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UDC: 821.111(417).09-32Sheridan F.D.

“More at Home Here than in Her Native Land”: F.D. Sheridan’s Image of Spain

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to (re)introduce the largely overlooked Irish writer Florence Daphne Sheridan and critically examine her portrayal of 1950s and 1960s Spain in her short stories written in the 1980s. While other Irish authors such as Kate O’Brien and Pearse Hutchinson have received moderate attention in relation to their depictions of Spain, Sheridan’s literary representation of the country under Franco’s dictatorship remains largely ignored. This study explores Sheridan’s images of Spain using the framework of Imagology Studies, which focuses on the cultural construction of national identity through literary representations. Sheridan’s works offer a distinctive perspective on the intersections of Irish and Spanish cultural relations, moving beyond the romanticized or stereotypical images of Spain often found in British literature. Her fiction captures the complex realities of Spain during its developmental stage under Francoism and focuses on the effects of economic hardship, political oppression, and the influx of tourism.

Keywords: F.D. Sheridan, Spain, imagology, short story, Hiberno-Spanish cultural relations

“Bolj doma tu kot v svoji rodni deželi”: podoba Španije v delih F.D. Sheridan

IZVLEČEK

Članek poskuša predstaviti in ponovno opozoriti na pogosto zapostavljeno irsko pisateljico Florence Daphne Sheridan in kritično preučiti upodabljanje Španije petdesetih in šestdesetih let dvajsetega stoletja v njenih kratkih zgodbah iz osemdesetih let. Upodobitve Španije v delih drugih irskih pisateljev, na primer Kate O’Brien in Pearsa Hutchinsona, so že bile deležne vsaj nekakšne obravnave, Sheridanine literarne upodobitve te države v času Francove diktature pa ostajajo večinoma prezrte. Pričujoča študija obravnava Sheridanino podobo Španije s pomočjo imagološkega okvirja, ki se osredotoča na kulturno oblikovanje narodne identitete skozi literarne upodobitve. Dela F.D. Sheridan ponujajo posebej prepoznavno perspektivo presečišča irskih in španskih kulturnih povezav in presegajo romantizirane in stereotipne podobe Španije, ki jih pogosto najdemo v britanski književnosti. Njena leposlovna dela prikazujejo večplastno realnost Španije in njen razvoj v času diktature generala Franca in se osredotočajo na posledice ekonomske stiske, političnega zatiranja ter rasti v turizmu.

Gljučne besede: F.D. Sheridan, Španija, imagologija, kratka zgodba, irsko-španski kulturni odnosi

1 Introduction

Spain has held a notable place in the imaginary of an array of 20th-century Irish authors who visited the country in different periods and have written about it in a variety of literary genres: Kate O'Brien (1897–1974) depicted the 1920s and 1930s in her novel *Mary Lavelle* (1936) and in her nostalgic *Farewell Spain* (1937); Walter Starkie (1894–1976) published four travel diaries (*Spanish Raggle Taggle* (1934), *Don Gypsy* (1936), *In Sara's Tents* (1953) and *The Road to Santiago* (1957)); Máirín Mitchell (1895–1986) published *Storm over Spain* (1937) after rambling around the country in the mid-1930s, just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; Pearse Hutchinson (1927–2012) depicted the difficult years of the Spanish dictatorship in his poetry of the 1950s and 1960s, focusing in particular on regional language restrictions in Catalonia and Galicia; and Aidan Higgins (1927–2015) captured the contradictions of the apparent liberalization and economic expansion of Spain in the last years of Franco's regime in his experimental novel *Balcony of Europe* (1972). Considerable research has been done on the literary image of the country posed by these authors, and on how Spain and its landscape have found expression in their works – see, for example, Asensio Peral (2023), Beja (1973), Davison (2017), Hurlley (2005), Ladrón (2010), Losada-Friend (2023), Membrive (2019), Membrive-Pérez (2020), Mittermaier (2012; 2013; 2014; 2017), Murphy (2020), Pastor Garcia (2011), Pérez de Arcos (2021), and Walshe (2017).

But if critical attention has been given to Irish authors who visited the country before the Spanish Civil War and the interwar period, the work of those who wrote about post-war Spain has not been that widely studied beyond the poetry of Hutchinson and the fiction of Higgins. Indeed, the literary contribution of Hutchinson's beloved friend, Florence Daphne Sheridan, has been largely overlooked if not completely ignored by academic research. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold: to (re)discover the contribution of Sheridan to Irish literature in the 1980s and to explore her literary image of 1950s and 1960s Spain. The analysis of Sheridan's production is conducted through the prism of Imagology Studies, defined as “the critical analysis of national stereotypes in literature (and in any other forms of cultural representation)” (Beller and Leerssen 2007, n.p.). The relevance of this field has grown in recent years, particularly in the context of globalization and the resurgence of nationalisms, as it offers insights into the dynamics of identity and otherness (Bakhareva 2022). Its interdisciplinary character allows for the combination of socio-historical, ethnological, cultural, and political approaches, which results in a suitable framework to understand the connection between literature and national identity (Zocco 2022). Thus, this paper also considers how the underlying ideologies that underpinned the images of Spain in Sheridan's fiction were informed by her time in the country.¹ This approach bears in mind that the “pre-given eternal categories [visitor and visited], are literary constructs in themselves, and result from the confrontation, projection and the articulation of cultural differentiation and discontinuity” (Corbey and Leerssen 1991, x). The visitor's generally partial knowledge of

¹ Following the tenets of Imagology, for the purpose of this paper the term “image” refers to analyses of an author's fiction as “the mental silhouette of the other. Cultural discontinuities and differences (resulting from languages, mentalities, everyday habits, and religions) trigger positive or negative judgements and images” (Beller 2007, 4).

the visited culture led anthropologists and new historicists to turn their attention to the study of the textual image of a given location. Clifford (1997) considered the village as the “unit” which allowed the anthropologist “to centralize a research practice, and at the same time it served as synecdoche, as point of focus, or past, through which one could represent the ‘cultural’ whole” (98). This trope, through which comprehension of the visited culture might be gained by simply “looking at” or “gazing at” only a fragment of it, can be thought about in terms of to the broader opposition, vision/knowledge. Pratt believes that travellers have tended to represent other cultures through “all-seeing, all-knowing ‘imperial eyes’, and take a ‘monarch-of-all-I-survey’ stance” (1992, 201). That is, the textual attitude towards the image of the visited location is always culturally mediated (Siegel and Wulff 2002, 109–10). Imagology, then, studies and identifies fractured depictions of geographical spaces and explores the fundamental fictionality of all images. As will be shown, Sheridan’s approach to the image of Spain aims at, to use Pratt’s terminology, “decoloniz[ing] knowledge” (1992, 3), as her impressions veer away from the traditional romanticized depiction of the country that, since the 19th century, has frequently been found in British authors who visited or lived in the country. This paper, however, does not seek to determine the reliability or untrustworthiness of Sheridan’s work; rather, it draws attention to traits of the Irish literary image of Spain (Mittermaier 2017) that have been overlooked and which build on hidden links and forgotten histories of cultural contact.

2 F.D. Sheridan

Sheridan (Dublin, 1929–2002), who always went by the name Sammy (Ryan 2023), attended University College Dublin (UCD) in 1947–1948 to obtain a diploma in Social Studies, but had to give her place up when she was affected by a polio infection which disabled her left arm for life. She was a member of the Labour Party and was considered a “milder sort of nationalist” (Ryan 2023). While, with the encouragement of Hutchinson (Ryan 2023), Sheridan did a lot of writing, she published very little. Her publications comprise a short story collection, *Captives* (1980a), reviewed by both P.J. Kavanagh and the theatre critic Gerry Colgan, who claimed to know “nothing of the author or of anything else that she may have written” (Colgan 1983, 10); the short story, “Olympia”, included in *The Anthology* (1982);² and two short stories published in the literary journal *Cyphers* (1983 and 1990).³ However, in order to locate Sheridan in the context of the Irish literature of the 1980s, as well as to provide a broader understanding of her image of Spain in the 1950s and 1960s, this paper also considers the letters and postcards she exchanged with Pearse Hutchinson (1950s–1990s), and her unpublished personal memoir titled “La Ciutat Condal” (1993), in which she recalls her Catalan years (1954–1965). These works are held as part of the Hutchinson archive at Maynooth University (Ireland) and have not received any attention

² Edited by her friends, Leland Bardwell and Joseph Ambrose, and published by Co-op Books. Sheridan’s story opened the collection in which a number of renowned authors such as Anthony Cronin, Sebastian Barry, Desmond Hogan, Macdara Woods and Neil Jordan also had contributions.

³ *Cyphers* is a literary magazine that published poetry and criticism from Ireland and abroad. It was established in 1975 by Leland Bardwell (1922–2016), Pearse Hutchinson (1927–2012), Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (b. 1942), and Macdara Woods (1942–2018).

to date. The fact that Sheridan does not have her own archive reveals how overlooked this author's contribution to Irish literature has been.

While at UCD Sheridan met the poet and critic, John Jordan, who revived *Poetry Ireland* in 1962 and played an important role in shaping Ireland's cultural life in the middle decades of the 20th century (McFadden 2012, 137). Jordan was later best man at her wedding (*Meath Chronicle*, 1959), and became her son's godfather. Her interactions also extended to Patrick Kavanagh, Leland Bardwell, and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, as well as the painter Edward McGuire. These artists and others (such as Aidan Higgins, John Montague and Brendan Behan, to name a few) were part of Dublin's so-called Baggotonia, the bohemian quarter around Baggot Street that was particularly vibrant in the 1950s. This hub for writers, artists, and intellectuals has contributed significantly to Dublin's cultural and literary heritage. Baggotonia was known for its unconventional and anarchic lifestyle, and was the site of a "cultural radicalism" (Quinn 2003, 293) that was at odds with the conservative societal norms of the time.⁴ Travelling to other countries was a rite of passage for most members of this generation.⁵ These writers met in pubs, such as McDaid's (on Harry Street in Dublin), which has been acclaimed as the centre of "Ireland's literary and bohemian life" (Wall 2005, 33). There, in some cases, they were able to foster collaborative dynamics despite the occasional air of mutual distrust and jealousies (Cronin 1999, 62, 113). Academic scholarly publications agree on which authors convened there, but although Sheridan was "part of the group who used to drink in McDaid's" (Ryan 2024), she is never mentioned.⁶

After a short period living in Hampstead (London) and then Ireland, Sheridan moved to Barcelona, Spain in September 1954 (Sheridan 1993, 1). She left Ireland with her oldest brother, the painter Bryan Sheridan (Hutchinson 1994), and Pearse Hutchinson, who was described by Mittermaier (2017, 288) as her "early love" and, by Woods (2010, 114), as "a close companion".⁷ She left Ireland as she felt the country was culturally

⁴ The documentary *Ghosts of Baggotonia* (released in 2022 and directed by Alan Gilsean) explores the history and cultural significance of that time and place.

⁵ Anthony Cronin visited Spain intermittently in the 1960s, while John Jordan wrote poems in the books *A Raft from Flotsam* (1969) and *With Whom Did I Share the Crystal?* (1980) related to his sojourns in the country, where he went in the 1960s because he felt that his lifestyle in Dublin was "claustrophobic" (McFadden 2012, 129). He maintained connections with Gerald Brenan, Robert Graves, and Kate O'Brien (all of whom also travelled to Spain), and his affinity for Spanish culture and religion confirms that he "thought not merely in Irish, but in European, indeed in world, terms" (Martin 1988, 264). Other poets of what Mittermaier refers to as the "Irish Beat Generation" visited the country in this period, including Michael Smith, Seamus Heaney, Paul Durcan, Brian Lynch, Philip Casey, Joseph Hackett, Dorothy Molloy, and Macdara Woods (2012, 79).

⁶ McFadden (2015) makes a list of the authors who reunited there: Leland Bardwell, Anthony Cronin, John Jordan, John Montague, Pearse Hutchinson at times, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Macdara Woods, Sheila Bradshaw, Pat Broe, Marie-Louise Colbert (Sheridan's best friend, a well-known Irish social worker and the godmother of her son), Therese Cronin, Kay O'Neill, Pauline Bewick and Beatrice French Salkeld. In a letter, Sheridan's sons also mention Brendan Behan and photographer Neville Johnson as other artists that gathered there and were friends of Sheridan (Ryan 2024).

⁷ In her personal memoirs, Sheridan never mentions Pearse Hutchinson and only refers to him once as "my companion" (1993, 1).

isolated, stating that “Dublin had been too small, in every way” (Sheridan 1993, 7). She and Hutchinson intended to move to Andalusia, but they “fell in love with Barcelona” (Woods 2010, 114) because of its vitality (Sheridan 1993, 1; Ryan 2024), which, to her, contrasted with Ireland’s cultural insularity. She stayed in the city until 1957, renting an apartment whose living room was a restaurant (13), and working as an English teacher in the prestigious Escuela Massé (Sheridan 1993, 10). Before she began teaching there, the director Señor Morres specified that there was only one rule: “no politics and no religion” (10). This reflected the regime’s strict censorship and repression, with political opposition and religious dissent being severely punished. In 1955, during her time in Spain, where she “led the typical existence that young people everywhere lead when they have shaken off their upbringing” (Sheridan 1993,12), she met Sebastian Ryan.⁸ Sheridan’s international experience continued with her stay in Milan (Italy) for six months in 1957 to teach at the British School. Her letters to Hutchinson from this year reveal that she insistently wrote asking him to meet her in Milan, but he did not seem to reply, which led to her becoming “utterly depressed by [his] silence” (Sheridan 1957). Therefore, her Italian experience was marked by her distressing relationship with Hutchinson and by the feelings of isolation, detachment, and boredom that are reflected in her Italian short stories.

When she returned to Barcelona in 1959 she started a relationship with Ryan, who she later married in Dublin, after which they moved back to Barcelona, “poor, married and not feeling in the least ‘respectable’” (Sheridan 1993, 13). In 1965 they resettled in a small village in Almería called Mojácar, where they stayed until 1968. Just as she did in Ireland, Sheridan surrounded herself with artists and intellectuals from different countries, especially “Germany, The Netherlands, and England” (12). While in Barcelona, she met with the American cartoonist David Omar White, the British actor Charles Gibson Cowan, the Spanish writer Luis Goytisolo (8), and the educator Pamela O’Malley⁹ and received visits from John Jordan and Antony Cronin. In Mojácar, she had a close relationship with the Danish couple Paul and Beatrice Beckett, who were artists, and the Australian painter John Olsen. Although Sheridan and Ryan resettled to live permanently in Lucan, Dublin, from 1968, leading what the author referred to as a “monastic life” (Sheridan 1987), Ryan “was anxious to get back” (Ryan, 2024) and the couple visited Mojácar and/or Barcelona for short periods almost every year until the 1990s. She always felt “at home” in Spain (Sheridan 1993, 18) and recognized that Barcelona “caught [her] imagination” (2).

The 1970s saw the emergence of a number of new Irish publishing houses, notably Co-op Books and Poolbeg Press, co-founded by David Marcus, to encourage new talent and to exhibit a “pride of place” (O’Brien 1980, 138-9). This period was considered by the Arts

⁸ Sebastian Read Ryan (1934–1994) was the son of a New-Mexican mother, Leona, and an Irish father, Desmond Ryan. In her unpublished memoirs, Sheridan recalls how Sebastian spent his childhood in Beauvallon and how, during the Second World War, in 1940 he and his mother escaped through Barcelona to Bermuda.

⁹ Pamela O’Malley (1929–2006) was an Irish-Spanish educationalist and radical. A friend of Kate O’Brien and Brendan Behan, and a member of the Communist Party in Spain, she taught at the British School in Madrid until 2003 when she retired.

Council as the “take-off phase of Irish publishing” (Hutton and Walsh 2011, 277).¹⁰ It was MacDonogh (Ryan, 2024), together with Hutchinson, who encouraged Sheridan to publish her stories as a collection. The result was *Captives* (1980a), which was strongly affected by her experiences abroad and was “called this as there are three captive stories of Spanish situations” (Sheridan to Pearse Hutchinson, undated), and “Olympia” (1982). There is little critical commentary on this co-operative (Farmar 2018; O’Brien 1980), and even though Sheridan was “known in [her] time, very well” (Ní Chuilleanáin, 2019), and considered “a very capable writer” (*Evening Herald* 1983, 26), she is never mentioned, nor is her work analysed or referred to.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when Sheridan was writing, the short story was often thought of as being most representative of Irish literature, and was even considered a “national genre” (D’hoker 2017, 3). However, critics also pointed to a tendency that had been growing since the 1960s for authors to use the stories as “essentially bourgeois entertainment, avoiding the dangerous and the challenging” (Bardwell and Ambrose 1982, 6). Madden-Simpson marked the 1960s as the beginning of contemporary Irish women’s writing (1984), and it is not surprising that both Poolbeg (through the work of David Marcus) and Co-op Books continued promoting short fiction written by women which aimed at reassessing family life, sexuality, personal relationships to, simultaneously, “reapprais[e] [the] terms of identity” (O’Brien 1980, 155).¹¹

In the 1980s book sales collapsed, and by 1983, after the international success of Jordan’s *Night in Tunisia* and Hogan’s *The Icon Maker*, Co-op Books ceased publishing because, according to MacDonogh, while they were able to launch new writers, they could not hold them and thus they were “confined to an area of publishing which was inherently uneconomic” (Farmar 2018, 170). Sheridan only published two further short stories in the literary journal *Cyphers* after Co-op Books shut down.¹² The author continued writing throughout her life and, although she had a good relationship with Joe Ambrose after he took over as the head of the Co-op and enjoyed working with him, it did not result in the publication of another title (Ryan 2023). F.D. Sheridan died in Hampstead, London, in 2022.

¹⁰ These new ventures looked to create a solid, purely Irish publishing industry (not one based only on reprints) that would challenge the dominance of British publishers on the island. Many members involved in the foundation of the Irish Writers’ Co-operative in 1974 had met at UCD: Fred Johnston, Neil Jordan, Peter Sheridan, and Ronan Sheehan, who acted as secretary of the Co-operative from 1975 until 1983. This so-called “generation of 1976” (O’Brien 1995, 16) created their publishing arm, Co-op Books, in 1976. It and the other new publishing houses of the 1970s “initiated a period of local innovation, drive and (occasionally) aggression that was quickly noticed by the media” (Farmar 2018, 171). By 1978, the Co-op had a dozen members who aimed at publishing new writers, “including themselves” (Hutton and Walsh 2011, 159). Amongst others, Sebastian Barry, Desmond Hogan, Leland Bardwell, Benedict Kiely, Anthony Cronin, and Steve MacDonogh, who was chairperson from 1977 to 1981, were involved in this venture.

¹¹ Other women writers who published short stories during this period and addressed these themes were Mary Lavin, Evelyn Conlon, Leland Bardwell, Anne Devlin, Edna O’Brien, Julia O’Faolain, and Maeve Binchy. This was also facilitated by the work carried out by Nuala Archer, Ruth Hooley, the Women’s Community Press, Arlen House Publishers and Attic Press to promote short fiction by Irish female authors.

¹² Overall, the Irish literary scene benefited from Co-op’s “bid to contest centralization, homogenization, and globalization in the publishing scene” (Hutton and Walsh 2011, 159).

3 Sheridan's Image of Spain

To examine Sheridan's literary image of 1950s and 1960s Spain, this paper analyses twelve of the stories she published in *Captives*, *The Anthology*, and *Cyphers*.¹³ *Captives* (published in hardback in 1980 and republished in paperback in 1983) is the only collection entirely authored by Sheridan, and is unquestionably affected by the author's time abroad, especially her years in Spain. Although the title of the collection refers directly to the three Spanish "captives" in the stories, "Captive I", "Captive II", and "Captive III", the protagonists of all the stories in the collection feel captive in one way or another, and lonely.¹⁴ The collection was considered "highly experimental" (Casey and Casey 1990, 6) due to the author's ability to trace intricate thought patterns in the stories and her emphasis on individuality. Sheridan's work follows a pattern of the desire to escape that was customary of the fiction of this period (O'Brien 1980, 147), and her stories combine national (mostly Dublin) and international settings, namely Italy, Mexico, England, and, above all, Spain, for she was "more at home here than in her native land" (*Evening Herald* 1983, 26). Her use of foreign settings aligns with Fogarty's contention that the best Irish short stories from this period "have always persistently linked the local to the global, the parochial to the worldly" (Fogarty 2002, 8). In Sheridan's case, Spain pervades her approach to universal social and political themes because, to her, "what was happening elsewhere was more noticeable here" (1993, 6). Sheridan's portrayal of "lives which have reached some final limitations" (Colgan 1983, 10) in her character-driven narratives acknowledge and resist the Joycean tradition, since while Sheridan also portrays characters with limitations – whether personal or societal – she differs from Joyce in the way her characters respond to these challenges. In this way, Sheridan acknowledges the Joycean focus on human constraint but also resists its inherent pessimism by offering more nuanced or transformative character arcs.

Her approach to Spain is pervaded by a constant interrogation of visitors' and foreign residents' attitudes towards, and involvement with, the country and its people. In fact, one of the few mentions of Sheridan in an academic text concerns this issue: Mittermaier recounts her visit to the British writer Gerald Brenan in Malaga with Hutchinson in the late 1950s. During the visit, a naked Andalusian girl appears in the house and Sheridan is said to have "[broken] the spell", dissipating "any illusions that he [Hutchinson] and his friends have nothing in common with those other voyeuristic tourists and exiled artists invading the Costa del Sol from the late 1950s" (Mittermaier 2012, 88). An analysis of her short fiction shows how Sheridan, in fact, aims at disenchanting the inherited romanticized literary image of Spain.

One of the main themes that permeates her Spanish short stories is Franco's economic policy of the 1950s and 1960s, *desarrollismo*. She was not a supporter of the "new" Spain.¹⁵ The regime was now settled, the development programme was at its peak, promoting its "bombastic

¹³ The remaining stories are set in Ireland (four), Italy (two), France (one), and Latin America (five).

¹⁴ According to D'hoker, loneliness was "the privileged emotion" in the short story of the 1980s (D'Hoker 2017, 3).

¹⁵ This can be seen in her letters and postcards to Pearse Hutchinson. In a postcard from 1978 with a Francoist stamp, she drew an arrow to it and wrote: "Lo siento. No había otra cosa" ["Sorry. There was nothing better", author's translation].

rhetoric of triumphalism, claiming victory on every hand, with Franco the true leader of all western civilization” (Payne 1987, 414). At the same time, Spain was slowly opening to the world: it joined UNESCO in 1952 and the United Nations in 1955, and signed the Pact of Madrid with the United States in 1953.¹⁶ By the mid-1950s, and especially in the 1960s, the tourist industry was established as a profitable source of income for the country, and the regime was determined to exploit this sector to attract more wealth to the peninsula. Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism from 1962 to 1969, made it possible for the country to receive over 30 million northern Europeans a year by the end of the 1960s (Grugel and Rees 1997, 117). “Spain is Different” replaced the former slogan “Visit Spain”, and the substantial development of the tourist industry seemed to be designed by the regime with a two-fold aim: to banish the idea of a land hostile to foreigners and to undermine the idea of a country that clung to archaic traditions. This gave the impression that the regime’s firm repression was being relaxed. In short, tourism was central to attempts to refashion Francoism and the industry worked to “put a friendly, hospitable face on a repressive military dictatorship” (Crumbaugh 2009, 5), and the image of Spain abroad began to evolve. Tourism as a “modern mechanism of power” (Crumbaugh 2009, 20) appealed to liberal democratized countries. In her memoirs, Sheridan identified the regime’s strategic approach to tourism: “when change came, it came suddenly. The Pyrenees were not high enough to withstand it. Tourists arrived. Prosperity was on offer and Franco’s government took it on the hop. It was not interested in instigating real social changes of its own which would have been practicable” (1993, 6). Social unrest grew in the last two decades of the dictatorship, together with a rise in regionalist issues. The end of isolationism was glimpsed. Encouragement of industrialization through foreign capital, multinational investment and major economic developments brought prosperity to the country, with the result that there was an “Americanization of life” (Grugel and Rees 1997, 146): the birth of consumerism. There was a notable improvement in living standards; travellers in the country had at their disposal new means of transportation, such as the plane or the car, which were more common by the 1960s, while inns were seldom mentioned, as they were replaced by hotels. Tour operators and new package holidays to Spain flourished in Great Britain.¹⁷ The “sun and sand” type of tourism together with the promotion of traditional attractions such as flamenco shows became very popular. The paradox of the “Spain is Different” slogan was thus exposed: a fictional pretension of “modernizing” the country that valued old, commonplace, overused preconceptions, and that recuperated “traditional cultural stereotypes after years of embarrassed rejection” (Kelly 2000, 29). In Carr’s exploration of this “new” Spain, he claimed that the 1960s’ images of the country presented an “anti-Romantic vision” (1992, 19), as they were vulgar and simplified. As will be seen, Sheridan’s short stories do not offer this image of the country.

The story “A Summer’s Day”, included in *Captives* (1980a), was inspired by Sheridan’s own experience and provides a subtle approach to the political situation in Catalonia during

¹⁶ The Pact of Madrid (1953) was an agreement between Spain and the US which granted Spain economic and military help in exchange for the establishment of military bases in strategic points in the country.

¹⁷ The tour operator Horizon Holidays flew the first charter-paneloads to the Costa Brava and the Costa del Sol in 1954, and the guide *Everybody’s Travel Guide to Spain* was published in London (Mitchell 2004, 165).

Francoism and the contrast between the marked ruralism of the country and its evolution towards modernization.¹⁸ It tells the story of Paco and Mercedes, the owners of a bar in Catalonia, who both complain about the “strangers from Barcelona and Lerida” (1980a, 17) and, at the same time, do “business with the tourists flocking from all over Catalunya” (1980a, 17). The transformation of the bar from a community hub that is open all night to a business catering to tourists marks the changing environment. Paco’s reminiscences about the old days, with their street markets, animal fairs, and the priests’ holidays, reflect a longing for a time when the village’s life was more insular and traditional. The annual leave-taking and the villagers’ nostalgic remarks speak of a collective memory of a time before the economic changes brought by tourism. Sheridan thus captures the impact of economic modernization and the influx of tourists and how this clashed with a nostalgic yearning for the simplicity and familiarity of the past. In the story there is an annual changing of the guard, and the military police are leaving a Catalan village at noon, as an array of characters gather at the bar. The military presence represents the pervasive authority of the regime, and for Sheridan, Spain was a “19th century paternalistic society” (1993, 2). The group carry sub-machine guns, and the descriptions of the villagers’ reactions illustrate an environment of control and intimidation. However, when Senora Aurora, loyal to the Republic, calls the privates “buffoons” as she laughs and walks out of the bar (1980a, 20), there are hints of a resistance to the external changes imposed on their way of life and the loss of cultural identity and community cohesion. The arrival of the military police also causes the villagers to fall silent, and the bar takes on an oppressive atmosphere that emphasizes the normalization of fear and control.¹⁹ The interactions between the characters further draw attention to the Captain’s arrogance and the villagers’ careful engagement with him, as they switch from Catalan to Castilian Spanish to avoid conflict. Sheridan herself experienced the prohibition on speaking Catalan in Spain and drew a parallel with her native Ireland: “It is not unlike Ireland where it is necessary to speak fluent Irish or English in a bilingual situation. But then, I’m choosing between two dominant languages. There’s something sad about unhelpful pride, or impatience, when you are trying to respect a tradition that has been threatened” (Sheridan 1993, 9). Her approach to the language policy during these years might have been influenced by Hutchinson, who published several poems related to the banning of Catalan in Spain. Thus, in this short story, Sheridan creates an image of captives of political oppression, as, to her, Spain was a “police state” (1993, 11). She often set her stories in bars where an array of people gather, as Sheridan believed that religion and politics, “especially the latter, were talked about in bars. But not in depth” (1993, 11).

Although all the stories included in *Captives* tackle different manifestations of captivity of one or more characters, the most representative would be the trio, “Captive I”, “Captive II” and “Captive III”. The first one portrays the contradictions of a country coping with fierce and rapid economic development while many of its citizens remain trapped in destitution. The story opens with a depiction of rural hardship and poverty, as seen through the character of a child, Luis, and his family. Luis lives with his mother and three sisters in a small, modest

¹⁸ In her memoirs, Sheridan recalls that “I found in a bar a friend talking with a Guardia Civil. To put it mildly, my friend was not in favour of Franco’s regime yet here he was sympathetically having drinks with a uniformed man from the most hated police force in the country” (1993, 11).

¹⁹ As Sheridan noted, in Barcelona those years, “there was secrecy too” (1993, 7).

house in a village whose name is never mentioned – probably to show that this story could happen anywhere in rural Spain – while his father is “working in France” (1980a, 30), which marks the common reality of absent fathers seeking employment elsewhere due to limited local opportunities. The repeated presence of plastic flowers operates as a form of silent resilience, because just as the flowers endure without water or care, the villagers continue to survive despite their economic hardships. Moreover, plastic flowers, being artificial, suggest the encroachment of modern, industrial products onto the natural environment of the village and its traditional way of life. The living room, sparsely furnished, had a vase of plastic flowers on the table, a stark contrast to the bare essentials around it (1980a, 30). Plastic flowers may look lively on the surface, but they lack the vitality of real flowers, much like the villagers’ lives might appear stable outwardly while they face significant struggles internally. Luis’s mother represents the hardships that women face in Spain and which, in her memoir, Sheridan compared to the situation in Ireland:

Being a woman in Ireland at that time was difficult enough. Women Civil Servants were forced to retire on marrying, and retirement from other jobs too was expected. Spanish society made the same kind of demands and more. My first sight of Iberian inhabitants was of women bent in the fields beneath large, black umbrellas. There was not a man in sight. (Sheridan 1993, 15)

In both countries, the Catholic Church played a major role in shaping state affairs and defining the ideal family. It promoted the notion that a woman’s duty was to bear as many children as possible and regarded avoidance of pregnancy as sinful. Marriage was advocated, and there were strict prohibitions on abortion and contraception. The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by a rigid adherence to those traditional roles, and women were largely confined to the domestic sphere. After introducing Luis and his family, the story reveals the arrival of a foreign family – a mother, father and a child, Michael – who are there for a vacation. Michael’s lifestyle contrasts with Luis’s hunger and poverty and his parents see their difference from the other villagers. However, Luis spends a lot of time with the foreign family, so he can be fed every day. Michael starts to eat less and shares his food with Luis, eventually falling ill: “He grew thin and began to get sore throats, headaches, and inexplicable fevers” (1980a, 33). Through an apparently innocent observation of a friendship between two children, Sheridan highlights that in spite of the regime’s infrastructural improvements and the promotion of tourism, which mainly brought wealth to urban centres, rural poverty persisted, as peripheral areas were largely unaffected by *desarrollismo*, for “the crumbs which fell from the rich men’s tables were now somewhat more substantial than before, but they were still crumbs” (Sheridan 1993, 6).

“Captive II” provides an emotional depiction of the life of an individual trapped in social and economic constraints in Barcelona. Through Arturo, a shoeshine man, Sheridan highlights the issue of inadequate welfare provisions and, once again, contrasts this with the burgeoning tourist industry. Arturo is left to fend for himself, with minimal support from a welfare system that is ill-equipped to provide care or opportunities for recovery, as Arturo explains: “After a few weeks I was let go. I stood outside the hospital with the few pounds they’d given me and thought where do I go from here” (1980a, 37). The narrative reflects how the benefits

of modernization and economic development do not trickle down to the lower strata of society. Arturo's descent into poverty, through various towns and workhouses, emphasizes the geographical and social isolation experienced by the rural poor. As he pleads when he visits the Governor's house: "What am I that this should happen to me? What are you that this should happen to me? Do something for me. I cannot beg. I don't deserve to beg" (1980a, 39).²⁰ Arturo's dignity and determination to search for a better life is contrasted with the static prosperity enjoyed by the tourist destinations.

"Captive III" continues the theme of entrapment or captivity. In this story, told from the perspective of Jane, an Irish tourist in a small Catalan village, the reader learns about Ernesto, the local baker's son, who represents the younger generation of the working class in Spain and is caught between the demands of labour and the allure of leisure represented by the cinema sessions held regularly at Bar El Cine. Ernesto's father, Santiago, embodies the local authority within the bar, as he manages both the business and social interactions, and his method of control and occasional mockery reflects the social structures that govern local life. Similarly, the respect and deference shown to Santiago by the other villagers and the tourists reinforce the traditional social system. The most revealing element of this story is the way Sheridan tackles Jane's curiosity and her interactions with Ernesto and other villagers, which speak of her superficial engagement with, and understanding of, Spanish life. Her questions about local customs and her shock at the treatment of the baker's son (who is twelve and is drinking coffee to stay awake in order to help his father) reveals the gap between visitors' perceptions and assumptions and local realities. She feels helpless to learn that nothing can be done for the child: "it's illegal, she cried. You are a policeman, she said to the 18-year-old guard. Can't you do something about it?" (1980a, 46–47). The bird trap referred to at the beginning and end of the story gestures towards the societal and political constraints that trapped Spaniards: "One of the boys held out a square wire object and showed it to their children. It was a bird trap" (1980a, 42). This object, designed to capture and confine, mirrors the experience of the Spanish working class, who were caught in the rigid and oppressive structures of the regime, and the act of setting the trap "just under the sand" (1980a, 43) epitomizes how these constraints were often hidden beneath the surface, and thus went unnoticed or misunderstood by tourists.

"Tomorrow I Shall Sail Across Castile" follows a group of travellers navigating the Spanish countryside, heading towards France. They encounter different characters along the way, most notably an eccentric man named Sven, who offers them a ride in his old car. Throughout the journey they face intense heat and the harshness of the landscape, which contrasts with their encounters in small, rural villages where they rest, drink wine, and interact with locals. The travellers experience instances of reflection, discomfort, and surreal interactions with Sven, who oscillates between moments of philosophical introspection and erratic behaviour. Sheridan presents a journey through the Spanish countryside that once again explores

²⁰ In her memoirs, Sheridan also comments on the fact that the council office building is similar to a palace that opens once a year (1993, 4). This finds a parallel in Hutchinson's poem "The Palace of Injustice or the Swallow's Well" (Hutchinson 1990, 81), in which, besides criticizing political corruption, he revealed the distress he felt when bureaucratic obstacles prevented him from prolonging his stay in the city.

tourists' shallow and transient engagements with the locals, especially the poor: "They asked a young woman in a muddy uncobbled pathway between houses if they could buy some wine" (1980a, 64). In contrast, the tourists' encounter with the luxurious lifestyle of the young Catalan couple at the end of the story highlights Sheridan's awareness of class differences and prerogatives: "The young Catalan well dressed and a little overweight locked the door. His wife dark olive-skinned beautiful smiled distantly" (1980a, 69). The journey takes on an almost existential tone, especially when Sven refers to "sailing across Castile", which becomes a metaphor for his internal and external struggles. As they traverse desolate and isolated areas, the travellers are confronted with feelings of disconnection, both from the world around them and from each other. The landscape becomes increasingly barren, resembling a desert, reflecting the travellers' growing sense of unease. In the end, Sven's erratic behaviour and philosophical musings lead to his isolation. The travellers decide to part ways with him, and to continue their journey without him. They reflect on their surreal and disorienting experience, leaving Sven behind with a sense of sadness and mystery. The story refers to Castile as a "sea" across which the sense of isolation and disillusionment, and, obliquely, the socio-political situation of this period can be explored, as the desolate landscape in the story mirrors the country's struggle with stagnation and lack of development in this period. Sven is the focal point through which Sheridan presents the main themes of the narrative, as his unpredictable behaviour, his heavy drinking and melancholic disposition reflect a sense of aimlessness in a man who struggles to cope with inner unrest. Similarly, Sven's metaphor of "sailing across Castile" shows an idealized image of freedom that contrasts with the actual arid landscape, and this could be interpreted as a reflection of Spain's efforts to navigate its path forward, caught between traditional values and the pressures of modernization: "Fifty yards in front of them a car lay half submerged in sand. Sven walked forward. His feet, at first, sank in the sand, then he sank to his ankles. He got back to the car, drank from his bottle, his shoulders hunched. He sobbed 'My poor beautiful Castilian sea'" (1980a, 69). This moment captures the isolation and desolation experienced by many in the 1950s.

The sardonic title of "Perfect People" refers to the interactions between two wealthy Irish families (the O'Briens and the Richards), and the story allows Sheridan to build up the rapid social changes of the country through the two families' divergent approaches to them. The story is told in the first person by the unnamed daughter of the O'Brien family, members of which convey a more appreciative connection to Spain. The mother of the O'Brien family values the traditional and unspoiled aspects of the village and is annoyed by the presence of souvenir shops, package tours, hotels, and discotheques, which she finds too grotesque (1980a, 73). This is a lament about the economic shift to cater to tourists at the expense of local culture and traditions. She notices how the locals, now overshadowed by foreign residents and tourists, manifest a sense of loss and disconnection, and observes that "the foreign inhabitants or as I overheard someone call them inmates drank a lot and looked like warriors whose shields were a false unconcern" (1980a, 74). She and her husband, David, seek to reconnect with the culture of the village, as they came "to see the landscape" (1980a, 75), and she claims that the Richards "had never seen the village, the villagers, the 'inmates', the landscape. Only the apartments filled once a year had any reality" (1980a, 76). The Richards thus display their indifference to the reality of the country and embody a shallow and materialistic approach to Spain, since they are depicted as striving for perfection and

status: “Everything they did was imbued with the power of being just the right thing to do at just the right time” (1980a, 72).

Sheridan also explores individual struggles, cultural integration, and the impact of societal norms on individual lives in “Saint Crispian’s Day”. In this story, the Northern Irish Sheila is a foreigner who travels to an unnamed Spanish village seeking refuge and meaning in a different cultural context, while confronting her own internal battles after the death of her boyfriend, Dominic: “Sheila had fled the meaningless order of her own early life to live eat sleep at will” (1980a, 86). Sheila’s interactions reveal her loss and search for understanding and closure following Dominic’s death: “I knew he was kind, generous. I knew he loved me but I try to understand those seconds when he made a decision to be killed instead of me” (1980a, 91). Dominic is presented as a melancholic character, who felt the burden of the Troubles, “the tragic years since 1969” (1980a, 95),²¹ and Sheila believed that “society offered nothing for his fastidious nature. He could not have killed, and he was no totalitarian. He saw the changes needed to bring justice, politically and socially, but he could never have walked under a narrow banner” (1980a, 95). Dominic’s existential quest parallels the search for meaning, the dissatisfaction with ordinary life and the restlessness throughout post-war Europe: “for Dominic was an explorer with nowhere to go. A revolutionary who could not kill or a drunkard who didn’t like alcohol” (1980a, 96). Sheila’s interactions with the villagers, especially Don Luis, the doctor, and her integration into their daily life show her trying to find a new sense of belonging: “She had been surprised at how much she enjoyed custom here” (1980a, 85). Despite this, she remains an outsider, evidenced by her self-awareness of never truly belonging in the village: “calmed by a small village’s way of life (though I would never belong to it)” (1980a, 86).

“Inquiry” revolves around the unnamed narrator’s reminiscence of a past romantic relationship with Luca, a man from Madrid who led a somewhat aimless and carefree life. Luca is depicted as charming, always surrounded by friends and laughter, but also irresponsible and not particularly stable. The narrator recalls the warmth and joy Luca brought into her life, and the ultimate futility of their relationship. Luca was unreliable, more interested in fleeting pleasures than in any deeper connection. Despite being drawn to him, their affair was temporary and eventually ended. The story hints at the repressive political atmosphere through the characterization of Luca and his group. Luca is described as a “spiv from Madrid”, which carries connotations of a person living on the fringes of society, “engaging in dubious activities” (1980a, 99). His life of aimlessness and reliance on others mirrors the survival strategies of many during a time when jobs were scarce, and the economy was struggling to recover from the devastation of the Spanish Civil War. The bustling life of Barcelona, and especially the Ramblas, with its cafés, bars, and street vendors, embodies the vibrant yet precarious life in the city. The narrator’s interactions with characters such as Don Antonio and Doña Dolores, who face economic hardships and the threat of bailiffs, also highlight the widespread poverty and difficulties experienced by many Spaniards in this period. Despite his outward charm, Luca’s life is marked by a sense of escapism, and thus his constant inability to settle down shows his existential struggle to escape the hostility of the Spanish socio-political

²¹ The Battle of the Bogside, Derry, 1969.

environment: “Luca seldom silent always moving somewhere nowhere” (1980a, 100). Luca’s relationship with the narrator is complex, because while he provides moments of joy and excitement his presence also brings instability and danger: “I was safe from Luca; knowing he couldn’t harm me. For I was already sad in love and this frivolous aberration of my real life would soon be forgotten” (1980a, 101–2).

In “Flora and Johnny”, which closes *Captives*,²² the story is narrated by Flora who discusses her relationship with Johnny. This lower-class Irish couple struggle financially, a situation exacerbated by Johnny’s imprisonment. Just as Johnny becomes institutionalized in prison, Flora becomes trapped in the institution of marriage and domestic life: “she too was institutionalised. It surprised her as she had taken her own freedom of action for granted” (1980a, 118). Flora decides to escape to Spain with her children and start anew, and Barcelona acts as a catalyst for her attempt to maintain her independence and forget Johnny. While Flora’s move to Spain is intended to be a personal escape – an emotional and psychological release from her troubled marriage and domestic life – it runs contrary to the political reality of the country, where personal freedoms were curtailed under Franco’s dictatorship. Flora’s concept of freedom is more internal and personal than political. Her choice of Spain reflects a kind of naivety or selective blindness to the broader political climate, highlighting how personal desires for escape can sometimes overlook larger, more oppressive forces. Flora’s Irish friend in Barcelona, Betty, is an obscure character who acts as both an agent of change and criticism, and as a mirror of Flora’s emotional strife. Betty’s insistence on practical solutions and independence encourages Flora to think about her own capabilities and strengths, and this is evident when Flora starts to manage her life without relying on Johnny or Diego, her Spanish lover: “Already she was becoming good at looking after herself; a quality she had perhaps taken for granted even though she had never tried it out” (1980a, 120).

In her two stories published in *Cyphers*, Sheridan builds upon her image of post-war Spain. In “Fairy Tale” (1990), she tackles the transformative impact and the destructive effects of the tourist boom in Spain through the lens of a small village. Tom Dyer, the main character, personifies the complexities and contradictions of the expatriate experience in Spain during this period. He represents the influx of foreigners who settled in the country and brought with them new cultural and economic dynamics. The story describes a small, crumbling hill village in Spain, inhabited by both locals and expatriates. Tom is an Englishman who moves to the village with his wife Emerald, seeking escape and simplicity. Over time, the village, once vibrant and full of life, begins to fall apart. Houses crumble, infrastructure deteriorates, and the once-thriving expat community slowly diminishes. Tom and Emerald’s garden is no longer a site of life and beauty: “Tom Dyer dug and dug until the arid land spouted water. It now again fitted into the waste around it more normally, it seemed, than it had done in the years of plenty when green trees, shrubs, and plants had spread over the valley” (1990, 38). The garden deteriorates as both the physical and emotional lives of the characters break down. Emerald dies in a car accident, leaving Tom in a state of decline. Tom’s daily life becomes a routine of drinking and waiting, representing a broader disillusionment with the expatriate lifestyle. The villagers,

²² Also published in the “Saturday’s New Irish Writing” page in the *Irish Press* on the 29th of November of 1980 (Sheridan 1980b).

meanwhile, struggle with their own issues, and there is a sense of decay and hopelessness permeating the air. As the story progresses, the village metaphorically and literally collapses after a series of tragic but unexplained explosions. The story brings to light the destruction and transformation – the abrupt and often violent changes and the displacement of the local culture – that the tourism boom brought to traditional Spanish villages: “The houses fall, the television antennae like pointing fingers lead to the ground. Explosion followed explosion until, with a tired crunch sound, the last explosion left their domain at their feet” (1990, 43). The contrast between the prosperity that had been brought by tourism and the reversion to a desolate state after the explosions bring to the forefront the instability and impermanence of the economic boom, as observed by Sheridan herself in her personal memoirs: “With tourism came, too, destruction. The Government seemed not to care at all about beautiful Spain. The good fortune to coincide with the increased prosperity in Europe was like manna. It was not to be refused. But also not to be examined. Juan Goytisola [*sic*] was right” (1993, 6). She refers here to the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo Gay (1931–2017). As stated in her memoirs, Sheridan was familiar with Goytisolo’s writings, in which he frequently denounced the superficiality and negative impact of tourism on local communities.

“The Man Who Stayed” (1983) is set in Barcelona, a city experiencing an influx of American sailors and the dynamism that comes with the presence of the Sixth Fleet. The story touches on the economic aspects of tourism, with references to bars and activities centred on the American visitors. However, it also hints at the superficiality and fleeting nature of these economic benefits. Sr. Manent’s bar is a refuge of resistance and authenticity amidst the chaos of tourism: “Now the quiet bar in that jumping street was his trench and at the door his gun that sardonic smile” (1983, 32). Sr. Manent’s persistent cough symbolizes the lingering effects of oppression and the struggle for survival, as “his cough alone was an outrage, his presence itself a protest” (1983, 34). At the most basic level, the cough indicates Sr. Manent’s deteriorating physical health, a persistent reminder of his declining strength. However, the cough extends beyond the physical realm, symbolizing the emotional and psychological decay that comes with living for years in a harsh and repressive environment. Just as his body is gradually worn down by illness, so too is his spirit, exhausted by the enduring pressures of life in a country governed by authoritarian control. Sr. Manent’s cough also suggests a silent, internalized resistance. Unlike a loud protest or an overt act of defiance, the cough is involuntary and subtle, yet it constantly disrupts the status quo around him. In this way, it can be seen as a metaphor for the unspoken dissent that existed within Spain during Franco’s regime. Many Spaniards, in a manner similar to that of Sr. Manent, may have felt stifled and oppressed, yet their resistance remained subdued, expressed only in small, personal ways rather than through open revolt. The cough also contributes to the image of isolation and detachment. Sr. Manent, although physically present and engaging with the narrator and other characters, remains emotionally distant, guarded by his bitterness and personal pain. His cough is a barrier, separating him from deeper connections with others, just as Spain, isolated by Franco’s policies, was cut off from the European community. Thus, despite his suffering, Sr. Manent’s ability to continue running the bar and his interactions with the patrons reflect an unbroken spirit and a silent protest against the severe social conditions under which he lives. The question posed to the unnamed female narrator and Carlo – “How COULD you live under a dictatorship?” (1983, 36) – reflects the outsiders’ incredulity at

the resilience of those who lived through Franco's regime. The protagonist's answer is a mix of defiance, adaptation, and the understanding that survival often requires compromising ideals. The transformation of Sr. Manent's bar into a neon-lit establishment after his death signifies the inevitable change brought by development: "When I walked down the street where Sr. Manent's bar was... I heard the sound of loud music and saw neon lights around the door" (1983, 37). Just as happened to Sheridan herself when she came back to the city in the 1990s, the return of the protagonist to Barcelona in search of comfort and familiarity reinforces her longing for the past status quo: "When I walked down the street where Sr. Manent's bar was [...] I sat day after day as if memory had no chronology" (1983, 37).

4 Conclusion

Through a (re)discovery of F.D. Sheridan's contribution to Irish literature and an extensive analysis of her short stories set in Spain, it can be argued that her work reflects both local and foreign experiences in the cities and rural areas of the country. Her fine observations stress the significant impacts of overwork and people's poor living conditions (1993, 3) and, at the same time, the expatriates' or tourists' multi-layered perceptions of the country. Spain, particularly Barcelona, is a recurring motif in Sheridan's work, a place that in some cases symbolizes an escape. However, this escape often proves illusory, as the city's essence is eroded by the tourist boom. This disillusionment parallels Sheridan's own reflections in her memoirs, where she describes Barcelona as a "mythical place, which is an irony, for there is no other city I know whose inhabitants have their feet more firmly attached to the earth" (1993, 1). This juxtaposition of idealization and reality is mirrored in her characters, who flee to Barcelona seeking comfort only to encounter failure. The bars in her stories, while sometimes reminiscent of those in the Irish Gaeltacht (Sheridan 1993, 8) in the ways in which they are central to social life, operate as microcosms of this cultural clash and personal disappointment.

Sheridan's writings reveal a thorough understanding of the Spanish socio-political situation of the 1950s and 1960s, as she identifies the regime's failed attempts to improve the situation of the nation, and shows that "although the economic changes certainly made for fewer hardships, they had not changed the fabric of the country" (1993, 6). Unlike other contemporary foreign writers in the country (especially those from Britain, such as Gerald Brenan, V.S. Pritchett, Laurie Lee, or Rose Macaulay) who took a more superficial approach to the underlying multifaceted realities of this period, Sheridan's reflections steer clear of both a nostalgic idealization and an anti-romantic image. Her ability to empathize with "the poor, the lonely, and the unlucky, and to inhabit her characters without patronage or interference" (Kavanagh 1981, 56) adds depth to her portrayal of Spanish life.

In the final section of her memoirs, Sheridan reflects on her short visit to Barcelona in the 1990s, comparing her perceptions of the city to those of Dublin. She notes,

We miss that ramshackle, endearing and downtrodden city that we first knew. Maybe it is that we have just outgrown it, as I feel I have Dublin. Both cities, in their different ways, have become similar, in the way cities can do. They look prosperous and it is good to wander along streets full of young people wearing unconstricting clothes. But poverty is still there. (1993, 20)

This reflection condenses her recognition of the superficial changes brought by prosperity in both her native country and her beloved Barcelona while the underlying issues of poverty persist, and this insight echoes the themes prevalent in her short stories. This paper reaffirms the importance of revisiting and re-evaluating overlooked figures such as Sheridan, whose work provides invaluable additions to Irish literary images of Spain.

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