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BACHELOR THESIS

History, Homesickness and Healing

The Irish dream of a new life in America with reference to Colm Tóibín's

Brooklyn

Historie, stesk po domově a uzdravování

Irský sen o novém životě v Americe s odkazem na knihu *Brooklyn* Colma

Tóibína

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have written this bachelor thesis exclusively by myself under the supervision of Doc. PhDr. Petr Chalupský, PhD. and that in this process, I have used only the sources cited. I declare herewith that I have not used this thesis to gain any other degree.

Prague, 15 March, 2017

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the idea of Irish immigration and the reasons why so many people gave up their lives at home in the hope of finding a better life in America. The theoretical part focuses on the history of immigration to different parts of the world with specific focus on America. The Irish encountered many difficulties such as culture shock and homesickness both of which became easier over time as they pursued their dreams. In the next part the difficulties of piecing together a new identity abroad, as touched upon in the theoretical part, will be supported with the analysis of the book *Brooklyn* (2009) by Colm Tóibín. The protagonist of the book is faced with a pertinent question that this thesis aims to answer: Is it ever possible to feel completely at home in another country?

KEY WORDS: Irish history; psychology of migration; homesickness; adjustment; Colm Tóibín; *Brooklyn*

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá Irskou migrací a důvody, proč tolik lidí opustilo své domovy s vidinou nalezení lepšího života v Americe. Teoretická část se zaměřuje na historii Irské migrace do různých koutů světa, přičemž největší důraz je kladen na migraci do Spojených států. Irové narazili na spoustu obtížností, jmenovitě například kulturní šok nebo stesk po domově, ale tyto obtíže se časem zlepšily, k čemuž pomohl i fakt, že Irové začali dosahovat svých snů. Další část, která navazuje na část teoretickou, se zaměřuje na analýzu knihy *Brooklyn* od Colma Tóibína. Protagonistka zmiňované knihy je postavena před otázkou, jestli je možné najít v jiném státě domov. Tuto otázku se bakalářská práce snaží zodpovědět.

Klíčová slova: Irská historie, psychologie migrace, stesk po domově, adaptace, Colm Tóibín; *Brooklyn*

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1. Introduction

History, Homesickness and Healing

The Irish dream of a new life in America with reference to Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn*

She tried to work out how she had come to believe also that, while people from the town who lived in England missed Enniscorthy, no one who went to America missed home. Instead, they were happy there and proud. She wondered if that could be true. (Tóibín 24)

This thesis focuses on *Brooklyn*, a novel by the Irish author Colm Tóibín, which was published in 2009. Since the story of a young girl leaving Ireland for America was published, the novel has acquired not only an astounding number of readers but it has also won critical acclaim. Tóibín is the author of eight novels. Three of them were nominated for the Booker Prize and one won the IMPAC Award. In 2009, *Brooklyn* won the Costa Novel Award.

The thesis is comprised of two parts. The theoretical part serves as a historical and psychological background for the subsequent analysis in the practical part. It is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, "History", focuses on the Irish history of immigration from the nineteenth century onwards. Specific focus is put on immigration to America. The main factors which pushed the Irish to leave Ireland are listed and the journey from Ireland to the United States is described. Great emphasis is also laid on women's migration. Chapter 2, called "Homesickness", delineates the psychological as well as psychophysiological factors of migration as the Irish encountered many difficulties such as culture shock and homesickness when arriving in the host countries. The third chapter, "Healing", highlights the fact that migrants who are piecing together a new identity abroad need to go through several stages when adjusting to a new culture and that their lives become easier over time. This chapter provides a reference to the adjustment of the Catholic and the Presbyterian Irish in America.

The practical part contains an analysis of the novel itself. It provides the reader with specific examples on the topics elaborated on in the theoretical part. Colm Tóibín is concerned with the issue of immigration and the novel *Brooklyn* is a story of a young Irish girl Eilis who is trapped between two worlds, Ireland and America. Not only does she feel homesick but is also faced with another challenge: trying to form herself a new identity. Moreover, Eilis is faced with a pertinent question that this thesis aims to answer: Is it ever possible to feel completely at home in another country?

2. Theoretical part

2.1. History

We are a small country. Our material wealth is comparatively insignificant... Though we are a small nation, we wield an influence in the world, far in excess of what our mere physical size and the smallness of our population might warrant. We are sometimes accused of acting as if we were a big nation. But, in fact, we are a big nation. Our exiles have gone to practically every part of the world and have created for their motherland a spiritual dominion which more than compensates for her lack of size or material wealth. The Irish at home are only one section of a great race which has spread itself throughout the world, particularly in the great countries of North America and the Pacific area. (John A. Costello, Assembly of Ireland, 24 November 1948)

Ireland is a place stupendously shaped by migration. However, emigration from the island is, in fact, only a comparatively recent phenomenon. Prior to the eighteenth century, the country gained more people than it lost (Duffy 90). Still, no other country in Europe has such a long history of migration. Just in the period from 1815 to 1922, when the mass exodus of emigrants was taking place, approximately 7,5 million men, women and children emigrated from Ireland to commence new lives abroad (Campbell 1). Nowadays, the Irish are still widely looked upon as an emigrant people. Some 70 million people around the world claim Irish descent; in the United States alone, there are thought to be about seven times more Irish-Americans than the current population of Ireland (Santry).

2.1.1. Migration; Irish migration from the nineteenth century onwards

Bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings, and even compulsion have produced and are still producing currents of migrations, but none of these currents can compare in volume with that which arises from the desires inherent in most men to “better” themselves in material respects. (Daugherty 286)

Migration is the movement of individuals or groups from one place or residence to another when they have the intention of remaining in the new place for some substantial period of time (Daugherty 109). As Daugherty explains, apart from fertility and mortality, migration is one of the three processes of population change, because the same as fertility and mortality, it affects population growth and population composition (109). Migration has been a major source of human survival, adaptation, and growth across the centuries or millennia (Marsella and Ring 3). This was true in

the earliest days of human existence, when hunter-gatherers roamed as individuals and bands across Africa and Eurasia and then across the Bering Straits to North America and South America. This was true as early sea voyagers followed coastlines and then crossed oceans to unknown worlds, and as nations colonized new lands in pursuit of power and wealth, moving citizens, servants, and slaves around the globe. This was also true during the great period of migration when Europeans left their home countries for the promise and possibilities which America offered them- freedom, hope, and identity. And it is also true today as new migrants from Asia and Central and South America move to North America, Europe, and Australia (Adler and Gielen 3). Marsella and Ring claim that the impulse to migrate is inherent in human nature and that it is in fact an instinctual and inborn disposition and inclination to wander in search of new opportunities and new horizons (3). It is relevant to mention that migration arises from forces that both push and pull (Adler and Gielen 9).

The push factors are the factors which describe the reasons which forced a migrant to leave his or her country. The pull factors, on the contrary, are the factors which delineate the reasons that attract a migrant to come to a foreign country. Generally, migrants usually decide to leave their country as more push and pull factors combine. Furthermore, this thesis also works with the terms immigration and emigration. To sum this terminology up, migration is an umbrella term that includes both immigration and emigration and it does not have to necessarily be a move from one country to another, it only implies a change from one place to another. When a person or a group of people immigrate, they enter a foreign country and they settle there to live permanently; and emigration describes the process of leaving one country in order to live in another.

The Irish leaving Ireland from the nineteenth century onwards emigrated for a variety of reasons, albeit there are some issues which afflicted all of them. Poverty, the appalling lack of unemployment, natural disasters, persecution, economic and political factors and no bright prospects for amelioration have been the major reasons for embarking on a strenuous journey. The general feeling of the Irish was that Ireland was not a prosperous land and people believed that ‘‘they could not be worse off in America,’’ and the only thing they wanted to do was to get out of Ireland (Nolan 45).

The most significant push and pull factor (see the definitions above) is to be mentioned here.

The immense push factor was the Irish Potato Famine (1845-1849), known also as “The Great Famine” or in Irish “An Gorta Mór,” which means “The Great Hunger.” A famine is a complex and deadly crisis initially caused by a widespread lack of food (O’Neill 10). As O’Neill explains, people die due to the lack of food but they also die from diseases that run rampant when a population is weakened by severe malnutrition (10). This catastrophe caused a mass starvation and is considered one of the most severe famines of the modern era (O’Neill 8).

This tragedy was caused not only by the fact that the potato crops failed, but also by other severe factors. Economic and political factors played a crucial role; many British leaders regarded the Irish people as less than human (O’Neill 12). As O’Neill explains, this attitude stemmed in part from religious differences between England and Ireland (11). Another factor was Ireland’s poverty. The Irish were dependent on potatoes as it was their only source of livelihood. Thus, when the potato crops failed because of a plant disease called potato blight, the Irish were left without any other essential nutrients. Interestingly, there was, in fact, no lack of food in Ireland during the Great Famine (O’Neill 6). Ireland’s farms produced wheat, oats, barley, pigs, sheep, and cows (10). Nevertheless, the Irish had nothing to eat. They stood by and watched how these products were exported to England and other parts of the British Empire (10). This fact, that Ireland was controlled by Britain, which was the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world and did nothing to help the Irish people, makes the catastrophe even more traumatising.

Most of the approximately 1,8 million Irish who left Ireland and arrived to the United States before, during, and immediately after the Great Irish Famine came from much poorer backgrounds than the Irish migrants who had gone before them (Ignatiev 38). The extreme conditions of the famine period understandably provided strong motivation for many Irish people to leave Ireland (Miller 6). The famine in 1845 was a milestone in modern Irish history. Consequently, the last major famine known as mini-famine followed in 1879 and people continued leaving their homeland. Between

1850 and 1913, over 4.5 million Irish people left their homeland (Hatton and Williamson 575).

The most significant pull factor for the Irish to head to the United States was the First Industrial Revolution in America in the early 1800s. Between 1790, when the first factory was built in the country, and 1908, the United States changed from a sparsely populated nation of small farmers into an urbanized, industrial society (Brezina 5). Before the First Industrial Revolution in the United States, most Americans were employed in agriculture, where the work was seasonal. Americans worked the land and ran business out of their homes or ran small shops. As Brezina explains, when the United States declared independence in 1776, it was a nation of farmers and artisans (8). Similarly, the Irish believed that farming and the countryside were essential elements of Irishness (Daly 24). According to Daly, they believed that Ireland was destined to be a rural peasant society, in contrast to the urban and industrial England (24). However, only men could work land. Furthermore, there were not enough jobs for all Irish men and the wages were extremely low. As a result, when the boom in industry in the United States was taking place, America was in need of cheap labour and the Irish who were left without any jobs or with jobs that could not make them a decent living responded to the unemployment in Ireland and emigrated to the United States. Likewise, the Second Industrial Revolution exploded in the 1880s and again, the United States required cheap, unskilled labour. The wages in the factories were not high, but they were higher than in Ireland. Thus, emigration of the Irish people brought benefits to both sides. The Americans had cheap labour to man the factories who were willing to work for a small amount of money. The Irish had a stable job which still earned them more than back in Ireland.

A question why the Irish emigrated to the United States when the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution was in Britain might emerge. As it has already been explained, the Americans were in seek of cheap, unskilled labour. Even with low salaries in the United States, the life of the Irish had substantially improved, a job in the United States paid as much as \$1.50 a day; in Ireland, a person lucky enough to find a job would accept that amount for a week's work (Goldstein 17). On the contrary, the Industrial Revolution in Britain raised the standard of living for the middle and

upper classes. However, the working classes had little job security and were easily replaceable (History.com Staff). Additionally, urban, industrialized areas were unable to keep pace with the flow of workers arriving from the countryside. This resulted in inadequate, overcrowded housing and polluted, unsanitary living conditions (History.com Staff).

Furthermore, there is one aspect of Irish migration which differentiates Ireland from other countries. Whilst in most countries male migrants outnumbered female ones, the Irish were an exception. The number of female emigrants was particularly noticeable. Between 1885 and 1920, females outnumbered males among the 1.4 million people leaving Ireland by almost twenty thousand (Nolan 49). Single women dominated Irish emigration for thirty-five years (Nolan 2). Except for the Irish, only Swedish women emigrated independently from their families in significant numbers. To compare, the Swedish women emigrants were the majority among Swedish emigrants for only five years. Thus, Ireland was the only nation where women emigrated in larger numbers than men for a significant period of time.

The idea of leaving Ireland arose from the fact that women had grown even more superfluous in their home communities as new demographic and economic patterns transformed Irish life in the half-century before 1880 (Nolan 2). These changes brought fewer chances for women to marry and become wives and thereby attaining a social and economic status. Since their home communities could no longer accommodate their aspirations, these young women chose to pursue their goals abroad where they had a chance to recover their lost importance in Irish life. Nolan describes the decision of Irish women to emigrate as “a remarkable example of female-determination” (3). Despite the fact that by the 1880s the immigration of women reached epidemic-like proportions, our knowledge of this issue will never be complete. Several factors have contributed to our lack of knowledge about female emigration from Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Firstly, only recently have historians started to look at the historical data already at hand, albeit the numerical data documenting the existence of this generation was available. Secondly, revolution in Ireland in the early twentieth century interrupted official record keeping and contributed to the devastation of existing

archival material. The Public Record office in Dublin was the place where all the documents were stored, and during the Irish Civil War in 1922, most of the documents were destroyed. The consequence was, that the important sources have been forever lost, thus our knowledge of women's role in shaping emigration patterns remains incomplete as same as the study of Irish social history, despite the existence of official data on the demographics of Irish life over the last century and a half.

2.1.2. The journey from Ireland to the United States

The first issue the Irish were encountered with were transport costs. Most of them could not afford the crossing as they had no steady income and the prices were very high. If they had families in the destination already, family members often pre-paid the tickets so the Irish in Ireland could embark on the journey. In the sailing ships of the middle nineteenth century, the crossing to America or Canada took up to 12 weeks; by the end of the century the journey to Eilis (New York) took just 7 to 10 days; by 1911 the shortest passage, made in summer, was down to 5 days, the longest was 9 days (Santry). Irish immigrants came to the United States from two directions. The first one was by a transatlantic voyage to the East Coast Ports and these immigrants headed primarily to Boston and New York. The second option was by land or sea from Canada. The Irish also stayed in Canada, but for the most-part this was just a stopover as the majority continued and settled in America.

Unfortunately, many Irish people died during the journey. Having nothing to lose, they embarked on a journey despite the fact that they had no food on the ship and the journey itself was draining. A huge number of starving and sick Irish died on the vessels and these became known as coffin ships. The term coffin ship is reserved for those that set sail during The Famine of the 1840s, often unseaworthy and overcrowded and nearly always with inadequate provision of drinking water, food, and sanitation (Santry). Each of the vessels had approximately 300 persons on board, which is two or three times the number which is allowed by a port in the United States. Up to the mid-1840s, due to bad weather conditions in winter, ships from Northern Europe set out on a journey only in spring and summer. But the year 1846 shows the desperation of the Irish. Immigration ships continued to sail from Ireland even in winter and the U.S. Congress was so alarmed by the situation that in March they passed

two new Passenger Acts, which led to a rising prices. Nevertheless, all tickets had been sold by the middle of April (Santry).

There were three types of accommodation on board. First-class, second-class, and third-class. The first and second class tickets were usually pre-paid from the United States as they were incredibly expensive and only few could afford them; the third-class tickets were reserved for those who travelled at the cheapest rate. The vast majority were in third class-young immigrants either returning from a rare trip home or going to America for the first time. These third-class passengers were also known as steerage or between-deck passengers. This is because these immigrants were placed in the cargo hold and they had to stay there for the whole journey. Steerage was enormously profitable for steamship companies. Even though the average cost of a ticket was only \$30, larger ships could hold from 1,500 to 2,000 immigrants, netting a profit of \$45,000 to \$60,000 for a single, one-way voyage, while the cost to feed a single immigrant was only about 60 cents a day (OhRanger.com Staff). For most immigrants, the journey was unbelievably debilitating. In a report to President William H. Taft, the United States Immigration Commission said:

The open deck space reserved for steerage passengers is usually very limited, and situated in the worst part of the ship, subject to the most violent motion, to the dirt from the stacks and the odors from the hold and galleys... the only provisions for eating are frequently shelves or benches along the sides or in the passages of sleeping compartments. Dining rooms are rare and, if found, are often shared with berths installed along the walls. Toilets and washrooms are completely inadequate; saltwater only is available.

The ventilation is almost always inadequate, and the air soon becomes foul. The unattended vomit of the seasick, the odors of not too clean bodies, the reek of food and the awful stench of the nearby toilet rooms make the atmosphere of the steerage such that it is a marvel that human flesh can endure it... Most immigrants lie in their berths for most of the voyage, in a stupor caused by the foul air. The food often repels them... It is almost impossible to keep personally clean. All of these conditions are naturally aggravated by the crowding. (OhRanger.com Staff)

Despite all these facts, migrants embarked on a journey as they had faith in the future. When the ships arrived in the piers, the first-class and second-class passengers passed through Customs and were free to go, whereas the third-class passengers had to undergo medical and legal inspections (Santry). Medical inspectors boarded incoming ships in the quarantine area at the entrance to the Lower Bay of New York

Harbour. Ships were examined from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Vessels arriving after 5 p.m. had to anchor for the night. Passengers were inspected for possible contagious diseases such as cholera, plague, smallpox, typhoid fever, yellow fever, scarlet fever, measles, and diphtheria (OhRanger.com Staff). If they had any of these diseases, they were deported. The legal inspections contained a set of 31 questions which immigrants had to answer. In total, about 20 percent of those arriving at Ellis Island were detained for medical treatment or a legal hearing; the rest were free to go after only a few hours. Only two percent of the immigrants seeking refuge in America would fail to be admitted (OhRanger.com Staff).

2.1.3. First Programme for Economic Expansion, Ireland, 1959 and The Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965

Sean Lemass (1899-1971) was an Irish minister from 1959 until 1966, but also a vitally important figure in the history of Ireland. As Prime Minister, he was widely held to have been the psychological and political regenerative force in post-war Ireland (Cook 779). His policies led to the economic regeneration of the Irish state. He presided over the most rapid phase of economic growth and material transformation the country has ever seen (Cook 779). The First Programme for Economic Expansion brought several social and cultural changes to one of the poorest countries in Europe. In consequence, access to education broadened, consumer spending increased, holiday abroad became commonplace, and, most importantly, emigration substantially declined.

In the United States, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was an influential landmark law in the history of US immigration. It marked a dramatic break with past immigration policy, and would have an immediate and lasting impact. In the subsequent half century, the patterns of U.S. immigration changed dramatically. The law abolished the national quota system of the 1920s and it allocated an equal number of immigrants for every country in the world, 20,000. In the 1950s, 57,333 Irish immigrants came to America but in 1960s, due to this emigration law, it was only about 38,000 (Kenny 221-222).

2.2. Homesickness

Migration is stressful. The stress begins in the earliest phases of the push and pull of forces leading to migration and extends to the later phases of migration: departure, transit, arrival, and resettlement. Migration is hazardous to life, limb, and psyche. The events and experiences of migration [even under the most positive experience], remain an indelible imprint of words, images, and emotions. The sights, sounds, and smells of the journey are all retained, to be retold years later again, and again to all that will listen. There is an old Sicilian saying: ‘When you leave home, you know what you leave behind, but not what you will find.’ (Marsella and Ring 9)

2.2.1. Psychological and Psychophysiological Manifestations of Migration

This chapter aims to describe mainly the various psychological manifestations which accompany migration.

Many psychologists believe that mental processes affect bodily ones, and vice versa. A basic assumption in psychophysiology is that behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and social events are all mirrored in physiological processes; psychophysiology is therefore concerned with how mental events, like feelings and thoughts, may have pronounced effects on bodily processes, including effects on health and disease (Hugdahl 3). Therefore, it is vitally important to bear in mind that when migrants have some psychological issues, the physical symptoms may follow as consequence of the disturbed well-being.

Homesickness is the first psychological as well as psychophysiological factor of migration. It is a condition which influences both the mental and physical processes. It is defined as a feeling of longing for one’s home during a period of absence from it (Oxford Dictionary). Some researchers have averred that homesickness arises as a reaction to novelty and unfamiliarity. A person undergoes various feelings when he or she arrives to the new country. It is probable that migrants are not prepared for the shock which comes inevitably. The typical reaction of migrants is that they have ruminative cognitions about home, they develop negative emotions in the new home and they might even feel depressed or anxious. Homesickness is also connected with various somatic symptoms (Tilburg and Vingerhoets 35). These somatic symptoms

vary depending on every individual, an example could be insomnia, loss of appetite, weakness and further.

Some researchers draw a line between two types of homesickness. One of them is a clinical psychologist Bremer, who distinguishes between a cat-type and a dog-type homesickness (Tilburg and Vingerhoets 5). The cat-type has strong attachments to places and to the physical environment, whereas the dog-type has strong bonds with people. The terminology was chosen due to the characteristic behaviour of cats and dogs. Cats are generally believed to develop strong attachments to their physical environments. On that account, after a move cat may run away and attempt to return to the former home. On the contrary, dogs generally show more signs of distress when being separated from their owner and they apparently seem to appreciate being reunited with their owners (Tilburg and Vingerhoets 5). It is relevant to highlight that homesickness not only interferes with adaptation to new situations, but it may also seriously hinder reintegration when back in the homeland, because of overidealization, which often makes the return disappointing (Tilburg and Vingerhoets 3). Thus, homesickness is a shock which comes immediately after abandoning the known environment.

Other psychological states accompanying migration are persistent thoughts of home, nostalgia, feeling of unhappiness, mourning, or melancholia. All these psychological conditions have in common that they influence the well-being of migrants. Furthermore, persistent feelings of sadness and nostalgia can later develop into a serious mental disorder such as depression. To understand the migrant's mental processes, it is essential to distinguish between the terms nostalgia, melancholia, and depression.

Nostalgia comes from two Greek words, *nostos*, meaning return home, and *algia*, meaning pain or longing. Thus, it was first used to express the physical ailment of homesickness (Partyka, Maszewski and Laszkiewicz 14). However, since the 1950s, when it became the subject of study of different disciplines, it has been defined by many psychologists in a number of ways: Svetlana Boym claims it is a “sentiment of loss and displacement”; Wilson claims that it is a “form of ideologizing or mystifying the past”; while Davis sees in it “a form of sentimental yearning for any

object, event, place in the past or a positively toned evocation of the past” (Partyka, Maszewski and Laszkiewicz 14). The inevitable part of nostalgia is that people evoke something from the past in the present (14). The psychologist Katarzyna Jerzak says that “nostalgia is a long-term illness, a phantom pain of sorts”; she describes it as “the feeling of being cut off from oneself or being in two places at the same time” and it feels like “a limb was amputated and left behind” (29).

All I was likely to discover at this point wasn't just how distant were the paths we'd taken, it was the measure of loss that was going to strike me—a loss I didn't mind thinking about in abstract terms but which would hurt when stared at in the face, the way nostalgia hurts long after we've stopped thinking of things we lost and may never have cared for. (Jerzak 29)

Some psychologists do not distinguish between the terms homesickness and nostalgia, claiming that both are the typical responses of humans separated from their homes, families, and native cultural environment. Even though the difference between them is subtle, in this thesis the terms homesickness and nostalgia are used with different meanings.

Melancholia is the condition of feeling unhappy or sad for no obvious reason (Cambridge Dictionary). To understand melancholia better, it can be compared to mourning. In 1917, Freud wrote an essay *Mourning and Melancholia* where he described these two different kinds of grief. Freud proclaims that mourning is a healthy response to loss and while it is finite and one day the migrant overcomes it, melancholia is interminable and people cannot get over it and are psychically stuck (Chang 7-8). Mourning, according to Freud, is an “expectable reaction to a loss, understandable as sadness, that might lift after a time and is proportionate to the loss involved” (Frosh 41). He goes further and explains that in comparison to mourning, melancholia is a “pathological condition in which mourning cannot properly take place, and for that very reason allows the loss to poison the mind” (Frosh 41). Therefore, melancholia can evolve into depression.

The difference between melancholia and depression might seem subtle. Same as melancholia, depression is the condition of feeling unhappy or sad, but unlike melancholia, depression is a mental illness, not only a pathological condition. Depression is defined as “a mental illness in which a person is very unhappy and

anxious [worried and nervous] for long periods and cannot have a normal life during these periods (Cambridge Dictionary). The main psychophysiological manifestations of depression are the loss of appetite or overeating; insomnia or excessive sleeping; fatigue and decreased energy, and headaches. In case migrants' feeling of homesickness evolves into depression so severe that they need to seek medical treatment.

2.2.2. Migrants and culture shock

In 1960, Kalvero Oberg, a Canadian anthropologist, introduced the term culture shock. He used it to describe the anxiety resulting from not knowing what to do in a new culture (Pedersen 1). Oxford Dictionary describes culture shock as “the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.” Pedersen avers that culture shock is a “profoundly personal experience” (vii). His explanation is that it does affect every person in a different way; furthermore, it does even affect the same person differently when/if it re-occurs (vii). Culture shock comes about when a migrant is exposed to a new environment which is unfamiliar to him. The shock happens inside the individual and he or she needs to construct new perspectives of self, others, and the environment that fit with the new situation (Pedersen 1). Migrants are very well-aware of the cultural differences and they must re-evaluate both the new host and their own home culture. Oberg mentions six negative aspects of culture shock. These are as follows: (1) strain due to the effort which is required to make necessary psychological adaptations; (2) a sense of loss and feelings of deprivation in regard to friends, status, profession, and possession; (3) surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences; (4) being rejected by/and or rejecting members of new culture; (5) confusion in role, role expectations, values, feeling and self-identity; (6) feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment (Tilburg and Vingerhoets 18). Thus, Oberg's view of culture shock implies that it is a negative experience, much like “an illness or disease” (Pedersen 2). In fact, culture shock is an inevitable part in the process of healing. Before adjusting to the new culture, migrants need to encounter the differences in the new environment so that they know what they need to adapt to. The process of adjustment to a new

culture depends on every individual, but once a person understands the values, habits, and behaviour of the people in the new land, adaptation gets easier.

2.3.Healing

She has become part of the tribe by behaving like its members. (Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*)

2.3.1. Cultural Adjustment; Trifonovitch's Cultural Adjustment Stages

As it has already been touched upon earlier (see 2.2.1.), a migrant was most certainly to experience a period of grief after leaving his or her homeland, facing the challenges of a new environment. Dan G. Hertz, Professor and Director of Psychiatry Clinic in Jerusalem, claims that after the stage of homesickness passes out, a migrant would gradually recover from it and would eventually adjust to the conditions of his new environment (Hertz 398). The sociologist Gregory Trifonovitch outlined the four stages of cultural adjustment. He has studied the experienced of students who were thrown into another culture. He found out that these students underwent four stages before adjusting within their new country. It is the kind of experience the Irish migrants may encounter during the first months in America.

The first stage is so-called “Honeymoon Stage” (Fishburn and Nemecek 15). In this stage, Irish migrants feel enthusiastic about the new environment. They are happy and thankful they made it into America. They have various expectations and dreams about what they would like to accomplish in the United States. It is also a stage filled with “emotions and expectations coupled with a sense of curiosity and naiveté” (Diakanwa). To understand this stage better, it could be compared to a tourist visiting a new country for the first time. He or she feels excited about everything, which may include for instance even the new smells or sounds.

The second stage is called “The Hostility Stage” (Fishburn and Nemecek 15). Trifonovitch believes that in this stage most people are likely to experience, for the first time, a frustration or even depression due to the difficulties of settling into a new environment. Irish migrants are frustrated because they might not know the language

(Catholic Irish spoke Irish), habits, customs, mentality, or values of people in the country. Immigrants become homesick and are anxious about their future. In this stage, they are also likely to experience various psychosomatic symptoms and they experience all sorts of malaise and sickness which result from striving to adjust, survive, and be accepted in their new culture (Diakanwa).

The third stage is known as “The Humour or Integration Stage” (Fishburn and Nemecek 15). In this stage, immigrants become more familiar with their new culture, its values, and the mentality of the people. The name of this stage is derived from the fact that immigrants start to heal from homesickness and they start to feel more enthusiastic again. Furthermore, they feel secure and comfortable in the new environment. They begin to accommodate to their new lifestyle, make new friends and fulfil their dreams (Diakanwa).

“The Home Stage” is the last stage of cultural adjustment (Fishburn and Nemecek 15). The culture is not new anymore. Irish migrants start identifying themselves with the American style of living, they know the language, are able to work and live in their new homes.

2.3.2. The adjustment of the Catholic and the Presbyterian Irish in America

Irish people leaving Ireland for America after 1846 were predominantly Catholic (Santry). In comparison with the years before 1846, a vast majority of Irish immigrants were Protestants or Presbyterians. The immense difference was that the Catholic Irish spoke Irish, whilst the Protestants or the Presbyterians Irish spoke English. Many of these Catholic Irish immigrants were desperate and lost as they were destitute, illiterate, had a language barrier and lack of skills. Whereas the Protestants or the Presbyterian Irish adjusted to American culture quicker and easier and became soon independent, the Catholic Irish were not embodied in the society and they were building their own ethnic ghettos in cities along the north-eastern seaboard instead (Santry). The Presbyterians sincerely believed that by going to the States they would find tolerance, freedom, and happiness. Many of them were shopkeepers or some worked in the Irish linen trade, thus they were more economically independent than

the Catholic Irish. However, even the Catholic Irish adjusted and made an enormous contribution to the subsequent development of the country (Duffy 120). The initial feeling that they found themselves the subject of suspicious and distrust in their adopted homeland diminished. And all of that without losing their cultural identity as Irish.

After the initial encounter with homesickness, the Irish bonded together to help one another. The idea of not being alone and have people who are in the same situation and therefore they understand what you are undergoing helps one to heal. The Irish formed not only their own clubs in America, but also their own banks, schools, and hospitals. They organized their own balls, St. Patrick's Day celebrations and they established Irish bars across the United States. In 1810, immigrants in New York founded the first Irish American newspaper called "the Shamrock." Other Irish immigrants opened an American branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Irish charitable society in 1836 (Goldstein 16). They found out that the vision of building new life in America was not just a mere dream.

3. Practical part

‘Some people are nice,’ she said, ‘and if you talk to them properly, they can be even nicer.’

They both laughed.

‘That’ll be my motto in America,’ Eilis said. (Tóibín 32)

The practical part of the thesis is concerned with an analysis of the novel *Brooklyn*. The major emphasis is put on the protagonist of the novel, Eilis Lacey, and her journey from Ireland to the United States. The acclaimed writer Colm Tóibín wrote this novel in 2009. It won the 2009 Costa Novel Award, was shortlisted for the 2009 Man Booker Prize and the 2011 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

To start with, the practical part provides the readers with the author’s background as it had a huge influence on *Brooklyn*. Secondly, genre, plot and socio-cultural background of the novel are briefly depicted. Later, Eilis’s situation in Ireland and her reasons to emigrate are dealt with, as well as her journey from Ireland to the United States. The analysis also follows with Eilis’s perception of homesickness and her subsequent adjustment in America. The practical part finishes with the subchapter ‘Eilis’s experience of identity conflict.’

3.1. Colm Tóibín’s background and the influence on the novel *Brooklyn*

Tóibín was born in 1955 in the little town of Enniscorthy, County Wexford. He attended a local boarding school and after his studies at University College Dublin, he spent three years in Barcelona. Later in his life, he visited Africa and South America, where he worked as a journalist. He has twice been a Visiting writer at Stanford University, as well as at the Michener Center at the University of Texas in Austin. He himself confesses that many of his life experiences resonate with his work.

Firstly, when he was twelve-years old his father died after a serious illness and Tóibín has never denied the influence that emotional jolt had on his later writing (Clarke). He and his brother were sent away to be cared for by nuns as their mother had abandoned them. He admitted that it affected them very deeply. Therefore, he unconsciously tends to create in his novels situations similar to what he had experienced- one character abandons another one, and he does so as he proclaims that

the ‘emotion remains raw with him’ (Tóibín, *The Independent*). Similarly, Eilis grew up with her mother and sister only. Tóibín conceded that he did not think about this parallel for a long time.

Then it came up when I did therapy with psychiatrist Ivor Browne. I otherwise wouldn't have thought about it. You get on with things and then these things come after you. If you are a novelist you are alert to the things you come back to. How come there's no father figure in Brooklyn? (Tóibín, *The Irish Times*)

The only mentions of Eilis's father in the book were when her brother Jack walked her to the port in Liverpool before she set out on a journey and when Eilis started experiencing homesickness and she compared it to the feeling she had when her father died.

‘This is going to take you to America,’ Jack said. ‘It's like time and patience.’
‘Time and patience would bring a snail to America. Did you never hear that?’
‘Oh, don't be so stupid.’, she said and nudged him and smiled.
‘Daddy always said that,’ he said.
‘When I was out of the room,’ she replied. (Tóibín 33)

[...] that was like how she felt when her father died [...] (Tóibín 67)

Secondly, Tóibín spent some time at the boarding school in Wexford. He was feeling homesick and in a *New York Times* interview he confided, that ‘what Eilis has in Brooklyn is exactly what he had at boarding school’ (Witchel). Moreover, he lived in the United States where he worked as a journalist and began to feel ‘the funny mixtures of loneliness and need and occasional happiness that emigrants feel’ (Tóibín, *Chicago Public Library*). This was the moment he started thinking about writing a story about a young girl who undergoes the same feelings as he did.

3.2. The genre

In 2012, *The Observer* named the book *Brooklyn* as one of the ‘best ten historical novels’ (Skidelsky, *The Guardian*). However, the Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction sees a difficulty in the term ‘historical.’

The Prize was conceived to award the very best work of fiction, published in the previous year in the UK, and set in the majority at least 60 years ago (echoing the subtitle of Sir Walter Scott's famous book *Waverley*) and therefore outside the mature personal experience of the author. (The Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction Editor)

Colm Tóibín's novel is set in the early 1950s and was published in 2009. In compliance with the Walter Scott Prize definition, *Brooklyn* cannot be called a historical novel. However, it is nonetheless a "stunningly controlled account of an important historical phenomenon" (Skidelsky). The crucial historical phenomenon it explores is the Irish emigration to the United States, which was described further in the theoretical part (see 2.1.1.)

Additionally, *Brooklyn* explores not only a historical phenomenon, but also Eilis's mental processes and feelings. And what is more, Eilis's internal life is of great importance, if not even more important than the plot. In other words, it is a story about a young girl's life in Ireland and the United States, about her emotional journey and about decisions which turn her life inside out. For that reason, this thesis regards *Brooklyn* as a psychological novel. Tóibín himself affirms that the narrative explores the beginning of a young person's life and choice they have to make.

3.3. Plot

A short summary of the novel helps the readers with a better orientation in the subsequent chapters. The novel is divided into four parts. The first and the fourth parts represent Eilis's life in Enniscorthy, Ireland, while the second and third presents Eilis's life in Brooklyn, the United States.

Eilis Lacey was a young girl living with her mother and sister Rose in a small city in Ireland in the 1950s. Eilis and Rose's father passed away and their brothers emigrated to Birmingham. Eilis was unemployed, working occasionally for Miss Kelly in the local grocery shop on Sundays. Rose arranged a meeting with a priest Father Flood. He found Eilis a job in a department store called Bartocci's in Brooklyn, New York and Eilis emigrated to America.

After an arduous journey, Eilis arrived in the United States. Living with five other girls at Mrs Kehoe's house, she was homesick, wanted to go back home, yet after the initial shock she got better and got used to her life in America. To gain a qualification, she attended bookkeeping classes. At an Irish dance she regularly visited, she met an Italian boy Tony and fell in love with him. However, she found out

that her sister Rose died in Ireland in the meantime. Eilis decided to go home to see her mother who was left alone. Before she went back to Ireland, Tony felt anxious that she would never come back. He proposed to her and she agreed to secretly marry him in the local municipal house in New York.

After returning home in Part Four, a job opportunity occurred in Davis's office and she met a boy Jim Farrell, who was a local pub owner, and for whom she began to develop feelings. No-one knew about her marriage, not even her mother. She kept thinking whether to stay in Ireland or to return to Brooklyn. The strict and disagreeable Miss Kelly found out from Mrs Kehoe that Eilis was already married, which pushed Eilis back to the United States to be with her husband Tony.

Brooklyn is a story about emigration and Tóibín noted that he wanted people to know what it was like to move to a new country.

You create a world away from home and make new room for yourself. But when you arrive back home in your old rooms the world you've made for yourself ceases to be real. Everything seems to crumble. (Tóibín, *The Guardian*, McCrum)

Eilis created her own life in America and after returning back to Enniscorthy, she did not know where she belonged and was confronted with a terrible dilemma. As a consequence, she got stuck between the two worlds, Ireland and America, and between her two lives. She needed to choose if she wanted to be the Eilis who lived with her mother in Ireland, and was seeing Jim, or the Eilis who was married to Tony in America. She needed to find out what her true identity was.

3.4. Brooklyn: Socio-cultural background

The narrative took place in the early 1950s. Whilst other western countries were recovering after the Second World War and their economy was developing, Ireland was in the doldrums. Due to economic stagnancy, Ireland was one of the poorest countries in Europe. Therefore, the post-war period in Ireland was characterized by austerity, unemployment, poor economy, near bankruptcy, and political instability (Kinsella). All these factors contributed to massive emigration. More than 400,000 Irish left Ireland between 1951 and 1961, which was approximately one sixth of the total population as recorded in 1951 (Meehan 10). As has already been stated in the

theoretical part, it was in 1959 when the Irish minister Sean Lemass came with policies that led to the economic regeneration of the Irish state and, consequently, emigration declined and Ireland started to blossom.

On the other hand, the United States was the worlds' strongest military power in the 1950s, its economy was booming and because the variety and availability of customer goods expanded along with the economy, people could afford to buy more things than ever before (History.com Staff). Moreover, rates of unemployment were low and wages were high. Therefore, America was the desired destination for most Irish emigrants.

3.5. History

3.5.1. Eilis Lacey, her reason to emigrate and her feelings before the journey

In the theoretical part, the general reasons for leaving Ireland were explained: the poverty, the appalling lack of unemployment, the economic situation and no bright prospects for amelioration which pushed the Irish to emigrate. Eilis Lacey had one major reason for emigration-she could not find a proper job.

Ireland was afflicted by unemployment in the 1950s, jobs opportunities were scarce, and due to the fact that the Lacey family grew up without their father and Eilis's mother had no job either, they were not in a good economic situation. Because of the economic instability in Ireland, more than 400,000 people left in the 1950s, most of them for Britain (Meehan 10). This was the situation of Eilis's three brothers, who were forced to leave Enniscorthy for Birmingham. Eilis was recommended to wait because she might have only got the factory work in England. Moreover, the bigger English cities could not accommodate all the migrants coming from the smaller cities and the countryside, thus the migrants were living in bad conditions and they had an "ordinary work for ordinary money" (Tóibín 24). However, an opportunity to emigrate to America came and Eilis ended up taking the chance. Unlike Britain,

America had a lot to offer. The United States was able to recover from the World War II more quickly than Europe and abounded with economic possibilities, including job opportunities.

‘In the United States,’ he said, there would be plenty of work for someone like you and with good pay.’

[...] ‘In Brooklyn, where my parish is, there would be office work for someone who was hard-working and educated and honest.’

[...] And there’s work for everyone who’s willing to work.’ (Tóibín 23)

Eilis found a permanent position on the shop floor of the large store called Bartocci & Company. She had also plenty of opportunity for promotion and very good prospects. Eilis knew that in Ireland she would have had a little chance of a stable job with satisfactory income, thus she chose to set out on a journey to the unknown, hoping there was a prospect of a better future. However, she had fear of the unknown. She had never thought about the eventuality of living and working in America and as this possibility came unexpectedly, she did not have a chance to mentally prepare for it in advance. She realized that even without her consent “it had somehow been tacitly arranged that she would go to America” (Tóibín 25). She attained the knowledge that her mother and sister Rose were in favour of the idea and it would make no sense to have any objection.

And then it occurred to her that she was already feeling that she would need to remember this room, her sister, this scene, as though from a distance. (Tóibín 25)

On the one hand, she was aware of all the opportunities America was brimming with, and stated that it had “an almost compensating glamour attached to it” (Tóibín 33). On the other hand, she would prefer to stay at home and would be content if all the arrangements which were made were for someone else, not for her. She wanted to be the Eilis who “could wake in this bed every morning and move as the day went on in these familiar streets and come home to the kitchen” (Tóibín 31). Eilis also realized that Rose had to sacrifice her own future in order to help Eilis to leave Ireland for a more prosperous place. It meant that Rose was giving up any real prospect of leaving the house herself and having her own family. Nonetheless, she wished Rose could go to America instead of her.

She wondered if her mother too believed that the wrong sister was leaving [...] She resolved as she went back to her room that she would do everything she could for them by pretending at all times that she was filled with excitement at the great adventure on which she was ready to embark. She would make them believe, if she could, that she was looking forward to America and leaving home for the first time. (Tóibín 32-33)

Furthermore, Eilis had to cope with her feelings alone. She promised herself that not for one moment would she give them the smallest hint of how she felt, and she would keep it from herself if she had to until she was away from them. She knew they were sad about her departure too, but they tried to hide it from her. All three of them tried to hide their feelings and Eilis thought that the only thing she could do to make the situation easier was to smile so her mother and sister would remember her smiling.

It is also interesting to notice that Tóibín chose a girl as the main protagonist of his novel, which affirms the statement provided in the theoretical part, that single women emigrated independently from their families in significant numbers and they dominated the Irish emigration.

3.5.2. Eilis's journey from Ireland to the United States

The ships leaving for America anchored in various larger harbours across Britain. Eilis's ship to New York sailed from Liverpool. Because there was not a direct boat from Enniscorthy, she had to travel to Dublin first. In comparison with the non-transatlantic ships, the transatlantic liner was massive and much grander, whiter and cleaner.

Eilis had a third-class ticket, which was pre-paid by Father Flood. The third-class tickets were reserved for those who travelled at the cheapest rate and these people were placed in the cargo hold. Eilis had to share the berth with another girl, Georgina. The third-class passengers had tiny rooms with a bunk bed, no window, not even an air hole, and they had to share a tiny bathroom with the people from the berth next to them. Georgina described the room as “the smallest room where you couldn't keep a cat” (Tóibín 38). Whilst the people from the first-class had their own lounge, people from the third-class had none. Furthermore, they had a prohibited access to certain

areas and even the areas on deck were reserved for certain classes, as Georgia mentioned that “the first-class passengers get the best view” (Tóibín 40).

The journey itself was, for most migrants, draining. Many Irish people experienced seasickness and Eilis was not an exception. Georgina warned her that “it’s going to be one of those nights, one of the worst” (Tóibín 40). Due to the possibility of storms, it was advisable not to eat during the whole voyage because migrants felt sick afterwards. It was Eilis’s first transatlantic journey and even if she found startling that she sat alone in the dining room, she enjoyed her dinner which consisted of a bowl of oxtail soup and what she thought was boiled mutton in gravy with potatoes and peas. As she was experiencing seasickness, she was sweating, feeling nauseous and admitted that “she has never felt worse” (Tóibín 40).

‘Did you not hear them saying it when we were coming on board? It’s the worst storm in years. It’s always bad, especially down here, but this one is terrible.’
[...] ‘I feel terrible,’ Eilis said.
‘It’s called seasickness, duck, and it turns you green.’
‘Do I look terrible?’
‘Oh, yes, and so does every person on this board.’ (Tóibín 46)

The journey took about a week. After arriving in the piers, the passengers had to pass through Customs and if the immigration officer thought any of the migrants had TB or any other disease, he or she had to go through a medical examination or was put in quarantine. Eilis was explained that sometimes they did not stop people at all, except to look at the papers. And that was exactly the case of Eilis. She arrived in the piers, showed the papers and was free to enter the United States.

3.6. Homesickness

3.6.1. Eilis’s perception of homesickness

Nothing meant anything. (Tóibín 67)

With reference to Eilis Lacey, this chapter aims either to support or to disprove the statements about homesickness mentioned in the theoretical part. In the theoretical

part homesickness was mentioned to be the first psychological and psychophysiological factor of migration. However, it has also been mentioned that homesickness affected every person in a different way, thus it is relevant to compare Eilis's perception of homesickness to her brother's, Jack, who went to England.

[...] she hoped that she would be ready for whatever was going to happen to her, however she was going to feel, when she arrived in Brooklyn. (Tóibín 38)

Firstly, some researchers aver that homesickness arises as a reaction to novelty and unfamiliarity. However, Eilis's perception of homesickness does not support this statement. The first three weeks in Brooklyn Eilis was experiencing the so-called "Honeymoon Stage" (see 2.3.1.) She was enthusiastic and said that "each moment appeared to bring some new sight or sensation or piece of information" (Tóibín 58). She enjoyed the morning air as well as the quietness of the streets. The days were not boring for her and the hours passed easily. The first, as well as the last thoughts of the day were about Brooklyn, about all the things she learnt that day, about all the new sounds and places. In other words, she was excited about the novelty and unfamiliarity. This stage took about four weeks. Secondly, some psychologists claim that straightaway after arriving in the new country, a typical reaction of migrants is that they have ruminative cognitions about home and that they think about home persistently. However, Eilis admitted that when she came to her small room full of sounds after a long day at her job in Brooklyn, the only thing she was thinking about was going over everything new that happened that day, not actually thinking about how she missed her old life.

[...] the day she had just spent [...] she would find herself going through it scene by scene. Even tiny details stayed in her mind. When she deliberately tried to think about something else, or leave her mind blank, events from the day would come quickly back. (Tóibín 58).

Moreover, she had not really thought of home in the first weeks and she admitted that even if she thought of her mother and Rose, she kept out of her mind her life in Enniscorthy because she accepted that it was not her life anymore, she had lost that life and would never have it again. However, after four weeks everything changed. She started experiencing homesickness and was thinking over and over of the same things she left in Ireland.

[...] she tried to seem busy, but she found that she could, if she did not stop herself, move easily into a sort of trance, thinking over and over of the same things, about everything she had lost [...] (Tóibín 69)

Thirdly, it is arguable whether homesickness is a single emotion or a combination of reactions. The professor of psychology and neuroscience Mark Leary clarifies that homesickness is mostly “loneliness combined with a sense of feeling out of place” (Van Brocklin). Eilis felt not only a single emotion, but a couple of them at once. She had a feeling of despondency, sadness, and desperation. Yet, she could not describe what was wrong.

‘I don’t know what it is.’
‘Are you sad?’
‘Yes’
‘All the time?’
‘Yes’
‘Do you wish you were with your family at home?’
‘Yes’
‘Do you have family here?’
‘No’
‘No one?’
‘No one.’ (Tóibín 72)

She was confused and tried to deny and hide her feelings from others. She would do anything to convince other people she was feeling good, was cheerful and was behaving as though it were a normal day at work. Her desperation arose not only from the fact she missed home and knew no one could help her, but also because she could not tell her mother and sister about what she was going through. For that reason, she got a feeling that she was moving away from them. She was aware of the fact that they knew everything about her before but it changed.

They would not find out about this; she would not put it into a letter. And because of this she understood that they would never know her now. Maybe, she thought, they had never known her, any of them, because if they had, then they would have had to realize what this would be like for her. (Tóibín 71)

Fourthly, the theoretical part describes mourning, a psychological state which accompanies homesickness. Eilis’s perception of mourning supports the statement that it is an expectable reaction to a loss, comparable to sadness and as such is finite and one day the migrants overcome it. The new feeling of sadness came to Eilis after a few weeks out of nowhere like a terrible weight. Yet Eilis brought herself to admit that the

sadness came with the letters she got from home and described the feeling as though “an ache in her chest was trying to force tears down her cheeks despite her enormous effort to keep them back” (Tóibín 67). She did not recognise this feeling, although she compared it to the moment her father died and she watched him at the funeral, being aware of the fact she would never be able to talk to him again. The readers are familiarised with Eilis’s feelings as she tried to describe them through similes.

It was as though she had been locked away. (Tóibín 67)

It was like hell, she thought, because she could see no end to it [...] It was all in her mind, it was like the arrival of night if you knew that you would never see anything in daylight again [...] (Tóibín 70)

Eilis got from the first “Honeymoon Stage,” where everything was new and exciting into the second stage, called the “Hostility Stage.” In this stage, migrants become homesick, are anxious about their future and they feel sad. Fifthly, in the theoretical part was said that some psychologists do not distinguish between the terms homesickness and nostalgia. However, in this thesis these two terms have different meanings. The psychologist Jerzak describes nostalgia as “being cut off from oneself” (29). This statement confirms how Eilis was feeling. Thinking about Enniscorthy and the familiar environment, she suddenly got the feeling she was nobody in America, that “she was a ghost in this room, in the streets on the way to work, on the shop floor” (Tóibín 67). In Eilis’s case, “being cut off from herself” meant that she felt empty and “was shut away somewhere and was trapped in a place where there was nothing” (Tóibín 70). When she was experiencing nostalgia, she was idealizing her home in Ireland. She felt that nothing in Brooklyn was part of her. On the contrary, she had a feeling that everything was part of her in Enniscorthy.

Nostalgia, combined with other mental states, can evolve into depression. It is obvious Eilis had so called situational depression that occurs in the aftermath of various stressful life events. Yet, she tried to fight it. Even if she was not sure she would be able to manage another day like this, she kept fighting. She was resigned to the prospect that nothing would change, began to dread every new day because she did not know how she is going to survive it, yet she knew that she must attempt to work out how to get through it.

She would try to put those days behind her. No matter what she dreamed about, no matter how bad she felt, she had no choice, she knew, but to put it all swiftly out of her mind. She would have to get on with her work if it was during the day and go back to sleep if it was during the night. (Tóibín 76)

To compare Eilis and Jack's perception of homesickness is another aim of this chapter. Jack, who already experienced emigrating to a foreign place and admitted that in the first few months, he would have done anything to go back home, warned Eilis that she might find herself feeling homesick.

His saying that at the beginning he would have done anything to go home was strange. He had said nothing about this in his letters. It struck her that he might have told no one [...] and she thought how lonely it that might have been for him (Tóibín 38).

The first crucial difference is that Jack arrived in England and was not experiencing the "Honeymoon Stage" as Eilis was. He found himself straightaway in the "Hostility Stage," where he experienced the feelings of solitude, desperation, and sadness. Therefore, he felt homesick from the first moment he arrived in Birmingham. He could not find his way around since the first day he emigrated to Birmingham. The second crucial difference is that Jack was not alone in England, because his two brothers emigrated with him. For that reason, whenever he felt homesick and was desperate to go home, he could have surrounded himself with his brothers, which made his situation easier.

Maybe, she thought, all three brothers went through the same things and helped each other, sensing the feeling of homesickness when it arose in one of the others. If it happened to her, she realized, she would be alone. (Tóibín 38)

On the other hand, Eilis had no one in New York, no family, no friends. She kept herself in touch with her family only through letters. Still, she did not write them about her feelings because she realised they would not be able to help her anyway. The third difference is that whilst Jack could not find his way around, Eilis knew from the very beginning of her life in Brooklyn what she was doing there. She had a job and accommodation and her life was sorted in that moment. The experience with homesickness came after a couple of weeks. Yet what they shared was their longing for home. They were both desperate to leave their new cities and to return back to Enniscorthy. It is relevant to mention here that they both went through homesickness

and got healed. They both survived the “Hostility Stage” and were ready to enter the “The Humour or Integration Stage” and “The Home Stage.” (see 2.3.1.)

3.7. Healing

3.7.1. Eilis and her adjustment in America

She would have to accept that this was the only life she was going to have, a life spent away from home. (Tóibín 143)

Eilis started to heal after experiencing a period of homesickness. Most migrants were bound to experience a period of grief after leaving their homeland. However, majority of them would gradually recover from it and would eventually adjust in the new environment. There are three crucial factors which helped Eilis to overcome the difficult times and to assimilate.

The first factor was the fact that Miss Bartocci and Father Flood expressed their sympathy with Eilis and tried to comfort her that the sadness would not last. Father Flood assured her that everybody gets it, but it passes. He explained to her that in some cases it passes more quickly than in others, yet he is aware of the fact that there is nothing harder than surviving the worst stage of homesickness. They both did not play down Eilis’s feelings. They were supportive and tried to make it easier for her.

‘There’s a name for it.’ [...]

‘You’re homesick, that’s all.’ [...]

‘Eilis, I hope you don’t mind if I try and enrol you in a night class. [...]

‘The rule is to have someone to talk to and to keep busy.’ (Tóibín 75)

The second factor was that Eilis started to become more familiar with her new home and started to feel more secure and comfortable there. She began to accommodate to her new lifestyle. Apart from her job in the department store, she also started to attend the night class in bookkeeping and preliminary accountancy at Brooklyn College. This activity kept her busy and took her mind off the things she

missed. Moreover, she regularly visited an Irish dance in the parish on Fridays. She established a certain routine and, thanks to it, she built a new life in Brooklyn.

The third factor were the people Eilis met. Apart from living with other five girls, who accompanied her to the parish hall where the Irish dances took place, she was also regularly meeting Father Flood. In the parish hall, Eilis also met her future husband, an Italian plumber Antonio Giuseppe Fiorello, also known as Tony. Eilis admitted that not only the fact that she was busy made her happy, but the meetings with Tony were also of great importance.

She explained to him then that she had been homesick, and that Father Flood had inscribed her on course as a way of making her busy, and how studying in the evening made her feel happy, or as happy as she had been since she had left home.
'Don't I make you feel happy?' He looked at her seriously.
'Yes, you do,' she replied. (Tóibín 136)

Thanks to him, she had a company and instead of sitting home and being sad she was making plans with him. What is more, a pattern developed. Tony waited for her outside the college, he then accompanied her onto the trolley-car and he walked her home. Therefore, Tony played an important role in Eilis's adjustment in Brooklyn. Moreover, had she not known him, she would have possibly stayed in Enniscorthy instead of going back to Brooklyn. Therefore, he played not only a determinate role in Eilis's adjustment in America, but he also played a crucial role in Eilis's final choice of her home.

3.7.2. Eilis's personality development

Throughout the book, Eilis Lacey underwent an immense emotional progress. At the beginning of the book, Eilis, being an Irish girl in Enniscorthy, could have been described as an insecure, timid, yet sensitive character. In comparison with the other characters she was also very passive. Her passivity was most visible when she was looking for a job. Had it not been for her sister Rose, she would have never emigrated to the United States. Whilst Eilis settled for a horrendous one-day job in Mrs Kelly's grocery shop, Rose took an action and ensured Eilis an opportunity to begin a new life in America. What is more Eilis was lacking self-esteem, which can be illustrated on Eilis's attitude towards her appearance. She was too shy to put make up on, being

nervous about her appearance and saying that “she would love to know how to put make-up on properly herself in the way that Rose and Georgina knew” (Tóibín 50).

Brooklyn was a significant turning point for her. Moving to America made a huge contribution to Eilis’s personality development. Eilis gained more self-confidence and her development from a young insecure girl to a confident woman was most visible when she came back to Ireland and realised that years before, she had been worried about herself, about her style, about whether people liked her or not, but now, when she came back from America, she felt “oddly confident” (Tóibín 215). She did not expect to feel in such way, yet she enjoyed it as her insecurities disappeared.

3.7.3. Eilis’s experience of identity conflict

Migrants often found out that after moving to a new country they had so-called “conflicted identity.” These individuals attempted to find out who they actually were. Eilis felt as if she were two people. Thus, she was experiencing an identity conflict. One part of her was the Eilis who “had battled against two cold winters and many hard days in Brooklyn and fallen in love there” (Tóibín 218) and the other part of her was the Eilis who “was her mother’s daughter, the Eilis whom everyone knew, or thought they knew” (Tóibín 218). She was in two minds and confronted with a dilemma what her true identity was.

“The first Eilis” was a young woman who built a new life for herself in Brooklyn. She had a job and a husband she loved. After experiencing a period of homesickness, she came to a stage where Brooklyn felt like home for her. She had good prospects for the future, as she finished her bookkeeping classes at Brooklyn University and would certainly get a job in the office she had dreamed of. As she was married to Tony, they planned a future together. “The second Eilis” was the Eilis who came back to Enniscorthy again. She got offered a job in the local office and a boy Jim started to flirt with her. Moreover, she had her mother there. Otherwise, she was more like a visitor in her old home.

She could not stop herself from wondering [...] what would happen if she were to write to Tony to say that their marriage was a mistake. [...] The best thing to do, she

thought, was to put the whole thing out of her mind, but it was hard now, as the ceremony went on, not to dream about herself being there at the altar and her brothers home for the wedding and her mother knowing that Eilis would be living in a nice house just a few streets from her. (Tóibín 236)

Eilis's dilemma was whether to stay in Enniscorthy or go back to Brooklyn. On the one hand, she admitted she felt strange after coming home, which she did not expect as she had longed to go home for a long period time, but on the other hand, she was postponing her departure back to the United States, which only showed her indecisiveness and insecurity. She enjoyed seeing her friends again, yet she admitted something had changed since the last time she saw them. It was hard for her to make a decision as her mother and friends wanted her to stay in Ireland and marry Jim, yet Tony wrote her letters from America hoping she was coming back to him. Her realization that "the answer was that there was no answer, that nothing she could do would be right" (Tóibín 236) made the situation even more desperate.

However, Eilis realised that she was not the Eilis everyone knew before she set out for a journey to America, she did not longer want to be the Irish girl in Ireland. America had changed her. All the experiences she had gained there had shaped her new identity.

4. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the theme of the Irish dream of a new life in America, further concentrating on history, homesickness and healing of Eilis Lacey, the protagonist in a novel by the Irish author Colm Tóibín- *Brooklyn*. The theoretical part serves as a historical and psychological background for the subsequent analysis in the practical part. It regards *Brooklyn* as a psychological novel. In the centre of the narrative is the journey of a young girl and the choices she has to make, rather than the history of the Irish migration. Albeit Brooklyn is not seen as a historical novel in this thesis, Tóibín follows the historical reality in all aspects, which makes the story plausible and not just superficially appealing. Moreover, it is indicative of a perspicacious mind.

The aim of this thesis was to address the question if it is possible to feel completely at home in another country. The novel *Brooklyn* did not produce a definitive answer. Due to its inconclusive ending, it is necessary to leave the question open, as the book offers two interpretations. The first interpretation is that deep down in her heart, Eilis sensed that she did not belong to Ireland anymore, thus she could not feel at home in the formerly familiar environment as she realised she pursued all her dreams in America and what is more, she even pieced together a new identity there. Based on this interpretation, the answer would be that Eilis did really feel completely at home in another country. The second interpretation is she knew that she would never be able to feel at home in the United States, no matter what she had accomplished there. She has never dreamed of leaving Enniscorthy. Moreover, there was a close bond between her and her mother. Yet, she had obligations in Brooklyn, namely marital obligations and work obligations. Since she was a virtuous person, the reason she returned back to Brooklyn was that her moral responsibilities prevailed over her feelings.

However, what the book does offer is a deep insight into the psychology of the main protagonist. All four parts depict Eilis's emotions, thus there is no need for any conjectures. Eilis herself is a character who declassifies her feelings, which means that it is possible to gain an insight into her own visions. It was only at the end of the book

where Tóibín did not permit the readers access to Eilis's thoughts. And for that reason, the ending is ambiguous and fails to uncover Eilis's pure intent behind her actions.

Interestingly, unlike the book, the ending of the Oscar-nominated film *Brooklyn* does answer the question if Eilis found home in America. Tóibín collaborated with the directors, thus the ending was probably in compliance with his own opinions. Yet the film leaves no space for doubt because Eilis herself provides the answer: Yes, it is possible to find home in America and she did exactly that.

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