that they tried to fight for the independence of Ireland (national issues), their interests were also focused on achieving equality, and being granted the rights that men already enjoyed.

In what follows, the different waves of feminism in Ireland are going to be reviewed, following Jill Franks in her book *British and Irish Women Writers and the Women's Movement* (2013). The first feminist wave runs from 1880 to 1937 and it is mainly concerned with national issues and the equal suffrage for women, i.e. with political issues. It cannot be understood without taking into account the Easter Uprising (1916) before the Independence war, with which Ireland wanted to end up with England's sovereignty. Before that key moment in Irish history, one of the most important movements led by women was founded: The Ladies' Lands League, which was born at the end of the nineteenth century and which can be considered the root for the future women's movements of the twentieth century. Originally it was a movement led by men, but it ended up being a women's organisation. Its leader was Anna Parnell, the sister of the Irish nationalist politician Charles S. Parnell, and the main purpose was to end up with the crisis provoked by the famine. It was one of the first times when women could show their abilities in power. Just in the beginning of the twentieth century, when the revolutionary Irish period was emerging, many more Irish women's movements appeared, which were devoted to the search for Irish independence. Women were interested in national issues because they thought that freeing Ireland of England's dominion, would give them more rights and more power in the social sphere. The Proclamation of Provisional Government of the Irish Republic made by the leaders of the Easter Uprising in 1916 contributed to this delusion with its claim for equality which was made more with the rights of workers than of women in mind. Two relevant figures must be considered in this

revolutionary stage. The first one was Maud Gonne, who helped in the fight for an independent Ireland and formed the first women's group to fight for Independence: The Daughters of Erin (1900). Besides and in a more indirect way, she contributed writing articles, although she was not living in Ireland at that moment. The other woman who stands out is Countess Constance de Markievicz. She was a member of the Daughters of Erin and then she joined the male organisation, Irish Citizen Army (ICA), whose leader, James Connolly, claimed for equality at many social levels, on gender and economic grounds. In this way, she participated in the War of Independence and she is considered one of the most relevant proto-feminists. Two years after the Easter Rising, in 1918, one of the most important goals that women accomplished in this first wave was granted by the British Parliament: the female suffrage for those over 30 and the possibility of participating in Parliament. The war of Independence (1919-1921), the birth of the Irish free State (1922) and a Civil War (1922-1923) where women played a vital role. Women continued to be actively involved in these, but the conservative turn that the nation took led to what is called the Abeyance Period (1922- 1968). During this period, women's organisations lost strength, basically because of the lack of new purposes to fight for, once independence and the suffrage were achieved.

The second feminist wave took place just after the end of the Abeyance period, from 1968 to 1980. In the same way that the first wave wanted to improve the situation of women in the political sphere, this second one was more concerned with women's liberation and women's rights (the rights of single mothers, the right to an equal education, etc). The first women's movement in this second wave was The Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM), led by Máirín de Burca and other three women. A pamphlet of this movement was produced, which proved very influential; *Chains or Change* was a written compilation of the inequalities suffered by Irish women. With it, readers were made aware of this real situation and encouraged to act. This movement was based on the meeting of women to share their experiences and discuss women's position in society. One of the main campaigns of the IWML was the Contraceptive Train in 1971. Many feminists from Dublin travelled to Belfast to get contraceptives secretly, since these products were banned in Ireland. Once back in Dublin, they distributed them publicly. It was a controversial issue within the IWLM itself,

that caused the dissolution of the group. The reason was that Ireland was not still prepared to accept something like that in 1971. Another movement that flourished in 1975 was the Irish women United (IWU). It was a movement that was concerned again with national and political issues, but contraception continued to be the most important one in their agenda. Despite this, the varied members of this movement (lesbians, liberals, nationalists...) did not share a common outlook on what the proper feminist aims were, which ends up causing the division of the group into factions.

The third and last of the waves runs from 1980 to the present. In the first years of this period, many conservative social movements were born, trying to recover the situation presented before the second feminist wave. They supported the 1983 Referendum, in which abortions were finally made illegal. Although, in general, feminism was numbed and many of these women decided to leave Ireland after the results of the Referendum, the fight to achieve the acceptance of abortion was one of the major concerns of those that remained. They had to face some of the most conservative powers of society: the Catholic Church, the law, and medicine. Their claims, however, were more audibly heard when some scandals took place, where women were untruthfully accused of being murderers of their own babies. This was the case of the Kerry Babies case, in which a woman, Joanne Hayes, was falsely accused of killing her own baby and another child whose dead body appeared in Cahirciveen (Kerry, Ireland). The case made a great impact on the consciousness of the Irish people. As a result, the Irish society started to question the role of the Church and the one played by the State in social issues, such as abortion. Eventually, the government enacted the Abortion Information Act (1995) in order to legalise abortion only for those cases in which the life of the mother was at risk. A new Referendum on abortion was celebrated in 2002, with the same result as in the previous attempt: abortions continued to be illegal. In May 2018 a new referendum has taken place, and a legal change has been widely supported.

As has been pointed out above, Irish women's movements and organisations were initially interested mainly in political issues, with the purpose of obtaining some women's rights. The reason is that Irish women have always felt oppressed by two different facts: their being Irish and their being women. The first one is the oppression suffered by belonging to

the Irish nation. Ireland was, as has been pointed out before, completely influenced and controlled by the English. This means that all Irish women, as well as men, suffered an oppression by the English nation, not being, in this way, completely independent as a nation. The second source of oppression for Irish women is caused by men in society. Irish women through history have had little opportunity to be concerned in social issues, as economics or politics. Instead of that, men have always been those who occupied the positions of power and who made decisions, even the ones related to those social aspects related to women (motherhood, abortion...). Women have adopted a passive position against the active one of men in Irish society. Irish feminism is concerned with the repression of women by men and nation. For this reason, all the feminist Irish waves have some brushstrokes of nationalism, where women had to fight to look for their position in political issues. This is considered the main characteristic of Irish Feminism that marks the difference with the rest of European feminist movements. Irish feminism faces a double fight: to end up with the double negative connotation that means to be both a woman and Irish.

### **1. The cultural representation of Irish women**

Once the historical evolution of the Irish women's movements has been sketched, it is important to consider where the women have been located within the Irish cultural sphere. Irish feminism is aware of the relevance of this aspect in the past and of its persistence in the present. In the past, women were represented by men in books as mere images or symbols, highlighting their passive behaviour and considering the female figure as invisible in all the fields that were not related to the domestic sphere. This means that knowing how women were traditionally represented by men in all kind of documents (historical, literary...) would facilitate breaking with the established oppression.

So, what are the characteristics that turn Irish women into universal myths? Before discussing the mythical representation of the Irish woman, it is important to take into account that myths are characterised by projecting fictitious and not completely true images. Women in myths in general are commonly represented as fantastic figures and they stand out not by

their expressed feelings, but by their beauty and their sexuality. For being stereotypical figures, it is common to find similar female images in different works that share that previously mentioned characteristics. Firstly, it is possible to perceive woman as a muse. In this case, women are simply represented as the most beautiful figures who moreover, stand out for their virginal status. This is accompanied by the fact that they do not express any type of feeling or thought. Moreover, women are also represented as witches or hags. From many years ago, women have been connected with magic and witchcraft, having the ability of controlling different natural elements. These are some of the stereotypical representations of women which can be found in Irish texts. The problem with myths appears when they start to be considered as real. In the way women are portrayed in myths, their real identity is lost.

So, which was the above mentioned traditional image of women in Irish literature and culture? This traditional representation is based on a stereotyped image of a woman who embodies Ireland as a nation, known under the name of 'Mother Ireland'. The way in which this figure is represented has been changing in texts, depending on the historical events that were taking place in Ireland. The historical overview about Mother Ireland and the changes that it has suffered, presented below, are the factors that Irish feminists have taken into account in many of their proposals and publications. The purpose is to break with this idealised and archetypical image that has been present during Irish history. In order to appreciate this change and to know the origins of the relation between Ireland and women, it is necessary to know where and when the origins of this Irish myth lie.

Basically, the myth begins with the Celts in a pre-Christian religious context and appeared in the form of epics, the traditional Irish narrative genre. Mother Ireland, a nineteenth century concept, was then represented as a goddess whose name was Erin as we learn from *The Book of Invasions*. In this book, the arrival of the first inhabitants to Ireland is narrated, as well as their meeting three goddesses: Banbha, Fodla, and Erin. One of the sons of those inhabitants promised Erin that the island would receive her name, and indeed it did. With the evolution of language, the name Erin has evolved to Eire, the Gaelic word for Ireland. This story shows the origins of the relation between Ireland and a woman, in this case a goddess. In what regards to her characteristics as a goddess, she acquired those that

were connected to her nation, i.e. she could be rich or poor. Moreover, she was considered as the giver of Irish sovereignty to men. In other myths of the Celtic period, the goddess was interested in looking for a man, in order to turn him into an Irish king in exchange of something. This is the case of the myth that narrates the story of three brothers who meet a hag. She proposes them to kiss her in order to get water of the well in return. Only one of the three brothers, Niall, kisses the old woman who becomes at that moment a young and beautiful girl.

Over time the representation of Mother Ireland has changed, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this figure was perceived in another way, because of the conflictive political context that Ireland was living. In the sixteenth century, Henry VIII, king of England, proclaimed himself king of Ireland. Once Anglicanism was established in Britain, he tried to do the same in Ireland. At that period, writings became more political, trying to express the outrage of Irish people at that situation. For this reason, Mother Ireland again turns into a figure in which the feelings of the nation are represented. Now, it is depicted as a maiden in distress, a woman who cannot fight back by herself and who needs the aid of her Irish sons to survive.

During the Victorian period in the twentieth century, to allegorise Ireland as a woman was still the rule. The nineteenth century is mainly characterised by the development of puritanism. Since the Catholic Church became one of the most powerful institutions, the figure of Mother Ireland starts to receive some characteristics that the Virgin Mary has. Mother Ireland stands out for her virginity and is represented as an innocent and pure woman. It is actually at this stage when the term Mother Ireland was created. It was Patrick Pearse who coined it in the context of the war of independence.

During that conflictive period, it was easy to perceive a gendered society where women did not play any type of active role in those political and social conflicts, with the exception of the women we have studied in the previous section. Women occupied hidden positions, their labour was staying at home as wives and homemakers. Although most women did not fight for the nation, they were still sufferers of the war, being killed and raped by men. The connection between Mother Ireland and the Virgin Mary was still present. In the

context of the Easter Uprising of 1916, it was Mother Ireland who rose above those men that died trying to protect them, as depicted in some poems. She is the mother of Iras's sons, i.e. the mother of all those men who belonged to the Irish Republican Army and who had left their homes, without knowing their fate. She is also represented as a sufferer and a victim of war, without the necessity of being in the battlefield. In the same way that Ireland was presented as the victim of the war against Britain, women at that time were seen as the victims of war playing a passive role in it.



# POSTSTRUCTURALISM IN IRISH FEMINISM

## 1. Brief Introduction to Poststructuralism

The essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” (1989), written by the Irish feminist Ailbhe Smyth, fits within poststructuralist feminism. The first part of this chapter is going to be dedicated to make a brief and simple explanation of the basis of poststructuralism and of how feminism adopts this way of thinking.

Poststructuralism must be explained on the basis of the ideas of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, one of the most influential twentieth-century thinkers. His ideas, developed in France in the 1960s, emerged from his belief about structures. He considers fixed and close structures as artificial hierarchies and he proposes deconstruction to break with that traditional way of thinking and to approach reality differently. Generally, he considers that all the occidental thought was based on dualisms or on binary oppositions that are established as universal truths on human minds. These oppositions establish a division between two different close groups. The first group is formed by those who occupy a privileged position, and are in possession of power, making an oppressive use of it in different spheres. The second group includes the minorities, i.e. the ones who suffer the oppression and who do not enjoy that privileged position. The latter occupy the position of 'the other' with regards to the former. This situation can be better understood through a visual image. Society can be represented as a circle; in the centre of that circle, the privileged or superior group is located, participating actively and making decisions on everything surrounding it. Out of the centre of that circle, in the limits, stands the inferior group. There, it can only accept the imposed rules, acquiring a passive behaviour.

Once the term 'binary oppositions' has been considered, it is necessary to go back to the notion of deconstruction. This term is a translation of the German word *destruction*, first employed by the German philosopher Heidegger at the end of the 1970s and in the beginning of the 1980s. It stands at the core of Derrida's theory, calling for the fragmentation of those structures or binary oppositions in order to build up a new reality. It is important to clarify

that Derrida's deconstruction does not want to destroy that central position mentioned before, but to reconstruct and reorganise it, leaving aside those absolute truths on which human minds were based before. After deconstruction, that metaphorical circle would be based on a free play, where that centre does not exist anymore and consequently the minority group does not revolve around it, leaving that oppressed position. That space would be now occupied indifferently by both groups.

Poststructuralism is a way of thinking, as mentioned before, and it can be applied to different fields, such as linguistics, philosophy or feminism. Deconstruction's reversal of hierarchies conveys in the feminist arena a recovery of the women's identity and, as a consequence, their active role in social, economic and political issues. To achieve it, women are the only ones that could initiate a process of reconstruction, or in Manuel Castells' words, a way of achieving a 'project identity' (12), by which they try to reconstruct their images in those fields where before they were muted. Even in this way, they could create a new social structure that is not based on the binary opposition man-woman any more.

## **2. The most Representative Poststructuralist Feminists**

As has been pointed out before, poststructuralism affects different areas, and particularly, in Irish feminism it has had a great influence. The poststructuralist literary criticism emerged at the end of the 1960s and it is still present in the 1980s, coinciding with the beginning of what is termed the third feminist wave. Indeed, poststructuralism influenced the development of the ideas of the third wave contributing new characteristics that previous waves had not developed. For this reason, the third feminist wave, whose origins have been pointed out in the previous chapter, must be considered a new generation within feminism, called a 'New Feminism' in Europe. The reason is that unlike the previous feminist waves, this one is accompanied by poststructuralist strokes, establishing, in this way, differences between this third wave and previous ones. As a consequence, the feminists who belonged to the third wave are the ones considered the poststructuralist feminists. The third wave feminists who

stand out are mainly the French ones, who are the ones acquiring that new way of thinking, understanding feminism differently, and influencing other feminists, such as the Irish.

To begin with, poststructuralist feminism is characterised by the separation that it wants to maintain with the first and the second waves. They accused previous feminist movements of being based on contradictory ideas, of having many gaps and open conflicts, apart from being very conservative. With those constraints, they were making reference to their forerunners having left aside some important social issues that affect women, because previous waves had gender issues as their main concern. As a result, those first women's movements were now considered as not having enough strength to help women fight, not only against gender issues, but against those social aspects that oppressed them, like race or class issues. This change from the first and second waves to this third one is known as the cross-generational moment. It is based on what is called the 'mother-daughter' metaphor. The mother represents the first waves, portraying difficulties and gaps, whilst the daughter is the new generation, the third wave, the 'young feminists' who can break with the previous constraints.

Another aspect with which a separation with previous waves is established is the way of fighting. Previous waves were mainly based on the fight for new advantages for women through the activism or, in other words, by going out to the streets in order to sing them out. For example, this was the case of the Contraceptive Train of 1971 during the second feminist wave. In this third wave, this activism is in many cases left aside. Women that belong to this third wave were intelligent and well-educated figures who did not consider activism the most important way to fight. By contrast, they preferred to fight against the stereotyped figure of women and to look again for their identity through reason and dialogue. Here the notion of 'transversal politics' appears. It wants to portray the dialogue and the participation established between women with different nationalities, religions, etc. The purpose is to achieve that women both listen and participate showing their individual situations and, in this way, discover the possible similar situations between them.

This brings us to another important factor of the third feminist wave that is the importance of the individualisation. Feminists who belonged to previous waves were mainly

concerned with social issues that affected the community of all women, trying to fight for the injustices that they suffered as a group. By contrast, third wave feminists are more focused on their personal situations. Each woman raises her voice considering her own situation. For this reason, as has been mentioned before, they are interested in the political negotiations which deal with everyday life aspects and which touch them closely.

Poststructuralist feminism does not have a problem to reject some ideas that were spread before, like the essentialism, naturalism or universalism. From the very beginning, that women followed a universal patron was thought mainly by men. This meant that all women were encompassed under the same characteristics, no matter the time or the space where those women belonged. Instead of this perception, this 'new generation' claims for the multiplicity and the difference, always having in mind the social struggles of women. For this reason, multiplicity acquired importance at this point, referring to the inclusivity of all women in the fight, always claiming for the fractured identities of women. This means that it accepts the multiplicity of identities that women had, in terms of race or sexual orientation, for instance. In previous waves, that diversity and multiplicity were not present. The main concern of those feminisms was dealing with the inequalities that women suffered because of gender, but at this point, the rejection of women in society because of their race or class is also dealt with, since it was considered that women also suffer inequalities at those levels. Because of this, the third feminist wave started to be called with other names, like 'black feminism', in order to express the fight against the inequalities that specifically black women suffer. Furthermore, if women of the previous movements had as one of their main purposes the search for equality between men and women, poststructuralist feminism develops the search for the difference.

One of the main concerns of the third feminist wave is the recovery of women's identity. This new process must be started by knowing how women were portrayed in old texts, in order to be able to break with that representation. For this reason, one of the main processes that poststructuralism includes in the third feminist wave is the rewriting. The process of rewriting is the feminist version of the process of deconstruction with which women try to achieve a project identity in the cultural sphere. The fragmentation or

reconstruction of texts is a way to destroy and break with that hierarchy that organises society, reflected in texts, and which allows to recover the literary identity of women. In this way, women adopted an active role as writers. This process of rewriting can be done by means of what the French term *l'écriture féminine*, a phrase coined by Hélène Cixous. It allows women to establish a relation between the world (social reality) and the words. This is connected with the invisibility that women suffered at many levels both in society or in texts, as explained before. As previously said, men in cultural texts, generally speaking, have always been depicting history and literature from their own point of view, without taking into account the figure of women, which caused the creation of some gaps. Before, women were simply represented through historical stereotypes and associated exclusively to an aesthetic function. It is important to take into account that in myths when women were represented, they were seen as sexual figures and their beauty highlighted, as was the case with Mother Ireland. This made that writing turned into a homogeneous process. With *l'écriture féminine* the purpose is to introduce actively women in society and writings, ending up with the traditional writings and myths. In this way, that homogeneous process of writing where history was told by men is changed into a heterogenous one. In what regards to the absence of women in texts, rewriting tries to make women visible. Through rewriting, the female figure and the identity of women are recovered, breaking with the totalitarian male discourse that was employed before, the expression of women's experiences and feelings being now important. The female stereotypes that prevail in all texts written by men, such as that of Mother Ireland, are rewritten in essays like "The Floozie in the Jacuzzi" by Ailbhe Smyth. The rewriting done in essays like this tries to end up with the oppression suffered by women, looking for the reasons that have brought them to be located in that place, and the consequences that it has.

The most representative female authors from the poststructuralist feminism are some French thinkers. French feminists were women writers, and they also were a great influence for the English and the Irish feminists. Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray are the most relevant French feminists, specialised in the field of psychoanalysis.

Cixous wrote “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975). In the first words of her essay, she encourages women to write openly, trying to convince them that writing is not an activity reserved to men: “I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal” (320). She claims that women are the ones that must write about their history and their world, encouraging other women to do the same, refusing the involvement of men in that labour. Related to this, she devises a new way of discourse considering the body of women as a tool. She portrays the female body as a weapon to defend the feminist writing, as we will see Smyth doing in her essay through the figure of the Floozie. Cixous expresses this idea through these words in her seminal essay:

I wished that that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst - burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune. (321)

Cixous considers the female writing as a process through which the feelings, the ideas and the emotions that women have, flow as a liquid, something completely different from the male writing. That mentioned liquid represents the fluids associated to the female body, the ones related to menstruation and to masturbation. She establishes a connection between those and the reason why women did not write before, i.e. shame. Women have always felt shame for “her drives”, the same shame she feels when she writes, an activity reserved for “great men” (321). She tries to portray the image of those feelings flowing through the use of some words, such as 'torrent', 'burst' or 'overflow', which bring the reader to imagine liquid running. This is the connection that she sets between the female body and their process of writing.

Some Irish feminists develop their feminist ideas with poststructuralist strokes as well. This is the case of Edna Longley, a staunch antinationalist during the conflict with Northern Ireland. In her book *From Cathleen to Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands*, she makes a criticism of the relation established between Ireland and a woman. She wants to break with that female perfection and idealisation that is commonly associated to the stereotypical figure of Mother Ireland, but also Cathleen, who gives title to her book. Cathleen Ni Houlihan is the female personification of the Irish nationalism at the turn of the century that W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory immortalised in the 1902 play that has her name for a title. In order to make a criticism of that stereotypical female figure, she makes use of one of the most common problems suffered by the real women of our society: the eating disorder of anorexia. She wants to show the change that Cathleen suffers from the perfection of a stereotypical figure, to the effects caused by anorexia, which provoke that perfection to disappear. This is another case in which the body of women is employed in the process of rewriting. The same thing we will see in Ailbhe Smyth's "The Floozie in the Jacuzzi", which we discuss next. Smyth also uses the body of a woman to carry out a process of rewriting.





## **“THE FLOOZIE IN THE JACUZZI” AND IRISH FEMINISM**

### **1. Introduction to the essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”**

This section is dedicated to making a close reading of the essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”, written by the poststructuralist feminist Ailbhe Smyth, drawing from the information provided about Irish feminism and the poststructuralist way of thinking in the previous sections. Ailbhe Smyth is an Irish feminist who has been one of the most remarkable leaders during the referendum in last May 2018. In the 1970s, during her university years, she started to participate actively in the feminist movement, as a member of the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement (IWLM), founded by Máirín de Burca during the second feminist wave. As mentioned in previous sections, this movement consisted on meetings where women shared the inequalities they were suffering. Activism was also an important side of the IWLM, since women went out into the streets in order to fight against those inequalities. As a thinker concerned with the women's situation in Ireland, Smyth writes “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” (1989). The essay derives in the real life from the sculpture fountain erected in Dublin in 1987, which represented one of the main female 'characters' of Joyce’s novel *Finnegans Wake*, Anna Livia Plurabelle, which Joyce meant to be a symbol of womanhood and of Dublin. The essay first appeared in the Irish academic journal *The Irish Review*.

In 1988, the city of Dublin celebrated its Millennium and the sculpture of Anna Livia Plurabelle was erected a year earlier to commemorate it, being set up in O’Connell Street until 2001. In that year, the sculpture was removed to make space for another well-known Dublin landmark, the Spire of Dublin. The sculpture of Anna Livia was relocated in Croppies Acre Memorial Park, which is near the River Liffey. There, it can still be found nowadays. Named after Joyce’s female character, it is colloquially better known as 'the Floozie in the Jacuzzi'. This unrespectful nickname has a parallel in the unrespectful behaviour of both tourists and Dubliners when they were near the sculpture. A meeting point for young people, alcoholic drinks were poured into its water and trash was accumulated. Made of bronze, the

sculpture represents the figure of a naked woman with long hair covering her breasts, and water running through her body. Here is where there exists a connection between the character of Anna Livia Plurabelle and the monument. Both are representations of womanhood and, at the same time, a personification of the water of the river Liffey, which runs through Dublin. What Smyth does in her essay is reflect about the meaning that this sculpture has for Dubliners and for the Irish people in general.

Two years after the notorious sculpture of Anna Livia Plurabelle is established in the city of Dublin, Smyth focuses her essay on that female image, in order to portray and to break with the stereotypical and mythical representation of women present in the Irish society and in its cultural sphere. Smyth's essay can be considered a reflection of the work carried out by some French feminist thinkers, which she applies here to the Irish situation. As mentioned before, Hélène Cixous, the French feminist, tried to convince women to write openly, proposing a new way of discourse through the female body, with which they are able to speak about their own past. Through her essay, Smyth tries, in the same way, to recover the voice of some female writers from Ireland, ignored until that moment. She thinks that this is a good proposal to break with the female stereotypes of the Irish culture.

"The Floozie in the Jacuzzi" is different from other feminist writings mainly because of its complexity at many levels. That complexity appears already in the title of the essay, since Smyth does not propose a single and closed title, but six: "The Floozie in the Jacuzzi", "The Whore in the Sewer", "Bidet Mulligan", "The Skivvy in the Sink", "Anorexia" and "Anna Livia Plurability", each of them with its own subtitle also full of wordplay.

Considering the organisation of the essay, it is divided into two main different parts. In the first one, Smyth makes a reflection on the meaning that the sculpture has for the Dubliners. To do this, she pays attention to the physicality of the statue, which for its great size seems to contribute to portray the importance of women in Dublin; as it is, it is just the contrary: a way to show the insignificance of women, a simple projection of the male gaze. Moreover, she focuses her attention on the renaming game carried out over the statue in order to prove again that widespread female insignificance. In the second part of the essay, Smyth calls on female writers in order to find different voices with which to end up with the silence

suffered by women. She quotes in her essay from different stories and poems written by women such as Eavan Boland or Catherine Byron which deal with the impossibility to separate between being a woman and being Irish, i.e. between feminism and nationalism in Ireland.

## 2. Analysis of “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi: Part 1”

As explained before, the selected essay is divided into two main parts, and the content differs from one to the other. For this reason, my analysis is going to follow that division, and consequently the reading of both parts is going to be made separately.

In the first part of the essay, Smyth's purpose is to make an analysis and to reflect about what the sculpture of Anna Livia Plurabelle, also known as 'the Floozie in the Jacuzzi', signifies for Dubliners. To do this, Smyth sprinkles this first part with quotations from *Finnegans Wake*, referred exclusively to Joyce's 'character' Anna Livia Plurabelle, which is the influence behind the Dublin sculpture. As has been pointed out before, according to Joyce, the 'character' Anna Livia Plurabelle has been considered a symbol of womanhood and of Dublin, so Smyth analyses the meaning of the statue to see if it signifies the same for Dubliners. For this reason, Smyth thinks that a way to analyse that meaning is considering two different factors of the statue: its physicality and its changing names.

Smyth considers firstly the physicality and the position in which the sculpture is set up. She thinks that it is one of the factors that could help to approach the meaning that the statue has for Dubliners. For this reason, Smyth gives a lot of references and details of the physical appearance of the sculpture of Anna Livia Plurabelle.

The statue itself represents a naked woman, with an asexual and demure body. Smyth describes the position of different parts of her body in order to let the reader perceive the statue as a 'deerotized' figure. To begin with, as Smyth points out, her long hair is placed carefully, covering her breasts and in this way, avoiding people to see her completely naked: “Long tresses chastely covering barely tumescent breasts” (9). Her knees are also mentioned,

which are attached one to the other: “knees neatly aligned tightly together” (9). The closed legs have always been the correct way in which women must sit, so they can be considered also a symbol of chastity. In this way the idea of the Floozie as a chaste woman is reinforced. In addition, the Floozie’s eyes and mouth are also described, stressing through that description the asexuality of the statue. Smyth describes them with words like 'frigid' and 'speechless', which seem to belong to a body that does not feel anything, almost a dead one. Through this description, Smyth can emphasise that the statue does not release the common sexuality of a naked body, and she ends up considering the body represented in the statue as “hammered-hardened against seduction” (9). Smyth includes this fragment from *Finnegans Wake* that expresses this lack of femininity, as if it was made of wax: “Head, back and heart aches of waxed up womanage” (9).

Smyth constantly makes use of words that provide information about how the figure is seen by Dubliners: 'annorexically', 'deerotized' and 'immobilised'. The use of the word 'annorexically' brings us back to the Irish feminist Edna Longley, mentioned before. She made a critic of the stereotypical figure of women, showing some of the most common problems suffered by real women in society, as the anorexia. Doing this, Longley’s purpose was to break up with the national Irish myths, specifically with the nationalist myth of Cathleen Ni Houlihan. This same destruction is the one that Smyth wants to achieve, in order to end up to with the way in which men look at the myth and icon of Anna Livia Plurabelle. The fact that the statue is naked provokes that it is seen by men with fantasy and desire, sexualising her body; Anna Livia Plurabelle is certainly not seen as a national Irish icon. As a consequence, the statue would simply be a projection of the men’s eyes which look at the statue with a dirty gaze. This dirty gaze is reflected in the polluted water that runs through the body of the Floozie: “lapped and licked caressed and purified by the unceasing flow of clearly polluted city water” (9). Smyth points out that just as water runs through the body of the sculpture, so does the diversity of meanings flow through her. This allusion to water can be also connected with the meaning that water had for the French feminist Cixous. She connected the feelings and emotions running on women, with water or the female fluids, flowing through their body.

In what regards to the size of the sculpture, it is also significant. Smyth employs the size of the statue to emphasise the insignificance of women. Although at first sight, because of its greatness, the statue seems to become important, it is just the contrary. That greatness only represents the great insignificance that Irish women have had over the course of Irish history. Considering the eyes and the mouth of the woman represented in the sculpture, they are sightless and speechless, symbols of the insignificance and invisibility that Irish women, or specifically, Dublin women, have acquired over the years: “incapable of conferring meaning [...]. Always seen never seer” (11). They have always been treated as 'the other', i.e. “woman-as-image”, who is simply seen by men, but who never sees or expresses herself, occupying in this case the role of “woman-as-spectator” (11). Smyth assigns this perception of the women as 'the other' to two different circumstances of the Irish society. The first circumstance pointed out is the patriarchal society, which always rejects women and emphasises their exclusion, being displaced from the centre of society by men. Patriarchy goes hand in hand with capitalism, outstanding its political facet. The statue also represents this economic and political system. In the beginning of the essay, Smyth makes reference to the funders of the statue, the Smurfit family, who was in control of various multinationals in Ireland. Postcolonialism is the other factor that places women in 'the other' position. Women were oppressed by men who had been in turn oppressed by the English colonisers. This double oppression is one of the main issues of Irish feminism, and it marks a difference with the rest of the European feminist movements, as seen before. This double oppression is defined by Smyth with this expression: woman is “the other of the ex-other” (12).

One of the strategies carried out by a postcolonial patriarchal culture, where Dublin fits, is the game of renaming. Over the years, the Dubliners started a game of renaming the statue, giving it the most ironic and irreverent names. Smyth sees in the awarding of names to the statue a way of demystifying the myth of Anna Livia Plurabelle, and in this way, allowing it to fit in the mind and in the society of the male Dubliners. The reality of Irish men was based on the dominance and power of men over women. In this position, men show their desires to appropriate for themselves the female body; that is exactly what the male Dubliners are doing by changing constantly the name of the sculpture, as Smyth explains in her essay:

“Dubliners have appropriated the monument in their midst through a multiple renaming game” (12).

Those names tend to combine the Irish high art with the “ordinary mythology” of Dubliners, as Smyth points out (12). The demystification of the figure of Anna Livia Plurabelle involves the high art: this is the case with the official name given to the statue, Anna Livia Plurabelle. With this female name the high art of Ireland is referred to, since that name is contained within one of the Irish literary masterpieces *Finnegans Wake*.

As opposed to the official name, the statue acquires other names given by the Dubliners. Those names have been given by what Smyth calls 'the Man in the Street', to make the statue fit in their everyday life. They are in-jokes that can only be understood by the Dubliners themselves or at most by the Irish people, since they show the Dublin manner of speaking. Smyth includes all of those names in the beginning of the essay, as different titles for the essay, as explained before. Now, she discusses them, mostly in pairs, and provides an explanation for what those names represent. 'The Whore in the Sewer/Skivvy in the Sink' is one of the proposed pairs of names. Smyth connects them with the title of Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, by establishing a link between the Whore/Skivvy, and a female character confined in the attic of a house in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. 'Confined' and 'contained' (13) they are. Those two dirty names given by Dubliners turn those female figures into whores. The novel represents the high culture, but Smyth puts it at the same level as the ordinary Irish culture

Dubliners also gave the statue the names of 'Anorexia' and 'Anna Livia Plurability'. These two names are commented by Smyth as a pair which, as the rest, is asexualising and demystifying the sculpture. Moreover, with the term Anna Livia Plurability, Smyth is making reference to one idea that is going to be dealt with the second part of essay. This idea has to do with the plurality of women and the impossibility of defining women in terms of individuality. Another name that the statue acquires is 'Bidet Mulligan', who is a woman street vendor from an Irish ballad of the 1930s. The essay title name is 'the Floozie in the Jacuzzi'. With this name, the figure of a whore is being glamorised, thanks to the use of the Italian word 'Jacuzzi'. For this reason, the statue could be a way of seeing all Irish women as

whores, since the statue is the projection of all Irish women. As it is possible to see, most of the names make reference to water ('jacuzzi', 'sink' and 'sewer'). This is referring to the polluted water of the city that runs through the statue, which can be related to the dirty multiple meanings that the Dubliners have given to it.

Smyth states that in these 'watery' names, it is possible to see another postcolonial facet, since the name contains words of two different cultures, the one of the colonising English and that of the French and the Italian (Bidet, Jacuzzi), adding an extra layer of foreign words to the language of the colonised Irish people. The fact that some of the invented names contain French and Italian words reveals that Ireland is still open to the colonisers, emphasising its colonised side.

### **3. Analysis “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi: Part 2”**

In this second part of the essay, Smyth reflects about the identity of Irish women and the implications of being a woman in Ireland. She claims that within herself there is a 'plurability' (8) of sources (literary, visual, historical, and everyday sources). This idea that Smyth has about the Irish women's identity is expressed by a mixture of her own words with quotations of other Irish women writers, plus her own inner thoughts, which are included in the text using a different format, in order to differentiate them from her own explanations.

Her first idea is focused on identity and the impossibility of setting her own. This lack of identity is one of the issues on which Irish feminism is focused. She starts with one of the poems by the Irish poet and activist Eavan Boland, called “The Woman as Mummy's Head”, which begins in this way: “I can't hear/ I can't see” (14). With this poem, Smyth wants to enhance the impossibility of women to develop their identity. She starts by enhancing the word 'can't', taken from Boland's poem, in order to make reference to the difficulties for a woman to fix her identity. As Boland does, Smyth also points out that she is incapable of hearing, looking or feeling, and as a consequence she “can't be [her] self” (14); or, as her mother and grandmother would say: “Ciunas! Quiet! I can't hear myself think” (14), the Irish word bringing the issue home. Men are the ones who “described” and “prescribed” (15) her, and finally, who defined her. The conclusion that she finally reaches is that, maybe, for her,

it is impossible to establish an 'I'. This idea can be clearly connected with the third feminist wave, explained in the first section of this paper. It claimed for emphasising the image of women as individuals and not as a group, paying attention to their personal circumstances.

This reconsideration of the Irish women's 'I' is explained through Smyth's personal experiences, having spent two summers in France and Greece, thinking about her condition as an Irish woman. She realises that Irish women could not search for their identity within the Irish nation. This makes her to reflect: "Why never Ireland?" (15). An Irish woman could only fit in a process of dislocation: "in time out of time, place outside place, vacant space" (15). She can only find her identity and be herself far from Ireland. In those foreign places, she has the capacity of asking herself what the implications of being a woman in Ireland are. For this reflection she could not obtain a defined and clear answer, but instead of that, she carries out a compilation of different fragments which finally overlap. That compilation of completely different fragments from different Irish women writers makes us think of Derrida and of his poststructuralist style of writing. In order to reinforce the approach of the identity of women, Smyth makes reference again to Boland, who is against accepting the complete unity of the self. To conclude, Smyth supports the fragmented self, defining it as an "interrogative mode. Incomplete. Unfinished" (16).

Now Smyth turns to the issue of the place the Irish women, and she personally, occupy in society. She starts from the idea that women are out of the centre of society and, as a consequence, devoid of the possibility of speaking and expressing by themselves. She uses these words, "I choose the oblique because I am not the center" (16), which are completely connected with the poststructuralist way of thinking, based on dualisms or binary oppositions. This displacement that women suffer from the centre of society is expressed by Smyth's words, "So long eclipsed, fear of eclipsing" (16). The fact that Irish women maintain the "politeness of ellipsis" (16) causes that they could not express themselves, unless they do it by appealing to the voices of others, in her own case the voices of other Irish women writers. For this reason, Smyth thinks that she can only be through other selves, which is completely related to the fragmented approach to women's identity explained before. In order to search for that forgotten self in the decentralised position occupied by women in society,



she describes a process, whose purpose is, in Smyth's words, "merging to emerge" (17), that is, being merged in that multiplicity of voices for the self to emerge. As it is possible to appreciate Smyth, is using many words related to water, as 'merging' or 'emerge', which makes the reader think again about Cixous, and the connection that she establishes between the different meanings and identities of women and water.

With the purpose of reflecting in depth about the identity of Irish women, Smyth proceeds to provide a definition of these three terms: Irishism, Woman and Identity. She wants to know the implications of having an identity based on those elements. She deconstructs those terms. Firstly, "Irishism" is defined as a mistake or, in Smyth's words, as an "equivocation" or "nonsense" (17). Following with the term "woman", she mentions some philosophers, as Aristotle, Aquinas, Lacan and Freud. They have always been considered the male authorities of philosophy, and in their theories, they have always defined women in a particular way. Smyth follows with her definition by making reference to some of the words that sum up the philosophers' point of view: "defect", "lack" or "absence" (17). Finally, she does the same with the word "identity": it is defined through a deconstruction of the word, reaching the conclusion that the identity of women is the same as the "sense absconded" (17), or in other words, as if their sense had fled. These three words are depicted in this particular way, with a particular purpose: reaching the elements hidden behind them.

Sticking to her search for the hidden, Smyth now turns to the role of myth in the construction of the identity of Irish women. She recovers a fragment from the "The Finn Cycle", again full of vocabulary related to water, such as, "well" or "drowned" (18). It speaks about a woman who leans on a well, where taking a look into its depths was forbidden. The water emerged from the well, drowning the woman, and making Ireland to flourish. From this old myth, Smyth turns to a contemporary myth, that exemplified by Seamus Heaney's well-known dictum, "Ireland is a country of the mind" (18). She criticises this sentence, since it reflects that the mythology that prevails is the one of men, something that is common in a patriarchal society. Smyth adds at this point her own reflection about that sentence: "Whose mind? Not mine" (18). Through Heaney's sentence, the colonisation carried out by men on

women is conveyed, and women are placed again in a disadvantageous position reflected in Smyth's meaningful expression "the other of the ex-other" (12).

Smyth also recovers another Irish important figure, Richard Kearney, who wrote *The Irish Mind* (1985), which in Smyth's view also reinforces the prevalent myth of women as "Inhabited by their myths and mind" (19). With the word 'their', she is emphasising the idea that the male mind is the one that governs the culture of Ireland, through the trinity of "Father, Faith and Motherland" (19). Finally, she also takes into account the Irish poet and scholar Gerald Dawe. He suggests that the Irish should forget about the topic identity: "The infernal navel-gazing about 'Irishness' and 'Identity'" (19). Smyth questions this opinion as well with the simple question "Whose navel?" (19).

Through the recovering of the Irish figures of Heaney, Kearney and Dawe, Smyth wants to demonstrate that the Irish myths and culture are completely created by men for men. As a consequence, they are the ones who indicate the way in which people should speak about the Irish nation. She contrasts the words 'theirs' and 'mine', reaching the conclusion that 'theirs' is a transitive active subject involving the figure of men, and 'mine' an intransitive passive one, seen in women. Smyth provides adjectives to define them: 'theirs' is defined with words as "thinking", "speaking" and "defining" (19). For this reason, men act actively, having the opportunity not only of thinking by themselves, but also of defining 'the other', women. By contrast, the word 'mine' is qualified as "subjugated" and "thought/spoken" (20), indicating the impossibility of women to think or speak by themselves.

Following with the idea of myths, now Smyth turns to a number of poems to illustrate, the passive role that women have had in the myths of the Irish culture, as well as in society. Smyth considers women "intransitive" figures, who only appear on myths "to die" (21). She quotes from one of the poems by Eavan Boland in order to reinforce her idea, in which she also portrays the passive figure of women in myths, adding her words: "the priests ordering my immolation. For their Cause" (21). In order to contrast this passive role, she also analyses the active male figure in myths. In opposition to the intransitivity that women play in myths, Smyth describes the role of men under the term "machoheroism" (21). With this term, she emphasises men as heroic figures playing "transitive" (21) and active roles, who die with a

purpose and in a heroic way. Having analysed both roles in myths, Smyth moves on to personify the intransitivity of women, using some Irish mythical figures who show the relation established between women and Ireland. Some of the women that she makes allusion to have been already mentioned in this essay. This is the case of Eiriú, who, as explained in the first section of the essay, was a goddess in the origins of the Irish mythology. Smyth also mentions Caitlín Ní Houlihán, who is considered one of the personifications of the Irish nationalism. Finally, she takes into account the mythical figure of Mother Ireland.

Smyth selects the mythical figure of Mother Ireland to continue to show the passivity of women in Irish myths. She describes it with these words, “Always image, never imagining” (22), which can be connected with the expression, “always seen never seer” that she used before to refer to the mythical figure of 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi'. Under these words, Smyth emphasises once again that mentioned passivity. When speaking about Mother Ireland, Smyth points out that she “[devours] her own offspring” (22). In this way, she is making reference to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce’s short novel. In *Portrait*, Ireland is described as 'the old sow that eats her farrow', which expresses the fact that Ireland devours her people. Smyth recovers this idea in her essay and reflects it in the image of Mother Ireland. Her purpose is to criticise the vision of the prevalent Irish nationalism. Apart from this main idea, it is remarkable that Smyth makes allusions to bulimia when speaking about Mother Ireland, “bulimiac” (22), as Longley did with the myth of Cathleen Ní Houlihán, in order to break with the perfection related to both figures. In addition, she plays with the graphic presentation of the name 'Mother Ireland' in order to emphasise her passive role as 'the other': “M/other” (23).

Having recovered this vision of Irish female figures in ancient myths, as that of Mother Ireland, Smyth returns to her own current situation, in order to pay attention to her role as a thinker. In this case, she expresses herself in the first person singular in order to involve in her issues Irish women in general. She mentions the necessity of women to have their discourses approved by men: “I need the legitimating male imprimatur” (25). She points out that men have the power of their ideas, since they can appropriate them, or even, refuse them. Smyth describes this idea with the expression “colonisation of the subconscious” (25),

with which she is making reference again to the idea of colonisation carried out by men over women. She shows, in this context, the definition of the Irish woman in relation to men with words like: “margin”, “perimeter”, and “border country” (25). Smyth focuses her attention on men and Irish women and, locates them in two different realities. In the reality of men, that she calls “reality 1”, she refers to the colonised condition of men as “dispossessed” figures in Ireland, having been oppressed by territory of England. In the second reality exposed by Smyth, “reality 2”, women are, in her own words, “twice dispossessed” (25), since as well as being oppressed by England, they also suffer the repression of their nation. With this idea, Smyth is making reference to the double fight which particularly Irish feminism has to face, already explained. When discussing this double negation, Smyth poses a question: “Is double negation double definition?” (26).

Having reflected about all these ideas, Smyth finally concludes her essay with a closing paragraph, with which she justifies it, emphasising the fact that her writing is completely objective. With the essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” she tells us, she did not want to create the usual and typical discourse on Irish identity: “I won’t back to it” (28). She expresses her scant interest in speaking about identity, with these words: “I am who I am” (27), and inviting the readers to hear the absence of women.

## CONCLUSIONS

I want to conclude this essay by returning to the hypotheses proposed in the introduction, which were two. The first one was that the essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi” belongs to the third wave of feminism in Ireland; the second stated that it presents poststructuralist hints; At this point, it is possible to confirm that those hypotheses have been finally corroborated, it being now possible to define Smyth’s writing as a poststructuralist Irish feminist essay. Apart from having fulfilled the set objectives, this paper has also contributed to improving knowledge about Irish feminism, a topic on which there is little academic literature. Moreover, this B.A thesis has also been a way of making known an obscure essay, that few people have previously analysed in detailed.

To be able to fulfil the set goals, I have made a process of researching in depth about Irish feminism, in order to get enough information to present it as detailed as possible. All that information was expected to be helpful when analysing the essay “The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”. In this way, in the first place, I have reviewed the different stages of Irish feminism in order to contextualise Smyth’s essay. Irish feminism tried to fight against two different oppressions that women suffered, for being women and for being Irish. Smyth in the last part of the essay also shows her concern about this issue, and criticises Irish nationalism, which set women in a passive position. The use of traditional myths is also very common in Irish feminism, which is something that can be found in Smyth’s essay. She pays attention on some mythical figures, emphasising in particular the one of Mother Ireland. The purpose that Smyth has is to present and use 'Mother Ireland' to break with that stereotypical and idealised figure, that has been present during all Irish history. Another common element found in Irish feminism and the essay has been the break with the plurality or 'plurability', with which women lose individuality and their own identity. Smyth reflects about this lack of identity and the impossibility for Irish women to establish and 'I'.

Then, I have moved on to fit the essay within feminism in general. Doing this, I have finally determined that Smyth’s essay can be placed within the third feminist wave, finding at the same time some poststructuralist hints. One of the poststructuralist elements found is

water, which Smyth attaches great importance. For her, the polluted water of Dublin that runs through the body's sculpture is connected with the different meanings flowing through her. This allusion to water make me think of the Irish feminist Cixous, who also paid attention to water. Apart from water, the style of writing employed by Smyth has also brought me to think on the presence of poststructuralism on the essay. The fact that the essay is composed by a compilation of completely different fragments makes me think on Derrida's poststructuralist way of writing, where the unity is left aside. Smyth uses this style of writing to reinforce the idea of the fragmentation of the identity of women.

Ailbhe Smyth is a feminist activist and writer, whose essays want to defend women's rights. Moreover, she has an active participation on one of the most known social networks, Twitter. She uses it as a tool to inform about the feminist movements, which take place in Ireland in a modern way, being conscious of the possibility of transmitting more information to large amounts of people, rather than with her essays. For this reason, she is a character of our days, who in fact has been a great defender of women's right to abortion in the Referendum celebrated last May, which finally has given Irish women the possibility to consider abortion as an option.

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