

José Manuel Estévez-Saá

## THE GHOST OF THE TROUBLES: CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE

**Keywords:** The Troubles; conflict; reconciliation; ghost; Habermas; Derrida; Northern Ireland; Edna O'Brien; Deirdre Madden; Bernard MacLaverty.

**Abstract:** I will use trope of the Ghost so as to refer to the haunting legacy of the troubles in Irish literature. Some examples of the spectral effects that can be detected and the spooky language recurrently employed will be provided. I can advance that in the novels I am studying what I detect is the rejection of homogeneous, realist, chronologically ordered accounts of the topic. In O'Brien, Madden and MacLaverty the topic haunts the text. The fragmented, inconclusive, repetitive, incoherent and sometimes even misleading narratives proposed symbolize the difficulties that writers and protagonists have when dealing with transgenerational conflicts. Only by means of revisions, active rearrangements, meticulous but provisional evaluations can personal and social knowledge be reconstructed and transformed in the journey towards relief from suffering, redemption and reconciliation. And in this purpose the trope of the ghost is especially appropriate, since ghosts similarly to the effect produced by narratives on the troubles attract as well as repel us. They produce an uncanny effect that subverts dichotomies such as past vs. present, life vs. death, good vs. bad. The figure of the ghost has been used by writers and artists not only in reference to folklore and superstitions but, especially throughout the twentieth-century, in order to deal with those issues that "troubled" human beings and have kept on "haunting" modern men and women.