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## Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Transnational Irish-Language Writing

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In the latest edition of *The Irish Review* on memoir, memory, and migration, editors Tina O'Toole and Jason King draw attention to a new dynamic in Irish Studies and to a broadening of the critical discourse particularly in the area of migration and diaspora studies:

In the past twenty years a lively dynamic has emerged in Irish Studies that has broadened critical discourse beyond the somewhat static literary-historical categories of the past. As scholars have drawn on critical perspectives from postcolonial, feminist and queer theory, multidisciplinary approaches have been forged to create new understandings of Irish culture. This dynamic has been particularly evident in the area of migration and diaspora studies. At the same time, the fixed points on the map of Irish emigration have been unsettled in the context of the contemporary global environment and by what Diane Negra calls “transnationalized Irishness.”<sup>[1]</sup>[\[link: # edn1\]](#) This troubling of the canon and of the old certainties enables us to interrogate the connections and potential incompatibilities between received forms of national identity on the island and to locate these within a more complex nexus of Irish, European and translocational identities.<sup>[2]</sup>[\[link: # edn2\]](#)

This paper will examine how contemporary transnational Irish-language writing can be situated within this “more complex nexus,” and it will review the position of such writing within a multidisciplinary discourse on translocation. Transnational Irish-language writing may be defined as writing produced by authors of Irish birth or extraction who are not based on the island of Ireland, and Irish-language writing by authors of non-Irish birth or extraction living in Ireland or elsewhere. This is neither emigration writing nor travel writing. Rather it is a collection of diverse literary works

in a variety of genres. In these works we see the linguistic creativity of authors who are geographically cut off from Irish-language communities, or who are newcomers to such communities, or who are members of English-speaking Irish emigrant communities. The first half of this paper will present biographical sketches of authors and works from the 1990s onwards, while the second half will relate the cultural position and linguistic identities of these authors to the critical discourse on transnationality alluded to by O'Toole and King above.

## Transnational Irish-Language Writing

### 1.1 'Irish' abroad

Dublin-born writer and biologist Tomás Mac Síomóin (1938 – ) has been living in Barcelona since 1997. He has published over a dozen original works in Irish in this period, as well as translations from Spanish and Catalan. His left-wing politics and non-realist literary taste can be discerned in his translations of the work of Nicaraguan poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal, *Na Cathracha Cailte: Rogha dánta* (2004), and of the acclaimed novel *Pedro Páramo* (2008) by Mexican author Juan Rulfo.<sup>[3]</sup><sup>[link: # edn3]</sup> Transnational themes abound in his work, which also provides a relentless critique of contemporary Ireland as focus of a wider commentary on the cultural effects of globalization. Typical of his approach is the satirical novel *An Tionscadal* (2007), which is set in a fictional village in Catalonia, but features a central Irish character who is working for an international corporation.<sup>[4]</sup><sup>[link: # edn4]</sup>

Derry-born Pádraig Ó Siadhail (1968 – ) is one of the most prolific contemporary prose writers in Irish, despite the fact that he has been living in Halifax, Nova Scotia, since 1987. In this period, he has published ten major works in Irish, including the novel *Peaca an tSinsir* (1996), a murder mystery located in Canada but with a historical Irish dimension.<sup>[5]</sup><sup>[link: # edn5]</sup> He wrote *An Béaslaíoch* (2007), a critical biography of Liverpool-born Piaras Béaslaí, Percy Beazley, who became an Irish speaker, an Irish nationalist and creative writer and critic.<sup>[6]</sup><sup>[link: # edn6]</sup> Ó Siadhail researched the work of American folklorist of Irish extraction James Mooney.<sup>[7]</sup><sup>[link: # edn7]</sup> He published a collection of short stories, *Seacht gCineál Meisce agus Finscéalta Eile* (2001), that include stories based on Irish history, literature, and

folklore.<sup>[8]</sup><sup>[link: # edn8]</sup> He recently published a historical novel, *Beirt Bhan Mhisniúla* (2011), based on the early twentieth-century transnational and transatlantic political and cultural networks, and in particular on the relationship between the writer Pádraic Ó Conaire and Canadian woman of Irish descent Kathleen Hughes.<sup>[9]</sup><sup>[link: # edn9]</sup> Ó Siadhail also published a collection of essays on Canadian themes, both historical and contemporary, entitled *Idir Dhá Thír: Sceitsí ó Cheanada* (2005).<sup>[10]</sup><sup>[link: # edn10]</sup> Some of Ó Siadhail's work, most notably the Canadian novel *Peaca an tSinsir* and some of the articles in *Idir Dhá Thír*, sound a satirical note, but unlike the work of Mac Síomóin, the cultural criticism is directed at the host country rather than the country of origin, reflecting Ó Siadhail's personal investment in his immediate environment, but also perhaps his emotional attachment to Ireland, an attachment absent from Mac Síomóin's latest work.

Dublin-born historian and poet Seán Hutton (1940 – ) has been living in England since 1969, where he has worked as a teacher and as a lecturer in Irish Studies. He was Executive Director of the British Association for Irish Studies (1988 – 1992), and he has worked for or been active in various Irish emigrant and Irish Studies associations, including the Federation of Irish Societies and the Irish Texts Society. He has published five collections of poetry, all marked by a strong commitment to human rights. The poems move between Ireland and England, while also addressing major world conflicts and power struggles. His latest collection *Sceach sa Bhearna* (2011), includes poems that address post-9/11 war-mongering as well as Irish clerical abuse scandals.<sup>[11]</sup><sup>[link: # edn11]</sup>

Bantry-born Derry O'Sullivan (1940 – ) has been living in Paris since 1969, apart from a two-year period (1977-8) that he spent in Stockholm. Having studied Philosophy and Latin, as well as Greek and Irish, he was ordained a priest but later left the priesthood and has been working as a teacher in various institutes of higher education, including the Sorbonne and *Institut Catholique de Paris*. He has published four collections of poetry in Irish, where he moves between Ireland (particularly his native Bantry) and Paris, as well as a series of original poems in French, *En mal de fleurs*, published in the *Québécois* poetry journal *Lèvres Urbaines*.<sup>[12]</sup><sup>[link: # edn12]</sup> His third collection, *An Lá go dTáinig Siad* (2005), is based on the story of a Jewish family evicted during the war from the Parisian apartment in which the poet was then

living.<sup>[13]</sup> [\[link: # edn13\]](#) Many of the poems in his latest collection, “*An Bhfuil Cead Agam Dul Amach, Más é do Thoil é?*” (2009), conjure up a Parisian streetscape in which the Irish-speaking narrator is perfectly at home.<sup>[14]</sup> [\[link: # edn14\]](#)

These four writers are established and critically acclaimed authors, regularly winning Oireachtas prizes and participating in Irish-language literary events in Ireland.<sup>[15]</sup>

[\[link: # edn15\]](#) Less well-known authors have emerged from among the Irish diaspora in recent years, including Dublin-born Irish American Seán O’Conner, who has published two detective novels and a collection of stories, and the third-generation Irish American Séamas Ó Neachtain, who has published several poetry collections and a historical novel, *Cogadh Dearg* (2008).<sup>[16]</sup> [\[link: # edn16\]](#) In 2009, Ó Neachtain, who learned Irish in classes in Long Island, New York, established the quarterly magazine *An Gael* as the International Irish-language periodical of *Cumann Carad na Gaeilge* (the Philo-Celtic Society). Named after the nineteenth-century periodical *An Gaodhal*, established by the original Philo-Celtic Society of New York, *An Gael* provides a literary platform for Irish-language speakers world-wide.<sup>[17]</sup> [\[link: # edn17\]](#)

Writing in Irish among the Irish diaspora has also been encouraged by the online monthly *Beo!* ([www.beo.ie](http://www.beo.ie) [\[link: http://www.beo.ie/\]](#)), established in 2001 by the educational organization Oideas Gael to serve Irish-language speakers and learners worldwide. This journal has created an influential virtual community and, in its “An Ghaeilge i gCéin” section, features regular profiles of individuals from diverse national and cultural backgrounds who have become proficient users of Irish.<sup>[18]</sup> [\[link: # edn18\]](#)

The importance of Irish-language blogs, websites, online radio, and television services as links with living language communities is regularly acknowledged in these profiles, which supports Brian Ó Conchubhair’s conclusion that the “Irish-language communication network, rather than a local organic community, is now a global phenomenon which is no longer restricted to Irish-based and Irish-born.”<sup>[19]</sup> [\[link: # edn19\]](#)

## 1.2 ‘Non-Irish’ writers

Dutch-born Alex Hijmans (1975 – ) moved to Galway in 1995 to study Irish as part of his degree in Celtic Studies in the University of Utrecht. On graduating, he undertook a course in Communications in Irish at the National University of Ireland, Galway, by

which time he was actively involved in a vibrant, young Irish-speaking community in Galway. He worked as an Irish-language journalist for ten years with the newspaper *Foinse*, Raidió na Gaeltachta, RTÉ, and TG4. A personal relationship brought him to Brazil in 2007 where he settled in Salvador in the province of Bahia. From Brazil he has been working as a freelance journalist serving Dutch and Irish-language media, and he has published three volumes in Irish: an autobiographical account of his life in a Salvador suburb, *Favela* (2009), a novel based on a fictional coffee shop in Galway, *Aiséirí* (2011), and a collection of short stories, *Gonta* (2012).<sup>[20]</sup>[\[link: # edn20\]](#) His work displays what Homi Bhabha has termed “vernacular cosmopolitanism” in its expression of solidarity and affiliation with communities and individuals whose lives are governed by exploitative power relations.<sup>[21]</sup>[\[link: # edn21\]](#) Intercultural relationships are seen as positive and liberating, and, as an overtly gay writer, Hijmans deals with issues of sexual orientation and gender justice in all three publications.

Andreas Vogel was born in 1970 and grew up in Bochum in Germany. Of mixed German and Polish background, he came to live in Ireland in 1996 and is working as a Technological Manager with the educational organization Muintearas in Connemara. He began publishing poems in Irish in 2002, and published his first collection *chomh gar ’gus is féidir (nicht näher)* in 2009, which also contains a number of untranslated poems in German.<sup>[22]</sup>[\[link: # edn22\]](#) His poetry in Irish is written in a style that shows a mastery of local idiom while eschewing any conscious engagement with “Irishness” or Irish national identity. Dublin is not worth bothering about, and, as a poem entitled “*So what*” indicates, “*what would I want an Irish accent for*” because “*tá mo dhóthain dúchais a’m | ’s a choinneodh triúr ag imeacht [...] mo dhúchas soghluaiste umam ’nós brat draíochta | is mise mé féin i dTír an Fhia.*” (I have enough heritage | to keep three people going [...] my mobile heritage covering me like a magic cloak | and I myself in Tír an Fhia’.)<sup>[23]</sup>[\[link: # edn23\]](#) The collection includes poems about miners, reminding one of the industrial tradition of his native Ruhr valley, while a series of poems based on Polish streets reflect the poet’s mixed cultural and linguistic ancestry. Though his work has received very little critical attention to date, poems by him were included in the anthology *Landing Places: Immigrant Poets in Ireland* (2010), edited by Eva Bourke and Borbála Faragó.<sup>[24]</sup>[\[link: # edn24\]](#)

Panu Petteri Höglund is a Finnish translator and polyglot, who published his first book in Irish, *Sciorthocail*, in 2009.<sup>[25]</sup><sup>[link: # edn25]</sup> Having learnt Irish from literary and online sources, and with very little direct contact with Ireland or Irish speakers, he began writing an Irish-language blog in 2005 and contributes regularly to *An Gael*. In 2009, Höglund published an article on the sociolinguistics of Irish, which is interesting in its outright rejection of what he calls the “dead language discourse” surrounding Irish: “we should forget about the dead language discourse and see Irish, in principle, as just another minority language—not more ‘dead’ than most of them, although due to its place in society an interesting exception from most of them.”<sup>[26]</sup><sup>[link: # edn26]</sup> This belief that Irish is no more dead than other languages may also motivate other individuals of a non-Irish background to engage with it less problematically than do many native Irish people. Höglund is exceptional due to his lack of identification with a particular Irish-language community. Interestingly, his book was not published by an Irish-language publishing house, but by a publisher who specializes in producing translations of classics into minoritized and constructed languages such as Esperanto and Volapük.

One could argue that each of these writers could be accounted for individually and that there is nothing particularly remarkable about an Irish-language writer retiring to Catalonia and continuing to write in Irish, or an Irish-language academic who is also a creative writer continuing to ply his craft in Canada. Even the writers of a non-Irish background will all have some personal story to tell that will explain their reasons for acquiring Irish and writing in Irish. What I wish to argue, however, is that, taken together, this body of texts—over a hundred of which were published since 1990—is worthy of examination as an example of transnational writing in an endangered, minoritized language: writing that is counter-cultural and yet is *not* the product of a cohesive language or cultural revival movement, writing that is linked to migration, but that is no longer defined by themes of displacement.

## Critical Perspectives

### 2.1 Literary history

One possible place to situate contemporary transnational literature in Irish is in the context of literary history and in a general acknowledgement of literary precedent. It is no coincidence that Pádraig Ó Siadhail prefaces his essay on the position of an Irish-language writer in Canada, “Idir dhá thír: Idir dhá thine Bhealtaine,” with a reference to seventeenth-century Pádraigín Haicéad’s poem of exile, “Isan bhFrainc im dhúscadh dhamh | In Éirinn Chuinn im chodladh,” thus acknowledging the link between his own position and that of the seventeenth-century emigrés to the Irish Colleges of continental Europe.<sup>[27]</sup><sup>[link: # edn27]</sup> Despite the literary activities of a diasporic elite in the seventeenth century and the development of transnational flows and networks of communication, Irish emigration did not sustain a diasporic literature in the vernacular, and publishing in Irish among the diaspora was minimal, even compared to the experience of other Celtic languages.<sup>[28]</sup><sup>[link: # edn28]</sup> Irish-speaking emigrants did, in more recent times, produce a steady stream of emigration narratives reflecting the authors’ experiences of displacement and acculturation, or, more commonly, marginalization and alienation.<sup>[29]</sup><sup>[link: # edn29]</sup> Typical examples are the mining songs composed by West Kerry-born laborers in Butte, Montana, at the turn of the twentieth century, or Pádraic Ó Conaire’s acclaimed novel of urban alienation *Deoraidheacht* (1910), which was written and set in London.<sup>[30]</sup><sup>[link: # edn30]</sup> The target audience for such works was particular emigrant communities (as in the case of the Butte miners) or readers of Irish in Ireland (as in the case of Ó Conaire’s novel). Nineteenth-century diasporic publication projects that were related to the Irish-language movement and were produced for an Irish emigrant audience—such as the original *An Gaodhal*—tended to be bilingual, or to take the form of Irish-language columns in English-language periodicals, where songs and folk material brought over by the emigrants predominated over newly composed material.<sup>[31]</sup><sup>[link: # edn31]</sup>

The contemporary experience has, with regard to a particular group of authors, been different, as attested by the manner in which temporary migration of Irish-language writers has resulted in literary works with a marked transnational dimension.

Examples include Alan Titley, who lived in Nigeria in the 1960s and who has written two novels with African subject matter, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, who produced her first major poem sequence while living in Turkey in the 1970s, and Louis de Paor, who wrote and published two original collections as well as locally publishing two dual-language collections while living in Australia between 1987 and 1996. Likewise, poets

Máire Mhac an tSaoi and Bidy Jenkinson also produced poems inspired by their sojourns abroad, while the work of a younger generation of writers is indicative of a conscious cosmopolitan mindset, where both traveling to and living in other countries are seen to be positive and enriching cultural experiences. This is particularly true of the poets involved in the network *Scríbhneoirí Úra na Gaeilge* (established on the model of a similar organization for emerging writers in Catalonia), for whom strong Irish-language identities are seen as compatible with a more fluid sense of nomadic cultural identity. [\[32\]](#) [\[link: # edn32\]](#)

In relation to authors of non-Irish birth or background writing in Irish, again one can find historical precedents, going back to the Anglo-Norman period and the work of plurilingual authors of settler stock such as Gearóid Iarla, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Desmond, or the Gaelicized poet-priests and scholars of Norman ancestry such as seventeenth-century historian Seathrún Céitinn. The post-Revival period produced interesting examples of English-born writers and cultural activists, such as the writer and revolutionary Piaras Béaslaí, mentioned above, and his co-Liverpudlian, the journalist and translator Stiofán Mac Enna. While both Béaslaí and Mac Enna were of Irish ancestry, the case of London-born actor, playwright and co-founder of the Gate Theatre, Alfred Willmore, alias Mícheál Mac Liammóir, is a particularly striking example of the kind of identity construction possible within creative literary circles in early twentieth-century England. For Mac Liammóir, identification with the Irish language led to the production of poems, plays, travel books and works of literary and theater criticism in Irish, and was part of a larger commitment to an international and intercultural artistic project.

As we move toward the transnational dimension in contemporary Irish-language literary writing, different contexts for the development of hybrid cultural and linguistic identities need to be acknowledged. While recognizing the significance of actual migration narratives in the history of post-Revival literature in Irish, we should now consider how recent developments reflect an interplay from the 1990s onwards between creative writing and non-literary discourses.

## **2.2 Irish literary studies and “diaspora discourse”**

Migration has long been a major research area within historical studies in Ireland, but in recent years historians of migration have come to give greater attention to the sociological and psychological complexities of Irish migration and subsequent diasporic relations. This move has been supported by public acknowledgement of the Irish diaspora by presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese, by an increased public awareness of the role of the Irish abroad, and in recent years, by a raising of consciousness associated with much higher rates of immigration. While issues of class, gender, and religion have been given greater prominence within academic research on migration, the most dramatic discursive move has been what Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, in an important recent survey of the field, describe as the move from “Irish abroad to Irish diaspora.”<sup>[33]</sup>[\[link: # edn33\]](#) Citing the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 as a crucial moment for a re-articulation of Irish political identity in a less territorially based notion of national and cultural identity, they see it in terms of the Bhabha-ian notion of a diasporic “third space”: “Underpinning this bold political development is the notion of a diasporic ‘third space’ in which multiple identities can be sustained.”<sup>[34]</sup>[\[link: # edn34\]](#) The advantage of a “diasporic” perspective in migration studies is, according to Fitzgerald and Lambkin, that it “offers a way of transcending fixation on the nation-state as the primary unit of historical analysis.”<sup>[35]</sup>[\[link: # edn35\]](#)

This reference to postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha in a survey by professional historians undertaking the curation and dissemination, as well as the practice, of migration research in Ireland is indicative of a more general cross-disciplinary dissemination of certain key explanatory concepts. Cultural hybridity, diasporic identities, identity as construct, multiple and negotiable nomadic identities—these have all entered the Irish Studies discourse through the work of influential critics and theorists such as Bhabha, as well as Stuart Hall, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti. In the same year that Bhabha published his seminal *The Location of Culture*, anthropologist James Clifford claimed that “For better or worse, diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated. It is loose in the world, for reasons having to do with decolonization, increased immigration, global communications, and transport—a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and traveling within and across nations.”<sup>[36]</sup>[\[link: # edn36\]](#) Another reason is the creation of new interdisciplinary spaces such as the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, established in the University of Toronto in 1991. The 1990s was certainly the

decade when diaspora discourse entered Irish Studies, with the publication of Donald Akenson's influential monograph *The Irish Diaspora: a Primer* (1993).<sup>[37]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn37]</sup> As Dianne Hall and Elizabeth Malcolm note in their historiographical account of this development, "The word 'diaspora' basically signifies a holistic approach: an attempt to offer a large scale and comparative account of Irish migration, encompassing detailed local studies but using them to inform a much bigger transnational and multi-generational picture."<sup>[38]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn38]</sup>

There is evidence that academic interest in migration and transnationalism had a direct effect on literary criticism as the work of creative writers was drawn into a new interdisciplinary discursive field. Creative writing was the main focus in Charles Fanning's edited volume *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (2000).<sup>[39]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn39]</sup> In the same year, the second edition of his path-breaking *The Irish Voice in America* (first published in 1990) included a new chapter on Irish-American writing of the 1990s (tellingly entitled "Liberating Doubleness in the Nineties"), in which President Mary Robinson's 1995 "Cherishing the Irish Diaspora" speech is invoked to account for a new cultural confidence among Irish Americans and the Irish in America.<sup>[40]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn40]</sup> The discipline of geography contributed the concept of "diasporic space" through Avtar Brah's 1996 publication *Cartographies of Diaspora*, and Brah has been widely cited within Irish Studies, both by sociologists and literary critics.<sup>[41]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn41]</sup> The relationship between poetry and the diaspora was addressed in special features in both *Poetry Ireland Review* and the more recently established poetry journal *Metre*, where Justin Quinn claimed that "the time has come to take account of the diaspora as an integral part of Irish writing."<sup>[42]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn42]</sup> The establishment by Patrick O'Sullivan of the online forum [irishdiaspora.net](http://www.irishdiaspora.net)<sup>[link: http://www.irishdiaspora.net/]</sup> in 1997 was an important development following the path-breaking *The Irish World Wide* series (1992 – 1997), edited by O'Sullivan, a series which included a volume entitled *The Creative Migrant* (1994), devoted to literature and cultural production among the Irish emigrant community.<sup>[43]</sup><sup>[link: #\_edn43]</sup> Writing in 2003 on the subject of "Developing Irish Diaspora Studies," O'Sullivan stated quite prosaically: "No one academic discipline is going to tell us everything we want to know about the Irish Diaspora. The study of migration, emigration, immigration, population movements, flight, scattering, networks, transnational communities, diaspora—this study demands an interdisciplinary

approach.”<sup>[44]</sup><sup>[link: # edn44]</sup> *The Irish Journal of Sociology* devoted its 2002 volume to “Sociological perspectives on the Irish diaspora” with contributions from Breda Gray, Mary Hickman and others, while in the same year *The Irish Journal of Psychology* published a special edition on The Irish Diaspora where Piaras Mac Éinrí and Liam Lambkin argued for a new research agenda in Irish migration studies which would incorporate immigration as well as Irish out-migration.<sup>[45]</sup><sup>[link: # edn45]</sup>

This more inclusive agenda is apparent with the establishment in 2006 in Ireland of the online journal *Translocations* where new conceptual tools are being developed in a broad trans-disciplinary field that includes communication, media, and translation studies. The concept of translocation itself, for example, is used in place of the more negatively toned “dislocation” to account for what are seen as more fluid transnational and translational processes associated with modern and contemporary migration. An increasingly international Irish Studies community has opened up new research fields in migration and diaspora studies, and Irish literary studies have been diversified and internationalized through the work of organizations such as the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) and the multidisciplinary nature of journals such as the *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* and the *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*. As Irish-language studies also becomes increasingly internationalized, increased interaction between Irish-language writers and an international community of readers can be anticipated.<sup>[46]</sup><sup>[link: # edn46]</sup> There is evidence that this is already the case when one considers international participation in the online book club Clubleabhar.com, the worldwide readership of *Beo!*, and the international sales of Irish-language e-books. <sup>[47]</sup><sup>[link: # edn47]</sup> Such developments should not be celebrated naively as part of the global dispersal of Irish cultural products associated with the concept of diaspora. Rather, it seems to me that they raise interesting cultural and linguistic questions that have, strangely, been avoided in much Irish migration research both empirical and theoretical.

## Language and Linguistic Studies

Issues of language cannot be avoided in migration studies, yet questions relating to minority ethnic or regional languages—or minoritized national languages such as Irish—tend to be ignored or under-researched. A comprehensive history of the Irish

language and the diaspora has yet to be written, though studies focusing on particular countries, regions, periods, and individuals do give an insight both into the dominant processes of assimilation and language shift and into the efforts made to encourage migrants to retain or reclaim aspects of their ancestral culture.[\[48\]](#)[\[link: # edn48\]](#) This is where the critical perspective of applied linguistics and research on multilingualism in minority-language contexts can contribute to the discourse, particularly in providing an insight into questions of motivation and cultural affiliation. A consideration of Irish-language writing in the diaspora, or Irish-language writing by immigrants to Ireland, must be informed by research in these areas.

Where Irish-born writers are concerned, motivation for writing in Irish while living abroad is related to the individual authors' experiences of language acquisition at home, though the work they have produced abroad is inflected by their personal relocation narrative and their position within the host community. Where second-generation and non-Irish authors are concerned, however, the situation is more complex. Despite the prevalence of the notion of fluid and negotiable identity, one may still quite rightly ask why anyone would choose to become a member of a minoritized language community, particularly when it is clear that the dominant linguistic process associated with migration is one of assimilation in the direction of the more dominant language locally and globally? Why would a non-Irish creative writer choose the minoritized subject position? The work of applied linguist and language pedagogy expert Jim Cummins is particularly useful here. Though the focus of his work is on language acquisition in bilingual and multilingual school contexts, notions such as "mobilisation of identity," the development of what he calls "identities of competence," and the importance in language learning of "showcasing identity" through creative activity, could have wider application, particularly in the context of adult acquisition of heritage languages in the diaspora.[\[49\]](#)[\[link: # edn49\]](#)

With respect to the non-Irish writers, the research carried out by sociolinguist Justin McCubbin (2011) on Irish-speaking immigrants in Ireland is ground-breaking in its insights.[\[50\]](#)[\[link: # edn50\]](#) This work explores the hybrid identities of individuals for whom belonging to, participating in and identifying with an Irish-speaking community does not imply a sense of emerging Irish *national* identity. Irish, for the individuals in his study, is seen as a living and functioning language, facilitating integration at a local and community level. Its importance is in its use value, as the language of work, of

personal relationship and of creativity. The “mobilization of identity” associated with their acquisition and subsequent use of the language is related to this use value and not to the national symbolic value more common among the native Irish population. In examining the transnational dimension of contemporary Irish-language writing, it may be useful to explore the importance of this writing in developing “identities of competence” in writers of non-Irish birth or background and in sustaining such identities amongst the diaspora. In both contexts, writing may serve as a showcasing of identity where new creative energies are unleashed and, in the process, new questions are raised about the relationship between language, literature and identity.

## Conclusion

The existence of a substantial body of transnational writing in Irish forces us to pose new questions about the relationship between language, literature, and identity. While certain individual texts could be looked upon as freak artifacts on the margins of the dominant structures of global cultural production, the sustained efforts of particular writers and the high quality of their work calls for a critical examination that will take into account the importance of literary precedent, the effect of diaspora discourse on writers themselves, and the possibilities for new kinds of cross-cultural communication and dissemination within transnational networks and creative multilingual communities.

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1. Diana Negra, *The Irish in Us? Performativity and Popular Culture* (London and Durham: Duke University, 2006), 1.
  2. Tina O'Toole and Jason King, “Introduction,” in *The Irish Review: Memoir, Memory and Migration in Irish Culture* 44 (Spring 2012): 1.
  3. Tomás Mac Síomóin, trans. *Na Cathracha Caillte: Rogha dánta*, by Ernesto Cardenal, 2004. (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2004); Mac Síomóin, trans. *Pedro Páramo*, by Juan Rulfo (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2008).
  4. Tomás Mac Síomóin, *An Tionscadal* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2007).

5. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, *Peaca an tSinsir* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1996).
6. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, *An Béaslaíoch: beatha agus saothar Phiarais Béaslaí (1881-1965)* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2007).
7. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, “‘The Indian Man’ and the Irishman: James Mooney and Irish Folklore,” *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* 14, no. 2 (Samhradh / Summer 2010): 17-42.
8. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, *Seacht gCineál Meisce agus Finscéalta Eile* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2001).
9. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, *Beirt Bhan Mhisniúla* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2011).
10. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, “Idir dhá Thír: Idir dhá Thine Bhealtaine” in *Idir Dhá Thír: Sceitsí ó Cheanada* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 2005), 53-8.
11. Seán Hutton, *Sceach sa Bhearna* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2011).
12. Derry O’Sullivan, “En mal de fleurs,” *Lèvres Urbaines* 30 (1998): 5-24.
13. Derry O’Sullivan, *An Lá go dTáinig Siad* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2005).
14. Derry O’Sullivan, “An Bhfuil Cead Agam Dul Amach, Más é do Thoil é?” (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2009).
15. The Oireachtas is an annual cultural festival organized by *Conradh na Gaeilge* (the Gaelic League) which includes literary competitions in all the main genres. Receipt of a major Oireachtas prize, particularly in the areas of poetry and fiction, is an important mark of recognition for Irish-language writers.
16. Séamas Ó Neachtain, *Cogadh Dearg* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2008).
17. Séamas Ó Neachtain, “An Gael: an iris nua is sine ar domhan,” *Comhar* (Meán Fómhair 2010), 11-12. For *An Gaodhal*, see Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin, *Mícheál Ó Lócháin agus An Gaodhal* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar, 1990).
18. See the Cartlann link on the *Beo!* homepage at [www.beo.ie](http://www.beo.ie/) [link: <http://www.beo.ie/>].

19. Brian Ó Conchubhair, “The Global Diaspora and the ‘New’ Irish (Language),” in *A New View of the Irish Language*, ed. Caoilfhionn Nic Pháidín and Seán Ó Cearnaigh (Dublin: Cois Life, 2008), 238.
20. Alex Hijmans, *Favela: Ar thóir an tsonais i mbruachbhaile bocht* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2009); Hijmans, *Aiséirí* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2011); Hijmans, *Gonta* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2012).
21. Homi K. Bhabha, preface to *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), ix-xxv.
22. Andreas Vogel, *chomh gar ’gus is féidir (nicht näher)* (Indreabhán: Coiscéim, 2009).
23. Ibid., 25.
24. Eva Bourke and Borbála Faragó, eds., *Landing Places: Immigrant Poets in Ireland* (Dublin: Dedalus Press, 2010).
25. Panu Petteri Höglund, *Sciornfhocail* (Cathair na Mart: Evertype, 2009).
26. Panu Petteri Höglund, “How’s dear old Irish and where does it stand? Stepping Stones into a Sociolinguistics of the Irish Language,” [gaeilgepanu.blogs.ie/2009/07/04my-old-article-about-Irish-sociolinguistics](http://www.gaeilgepanu.blogs.ie/2009/07/04my-old-article-about-Irish-sociolinguistics) [link: <http://www.gaeilgepanu.blogs.ie/2009/07/04my-old-article-about-Irish-sociolinguistics>] [consulted 6 May 2012]. Alternative link: <http://www.panunet.net/socioling1.html> [link: <http://www.panunet.net/socioling1.html>].
27. Pádraig Ó Siadhail, “Idir dhá Thír: Idir dhá Thine Bhealtaine” in *Idir Dhá Thír: Sceitsí ó Cheanada* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 2005), 53.
28. See the essays in Tracy Ní Mhaonaigh and Tadhg Ó Dúshláine, eds., *Léachtaí Cholm Cille 38 Éire agus an Eoraip sa 17ú hAois* (Maigh Nuad : An Sagart, 2008); Caoimhín Breatnach, Pádraig A. Breatnach and Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *Léann lámhscríbhinní Lobháin / The Louvain manuscript heritage*, eds., (Dublin: Éigse Publications, 2007); Jeffrey L. Kallen “Irish as an American Ethnic Language,” in *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic and Applied Linguistic Survey*, ed. Thomas H. Ihde (Westport/London: Bergin & Garvey, 1994),

33-35; and Niall Ó Ciosáin, “Old languages in a new country: publishing and reading in the Celtic languages in nineteenth-century Australia,” *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies* 11 (2011): 58-72.

29. See, for example, Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha and Máirín Nic Eoin, eds., *Ar an gCoigríoch: Díolaim Litríochta ar Scéal na hImirce* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2008); and Máirín Nic Eoin, “Idir Dhá Shaol’: An Díláithriú Cultúir agus Téama na Deoraíochta,” in *Trén bhFearann Breac: An Díláithriú Cultúir agus Nualitríocht na Gaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2005), 122-68.

30. Pádraic Ó Conaire, *Deoraidheacht* (Baile Átha Cliath: Connradh na Gaedhilge, 1910). For West Kerry-born laborers’ mining songs, see Seán Ó Dubhda, *Duanaire Duibhneach* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1933), 127-36.

31. Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin, *Fíníní Mheiriceá agus an Ghaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2008).

32. Ríona Nic Congáil, “Eagarfhocal,” *Comhar: Eagrán na Scríbhneoirí Úra* (Deireadh Fómhair 2009), 2.

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34. Fitzgerald and Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History*, 279. For the original, see Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 36-39.

35. Fitzgerald and Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History*, 281.

36. James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no.3 (August 1994): 306.

37. Donald Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast, 1993).

38. Dianne Hall and Elizabeth Malcolm, "Diaspora, Gender and the Irish," *The Australasian Journal of Irish Studies* 8 (2008/2009), 8.
39. Charles Fanning, ed., *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000).
40. Charles Fanning, 2000. *The Irish Voice in America: 250 Years of Irish-American Fiction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 2000), 370.
41. Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996). For sociologists citing Brah, see, for example, Mary Hickman, "Diaspora Space and National (Re)Formations," in "New Approaches to Irish Migration," ed. Piaras Mac Éinrí and Tina O'Toole, special issue, *Éire-Ireland* 47, no. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 19-44. For literary critics, see, for example, Anthony Murray, *London Irish Fictions: Narrative, Diaspora and Identity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).
42. Justin Quinn, "Irish Poetry and the Diaspora" *Metre* (Autumn 1997), 7; and Moya Cannon, ed., "Migration and Emigration," special issue, *Poetry Ireland Review* 46 (Summer 1995).
43. Patrick O'Sullivan, *The Creative Migrant* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994).
44. Patrick O'Sullivan, "Developing Irish Diaspora Studies: A Personal View," *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* 7, no.1 (Spring 2003), 131. While one may acknowledge the political concerns expressed by David Lloyd in his thought-provoking essay in this issue of *Breac*, the evidence would suggest that the application of diaspora discourse within Irish Studies has coincided with a considerable broadening and enriching of the theoretical base of Irish migration research.
45. See, respectively, Breda Gray, "The Irish Diaspora: Globalised Belonging(s)," *The Irish Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 2 (2002), 113-44; Mary Hickman, "'Locating' the Irish Diaspora," *The Irish Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 2 (2002), 8-26; and Piaras Mac Éinrí and Liam Lambkin, "Whose diaspora? Whose migration? Whose identity?"

Some current issues in Irish migration studies,” in “The Irish Diaspora,” ed. Micheál D. Roe and Christopher A. Lewis, special issue, *The Irish Journal of Psychology* 23, no. 3-4 (2002).

46. See Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, “Irish Language Teaching,” in *The Future of Irish Studies: Report of the Irish Forum*, ed. Christina Hunt Mahony, Laura Izarra, Elizabeth Malcolm, John P. Harrington, Ondřej Pilný and Catriona Crowe (Prague: Irish Forum/Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, Prague, 2006), 16-24; Michael Cronin and Laura Izarra, “Irish Studies in the Non-Anglophone World,” in *The Future of Irish Studies: Report of the Irish Forum*, ed. Christina Hunt Mahony, Laura Izarra, Elizabeth Malcolm, John P. Harrington, Ondřej Pilný and Catriona Crowe (Prague: Irish Forum/Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, Prague, 2006), 25-30; Ó Conchubhair, “The Global Diaspora,” 224-48; Brian Ó Conchubhair, “An Ghaeilge mar Ábhar in Ollscoileanna Mheiriceá/The Irish Language in American Universities” in Ó Conchubhair, ed., *Why Irish? Irish Language and Literature in Academia* (Galway: Arlen House, 2008), 131-200; and Siún Ní Dhuinn, ed., *An Ghaeilge i gCéin: Pobal agus Féiniúlacht Idirnáisiúnta* (Baile Átha Cliath: LeabhairCOMHAR, 2011).

[47] [link: # ednref47]. Regarding Clubleabhar.com, with a current membership of over a thousand, 20% are living outside of Ireland. Though many of these are in Britain and the United States, many other locations worldwide are also represented, including Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Hong Kong, the Marshall Islands, Thailand and the Netherlands. While Irish expatriates are in a majority, a sizeable proportion of international members have no family connection with Ireland. Information provided by Éamonn Ó Dónaill (founder and director of ClubLeabhar.com), in personal communication with author, October 22, 2012.

*Beo!* has monthly site visits of circa 11,000 by users worldwide (10,954 visits between 22 Oct – 21 Nov 2009, from 91 countries/ territories, according to Google Analytics). Information provided by the editor of [www.beo.ie](http://www.beo.ie/) [link: <http://www.beo.ie/>], Seosamh Mac Muirí, in “Todhchaí agus Riachtanais Phobail na Gaeilge” (paper presented at the seminar, “Ó Bolg an tSolair go Gaelscéal—breis agus 200 bliain d’iriseoireacht chlóite na Gaeilge,” An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath, November 13, 2010).

Regarding international sales of Irish-language e-books, 47% of current sales are international, with the United States accounting for 29%, and the UK 12%.

Information provided by Gareth Cuddy (Chief Executive of ePubDirect), “Ebooks—reading the future” (paper presented at Comhdháil faoin Léitheoireacht, Ionad Comhdhála Marino, Baile Átha Cliath, September 22, 2012).

48. See, for example, Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin, ed., *Go Meiriceá Siar: Na Gaeil agus Meiriceá* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Chlóchomhar, 1979); Thomas W. Ihde, ed., *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (London: Bergin & Garvey, 1994); Ken Nilsen, “Irish in Nineteenth-Century New York,” in *The Multilingual Apple: Languages in New York City*, ed. Ofelia Garcia and Joshua A. Fishman (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), 52-69; Ken Nilsen, “The Irish Language in New York, 1850-1900,” in *The New York Irish*, ed. Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 252-74; Nancy Stenson, “Speaking Irish in America: language and identity” in *Global Eurolinguistics: European Languages in North America: Migration, maintenance and death*, ed. P. Sture Ureland (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 2001), 435-59; Úna Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America, 1670-1915: The Gaelic Revival* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003); Dympna Lonergan, *Sounds Irish: The Irish Language in Australia* (Adelaide: Lythrum, 2004); Val Noone, *Hidden Ireland in Victoria* (Ballarat: Ballarat Heritage Services, 2012); and Janet Leyland, “Irish Language Learners in North-West England,” in *Watching One’s Tongue: Issues in Language Planning*, ed. Máiréad Nic Craith (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 145-76.

49. The notion of “mobilization of competence” was part of a 2010 lecture delivered by Cummins: Jim Cummins, “When can you ask why? Exploring language policy choices in Ireland past and present,” (lecture, University College Dublin School of Psychology International Research Seminar Series, Dublin, January 21, 2010). For more on “identities of competence” and language learning and “showcasing identity,” see Jim Cummins, “Diverse futures: immigration, education and identity in changing times,” in *All changed? Culture and Identity in Contemporary Ireland/ Cultúr agus féiniúlacht in Éirinn an Lae Inniu: The Fifth Seamus Heaney Lectures Series*, ed. Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Rory McDaid and Andrew O’Shea (Dublin: Duras, 2011), 49-70;

also see Jim Cummins and Margaret Early, ed., *Identity Texts: the collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools* (Stoke on Trent/ Sterling: Trentham Books, 2011).

50. Justin McCubbin, “Inimircigh agus an Ghaeilge: Idé-eolaíocht agus Cleachtas Teanga Lucht Inimirce na Gaeilge in Éirinn” (tráchtas PhD, Ollscoil Luimnigh, 2011).

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