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GRAO EN INGLÉS: ESTUDOS LINGÜÍSTICOS E LITERARIOS

**STREETS OF GALWAY: THE CHALLENGE OF ADAPTING FOR
TELEVISION KEN BRUEN'S JACK TAYLOR NOVELS**

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Abstract

Literature and identity are two ideas intrinsically linked. There is an indivisible relationship between both concepts and neither can advance without the other. Literary manifestations have been worked as a tool for the construction and expression of personal as well as collective identity. In the Irish case, the crime novel is a vital element to reflect Irish identity. This piece of research analyses and contrasts the crime novels *The Guards* and *The Magdalen Martyrs* written by Ken Bruen with its expansion into television *Jack Taylor* on Netflix. As such, the methodology used is firstly based on a socio-historical analysis as well as the study of the development of the Irish crime novel in recent years to, secondly, expose a comparison between written and audiovisual material. The main objective is to establish a framework to understand the differences and similarities about how Irish identity and the main character are relocated in front of the viewers. The idea of this literary analysis is to test whether cinematic art can show identity at the same level as literature.

KEYWORDS: Literature, identity, Ireland, Ken Bruen, *The Guards*, *The Magdalen Martyrs*, crime novel, Jack Taylor.

Introduction

The most consumed literary genre in Ireland is crime novel, or Irish noir. The flourishing of this type of literature is not a curious coincidence, and there are arguments and pieces of evidence noting historical factors as the main responsible. Noir novels present the darkest part of society, however, also daily life and authenticity where violence and moral conflicts are the order of the day. The concept of identity throughout the action is built with national-shared elements such as the presence of alcohol, the economic crisis, and the church, and all of them mixed with mystery, violence, and psychology.

As it is generally considered, identity, history, and literature have been connected over time, being this the most genuine reason to explain the presence and importance that Irish history would have throughout this research. To the best of my knowledge, the only way to fully understand the rise of this genre is through the examination of how and why has impacted as positively as to bring it to the cinematographic world.

As a result, the following essay is disposed into two different sections: the first one provides a historical approach into the socio-economic context, continued by an introduction to the Irish Crime Fiction and Ken Bruen, who is the creator of Jack Taylor. Then, the second section is formed by a presentation of Netflix's Jack Taylor, a comparative analysis between the book and the TV series.

Among the main objectives of this paper are, in the first place, to investigate and examine Contemporary Irish History in order to understand how it has influenced current literature followed by the second aim, which is based on an exploration of the Irish crime novel as well as its different subgenres. Thirdly, to present a comparative analysis between the literary art and the cinematographic art in relation to the production of Ken

Bruen to, finally, establish those similarities and differences in the representation of the character of Jack Taylor.

As such, the methodology used is based on two different concepts. On the one hand, documentary research focused on the history, politics, economy, and literature of Ireland from the beginning of the Twentieth century to the present times. Therefore, several books borrowed from the library, online encyclopedias, audiovisual resources have been needed to structure and compile all the information needed. Also, it has been meaningfully the collaboration of an Irish colleague, Patrick Loughnane, that helped to understand Irish terms. On the other hand, the audiovisual platform Netflix has been used for the analysis of the cinematographic rendition of Jack Taylor's book.

1. The Irish context in the 20th Century

It is said that history determines society. Every country, community, and person are the direct result of the past, and only when history is known can be improved, such as the Irish case. No matter when or where, there is a cause-effect dichotomy between literature and its historical setting, being the past the biggest influence to several writers. Literary production then starts to display the evolution and the consciousness of a society. Following this path, the socio-historical situation of Ireland has considerably fluctuated. In the last decades, the country underwent a systematic and structural imbalance that deeply impacted, even nowadays, the Irish. Political and economic instability resulted in a voluminous set of complex problems such as The Northern Troubles, migration, famines, and crime. Going further from the idea to drive a historical analysis, this navigation between the most difficult events in contemporary Ireland is needed to understand how they inspired the literary field.

To begin with, the Republic of *Éire* has been formerly considered one of the poorest countries for over two centuries in Western Europe, and terrible realities such as poverty, famine, disease, and emigration were profoundly engraved in Irish memory. However, the country experienced an economic change during a process of rapid growth in the decade of 1990, which transformed its global position into one of the wealthiest. The period of bonanza dated from 1995 to 2008, mostly called “Celtic Tiger” (*An Tíogar Ceilteach*) or “The Boom”, involved an economic transformation propelled by foreign direct investment, spawned an average rate of over 9% of the economy during the first years, to continue growing covering 6%.

However, for the most part of the 20th century, Ireland suffered a serious economic deficiency, which translated into high levels of unemployment, poverty,

inflation, and low economic growth. It may be said that there were three different periods in the Irish Economy: the depression, from 1922 to 1957; the early prospect of growth, from 1958 to 1994; and the Celtic period, from 1995 to 2008. The first period of economic and political instability begins with The Irish Free State, in 1922, after the Anglo-Irish Treaty (*An Conradh Angla-Éireannach*), with an array of legislations with a clearly protectionist tendency. At this point, the economy was highly associated with ideology, which is influenced by the ideological commitments of the party that wanted to severed all international connections. As a result of the restrictive trade policies and, consequently, of an international untying, an economic crisis and political turmoil exploded.

Free Ireland, during the decades from 1920 to 1960, had a limited domestic market of which industry was scarce and its economy was dominated by the primary sector, mainly potato crop and livestock. Hence, the fact of encouraging restrictive policies hampered not only the economic growth but also the possibility of the maintenance of the living standards at that period associated with the Irish island. Despite several attempts to recover, it would not be until 1957 when the Government gradually opened the trade barriers to boost the entrance of foreign capital. These measures, such as the approval of free taxation for exports or the elimination of industrial property for outsiders, achieved high levels of economic growth but they were not enough to balance the financial instability. Consequently, migration becomes an issue of critical importance once again when a large number of the population have to leave the country due, for example, to the technology gap.

Notwithstanding the internal difficulties, the entry of Ireland into the European Economic Community in 1973 settled its global position as not only a European business entity but also as a renewed country. But again, a crisis appeared on the horizon: the fuel

emergency. The shocking consequences were translated into an increase in public spending, in large part, to shield the internal economy through raising taxes and high public debt. As a result, in 1987, Government took drastic actions to manage the public debt as employment's frostbite, cuts in health and education. Also, it was created a National Recovery Plan, which reduced not only the public debt but also the social tension, limited the salary rise but also the payroll tax imposed on the workers. This solution gave some space to reduce the debt and impulse the economic growth, which finally resulted in the "Celtic Tiger" period. Then, during the mid-1990, large companies such as Apple, Microsoft, or IBM benefited from the Irish fiscal facilities, its location, and skilled labor force to transform Ireland into one of the biggest receivers of foreign direct investment of the world, starting the "boom" era, *An Tíogar Ceilteach*, or Celtic Tiger.

Then, *Ireland's Economic Miracle* would change the economic pattern until nowadays. Economic freedom and growth worked together, prompting new realities such as the role of entrepreneur, industrial development, competitiveness as well as a set of innovations that impacted society meaningfully. Even though the cyclical position of the finances, which means that every phase of expansion is followed by another contraction, the Irish economy sustained its reference pattern, slowly growing until it becomes an example of economic recovery.

Similarly, the political situation propelled one of the most controversial periods in contemporary Ireland. The *Troubles*, also known as Northern Ireland Conflict, was a long-running conflict between unionists, in favor to remain part of the United Kingdom, and nationalists, against belonging to the British empire. The clash of interest resulted in a civil war marked by street fighting, snipers attacks, and bombs. In talking about the

primary consequences, the first was indeed the significant losses in human terms, but the most profound effect was the spiritual and moral damage that still remains.

As a result, this series of the aforementioned events did weigh negatively on society and the shadows of those periods were carried by several generations of Irish. The rise of unemployment, migration, wars, famines, and a sense of hopelessness heavily dented the national identity, and the psychological impact produced an increment of drug consumption, violence, indigence, and crime rates. In this sense, the literary field echoed the shouts of the social reality and, from a certain perspective, literature made the crime novel a genre of its own. The purpose of the Noir genre has been, and still is, to concentrate social problems in a unique scope in order to examine the highest concerns of the country, and, quite rightly, the detective “can offer change, resolve, action, and insight. He or she restores order, stands for a form of justice” (Mannion, 66). Then, writers such as Ken Bruen, Devla McTiernan, John Banville, and Tana French, among others, managed to capture the darkest part of society to transform it into an amazing story.

2. The Irish crime fiction

A long time ago, it was claimed that literature was mere entertainment and even a distraction from the real course of life. However, and going further from that concept, what literature offers can be hardly positioned or labeled as simple, or ludic because its wide range goes from the didactic, crossing philosophy and ethics to reach sociology. Therefore, literary production has been and still is, a key element for individual self-construction as well as the national construction, in general terms. In fact, the term cultural nationalism theorizes the idea that “there is a natural link between culture and nation. [...] Culture moved from being representational to being interventionist; the novel, in particular, began to read less like a work of anthropology and more like a polemical pamphlet” (Smith, 15-16). Then, the novel articulates the idea of the nation in the collective imagination, which is why is a central aspect in the country of *Éire*. In this sense, the rise of the importance of literature would become more evident in the late 18th century when it acted as a decisive weapon for the establishment and liberation of Ireland as in the Irish Revival movement, in which every sphere collapsed.

Nowadays, one of the most outstanding genres in the Irish republic is crime novel. The presence of the contemporary detective novel is so significant and valuable that gave a name to the subgenre: the well-known *Emerald Noir* or *Celtic Crime*. In literary terms, the word “noir” is basically related to a storyline with sex, violence, death, self-destruction, with a detective or police protagonist forced to lead against corruption and crime. Then, Emerald Noir is a term used to define those crime novels which are “gritty, realistic and concerned with contemporary Ireland” (French, n.p.). However, there are several varieties of the concept depending on the country and its particular literary features but all of them referring to the same genre such as the Scandinavian Noir, or Brit Noir.

Before getting into detail, it must be mentioned and understood that the cultural heritage of *Na Gaeil* (Irish) is highly related to the mystical past, the wild, and the gothic as it can be proved due to the significant number of graveyards and tombs crossing the island, going from the Portal Tomb at Poul nabrone, crossing Newgrange and Tara to the cemetery of Glendalough. The cult of death in Ireland is not recent since the process of dying was not only understood as a natural phenomenon in daily life but also used as an administrative item. Many anthropologists claim that “burial rites -sites- were not only used as indicators of cultural identity but also of authority over a territory” (Hartogs, n.p.). The burial sites called “fertias”, according to several shreds of evidence, were used to claim the land throughout the country. Therefore, the essence of death must be evaluated as an imperative element in Irish culture.

However, the last twenty years were decisive for the rise of the Irish crime novel. The Boom, the crash, and the recovery that followed took place in a short time, echoing and crossing social limits. Due to the economic and social instability, the established hierarchies were altered and the limits between good and bad, fair and unfair, began to disappear. Morality was changed by necessity. As a result, the cluster of power, that is police, politics, and the church, was no longer in the highest position of the rank to be relieved by criminals and gangsters. Crime fiction, then, began to explore the darker consequences of that time frame. Of course, it must be valued that despite this period is marked by profound social, economic and political turmoil which resulted in a general deterioration, it also gave rise to a significant literary creation in which “crime fiction is a symptom of the tensions, the fears, the dark places of society” (French, 2:00 – 2:03).

Certainly, every literary work has its intended purpose. The concept of recreating in a novel a story where the base of the movement comes from crime, transgression, and

the worst forms of the human being cannot be used with any other intention than reinvention and redefinition. As Michael Connolly perfectly pointed out:

These writers know the secret. That the examination of a crime is an examination of society. The form is simply the doorway we go through as we enter lives and worlds as fully realized as in any fiction, as we examine issues and societies and moral dilemmas that are important to all of us. (N.p.)

The success of the Noir genre is not a coincidence. The fundamental premise of fiction comes from imagery; thus, situations, characters, and places are not supposedly real, framing a distance between what is real and what is not. Particularly, what seems to be so dynamic in crime fiction is that the line between fantasy and reality does not differ so far as it is thought. As Mark Twain said: “Truth is stranger than fiction”.

2.1 Evolution of Irish Crime Novel

The origin of Irish Crime Fiction is a topic that is currently discussed. Some scholars argued that the crime fiction phenomenon is not only related to the twentieth century because there are vestiges of darkness and death in pre-contemporary literature but differently categorized: “murder has always been inherent in Irish literature from the gothic novels of Sheridan Le Fanu to JM Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World*, often cited as the foundation text of twentieth-century Irish drama” (Farrelly, 244). Also, the gothic novel with pieces such as Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) written by Oscar Wilde might be considered precursors of crime writing.

However, the cradle of Irish crime fiction is widely set in Belfast, Dublin, and Galway during the last decades of the 20th century. The triggering event responsible for

the raise of this genre is related to the historical background: the North Troubles of Ireland and, simultaneously, the general instability along the rest of the country that comes from the political and economic turmoil of the Celtic Tiger. Then, crime novels started to display the social consequences and the tingling of the past. As Bill Philipps pointed out: “the rise in popularity of crime fiction over the last century can be attributed to a late nineteenth century loss of faith in which the spiritually consoling priest is replaced by the rational detective” (p. 170).

Moving to nowadays, the current status of crime fiction remains intact as one of the greatest genres in Ireland. Some trends are emerging such as domestic thrillers, and women are showing their hegemony as the main consumers and writers of the genre. It is worthy to mention Jo Spain, Andrea Mara, and Liz Nugent, among others, as the most outstanding authors these days.

2.1.1 Hard-boiled vs Noir

In literary terms, crime fiction presents two different subgenres. The lines, which cannot be easily drawn at first sight, show some traces that help to distinguish them although sometimes they are interchangeable. Likewise, similarities in plot, structure, and locations are the main objects that lead readers to confusion as it belongs to the same subgenre. However, the essential distinction is in the treatment of the main character, the protagonist. How the detective deals with his/her life, background, intentions, and weaknesses are the clue of the story.

On the one hand, the hard-boiled protagonist follows a model pattern of behavior. Generally, the detective is a handmade person whose life is based on a system of moral values that goes throughout the novel trying to battle organized crime and institutionalized corruption. Their internal sphere is present, but it is not the thematic axis.

A few examples of this style of narration are Patricia Gibney and her book *The Missing Ones* or Olivia Kiernan's *Too Close To Breathe*.

On the other hand, the main character of Noir does not only present an unbalanced system of moral values but also is in a constant struggle between himself and their demons, in an internal attempt to equilibrate the limits. In this case, the inner world of the protagonist, an imperfect hero, would influence the plot significantly. Furthermore, the crimes to resolve tends to hold personal motivations, that is human weaknesses, such as frustration, anger, or revenge. *The Wrong Kind of Blood* written by Declan Hughes and the production of Ken Bruen are some examples of the Noir.

2.1.2. Realistic novel vs Fiction novel

The realistic novel is one of the most consumed narratives. This type of novel tries to impact readers through the truthful representation of reality, and creates a plausible framework for the story. As a rule, supernatural and fantastic elements cannot be included in this genre. Moving into Irish crime terms, the large majority of production is realistic.

However, there is also a presence of fiction novels regarding the Emerald Noir. Writers such as John Connolly with *Every Dead Thing* and Stuart Neville's *The Ghosts of Belfast* use supernatural elements, terror, and mystery that moves away from the Noir archetype. In a way, those works might be considered as a hybrid genre that mixes gothic novels and crime novels.

2.1.3 Northern novel vs Mid-Southern novel

As in many other fields, crime novel categorizes following different criteria. The places where the action is located have been, on several occasions, a debated topic that,

at the same time, has helped to subdivide genres. Thus, the Irish crime novel distinguished between Northern and Mid-Southern novels.

The northern novel, also known as *Belfast Noir*, is considered all those works that set the action in North Ireland, mainly in Belfast. The Troubles¹ (*Na Trioblóidí*) influenced considerably the literary sphere as well as the narrative style allowing the rise of crime production. Quite rightly, its popularity was progressive until society could heal, at least, superficial wounds:

Why read about something as an escape when it is being played out right outside your window.

The ceasefire brought with it shifting sensibilities. Once terrorists are now political leaders, prisoners were freed and a different kind of crime was able to flourish. (Brown, n.p.)

Features such as the use of *slang*, realistic descriptions and inspiration of true events are the main diet of pieces such as *The Ghost of Belfast* written by Stuart Neville, Sharon Dempsey's *Who Took Eden Mulligan* and *Dead I May Well Be* by Adrian McKinty.

Alternatively, Mid-Southern fiction embraces the rest of the country or, in other words, the Republic of *Éire*. Certainly, the most remarkable places are Dublin and Galway but, it is the capital that provides a higher number of literary productions. During the Celtic period, the rise and fall of the city gave space to a systematic dehumanization that aided the genre. Novels such as *The Rage* written by Gene Kerrigan, Banville's *Christine Falls* and *The Guards* by Ken Bruen have left their mark in Crime canons.

Finally, it should be said that, even though the two subgenres are influenced by different historical events, both of them contributed to the establishment of the genre.

¹ The term refers to the historical conflict between nationalists and unionists that took place from 1960 to 1999 in Northern Ireland.

2.1.4 Violent novel vs Rural novel

Treatment of violence is also the last feature to divide crime novels. How the story deals with force, brutality, and wildness give place to the violent novel and its antonym, the rural novel. There is a broadly based perception that violence is most related to Northern novels, while rural fiction presents a more relaxed approach being linked to Mid-South novels.

Northern literary have dealt with the *Troubles* and it seems quite consistent to use the violent sphere that has been present for a long time and still remains echoing. For instance, the production of Adrian McKinty and Eoin McNamee's *Resurrection Man* displays a map of the sociological context of that period.

3. Ken Bruen and *Jack Taylor*

One of the most outstanding Irish writers is none other than Ken Bruen, also known as “the godfather of the modern Irish crime novels” (Kenny, 1). The author of *Jack Taylor* grew in Galway, a place that would be used some years later as the epicenter of his crime novels. Moreover, that city would be meaningful to solidify his literature as the framework of the genre.

The success and popularity of Bruen are not a matter of luck, but he is the perfect example of being at the right time and in the right place. In other words, his recipe for success is the result of the historical moment and his unique style. As mentioned above, the historical period in which the Emerald noir flourishes responds to social demand, to a necessity to show, analyze and express the real impact of the times, from the individual to the entire community. The Celtic Tiger produced a requirement of examination in every surrounded field: “The books of this genre capture this fast pace of cultural change — immigration, growth of attendant cosmopolitanism and racism, housing bubble, newly wealthy and upwardly mobile young workforce” (Kincaid, 41). Accordingly, in the last decade of the 20th century, Ken Bruen would have been published a significant number of works such as *Tales of Morbidity* (1991), *Shades of Grace* (1993), or *Rilke on Black* (1996), among others. However, it would be the character of *Jack Taylor* in 2001 that catapulted him to the Noir Contemporary canons.

The wake of American hard-boiled echoed in Europe so notably in the late twentieth century, that prompted the progressive creation of this type of literature in almost every country, such as Nordic Noir, Tartan Noir, or the Emerald Noir. The literary tradition of hard-boiled was challenged by a set of writers who wanted to define new horizons. While the American detective used to trade the streets of cities such as Los

Angeles or New York, Jack Taylor did in Galway, a city in the West of Ireland, with an average of over 80 000 population. As Ken Bruen stated: “The challenge was to set the story in Galway when the hard-boiled genre is rooted in the big American cities”. Moreover, Galway was in a time of expansion, becoming a “cosmopolitan city” where criminal actions could be easily found. In fact, pioneering Bruen’s perception about Galway as the center of crime was followed by some other writers such as Dervla McTiernan, Declan Varley, and Rory McCormac.

Likewise, the influence of American writers such as Mickey Spillane, James Sallis, and James Lee Burke can be seen in the Irish crime novel: borrowing fictional names, and shared characteristics among detectives are present (addictions, ex-polices that turn to detectives, violence...). According to some critics, the fact of including those American references is a way to “facilitate his entry into a genre which has not, until recently, been associated with his native Ireland” (Phillips, 70).

Moving into the second element of Bruen’s recipe for success, his style differs completely from the rest of the writers. On the one hand, his literature has been highly influenced by his personal experiences, as he stated through different public means: “Most of my writing has been fueled and based on this huge anger and enraged. I was arrested and imprisoned in this jail in South America and it’s just about every kind of human suffering and degradation was inflicted on” (Bruen, 0:41 – 0:49). Thus, the personal background of the writer helped to translate the purest forms “of evilness”. The biggest example of the influence of his life is Jack Taylor: “Jack is based partly on my brother Noel, who was found dead, a homeless alcoholic, in the Australian outback... I wanted a character who had my fascination with books, who showed the horror of booze and unlike the other stereotype, did not love “his Mammy”.

Moreover, the relationship between writer-reader is really close in this particular case because, as Clark pointed out, “his encyclopedic knowledge of popular culture and his topical use of current political and social issues” makes the story reliable. Therefore, readers feel socially represented in some way regardless of their position. From the poorest to the richest, from the victim to the murderer, from the nerd to the popular one, from one to each other, no matter who, every reader is represented in the stories of Bruen. In fact, there is quite a common presence of “minority and minoritized groups” such as homosexuals, people with mental issues or travelers (tinkers) in his novels due to his personal relations, too.

On the other hand, his intriguing crime stories are easily recognizable because of his unique style. Some elements and motifs are consecutively included in almost all novels, declaring them as his hallmark. Then, an anti-hero protagonist, the use of drugs, the representation of the Catholic church, the economic crisis, black humor, social criticism as well as ethics code are the most general features such as in *Taming the Alien* (1998), *London Boulevard* (2001), *The Guards* (2001).

Moving into Jack Taylor novels in more detail, drugs play an inherent role since their presences seem to be the axis of the action, and Bruen knew how to naturalize them to such an extent that it becomes natural -perhaps logical- that Taylor’s office is in a pub. Quite rightly, alcohol and coke are predictably involved in all cases, sometimes by external factors, such as being the mobile of a crime, or internal factors such as Taylor's addictions.

Another element to highlight is the construction, and criticism, of the Catholic Church throughout the character of Father Malachy. The Christian priest behaves opposite that it is expected, who is often defined in the novels as a chain-smoking, foul-mouthed, and a “prize asshole”. However, that critique is more related to the Church

itself, the organization, than to the religious faith as Phillips claims: “The fact is, despite everything, Jack remains a believer. Brought up a Catholic, he still automatically crosses himself at the start of a journey, frequents churches, and occasionally prays” (174).

3.1 Selection of novels

The range of literary pieces written by Ken Bruen covers a wide list of masterpieces, but there have been selected exclusively two to carry this research, being *The Guards* and *The Magdalen Martyrs*. Jack Taylor shows an internal development throughout the cases -and novels- and it is interesting, and more evident, in these both selected. The first contact, surely defined as superficial and rushed, comes from *The Guards*, a book *in media res*. Taylor is, at least to the first pages, *An Garda Síochána* without any sign of respect for authority nor hierarchy and, before chapter two, he is fired after calling “gobshite” and punching a high profile TD. After this moment, he becomes a private investigator followed by all the demons of his past, including addictions, that will accompany him during the novel. To conclude, Taylor is introduced as a stubborn, troublesome, and addict with his system of values dispensing justice by his hand. In some moments, even pathetic.

The Magdalen Martyrs, alternatively, shows the reasons behind the erratic behavior of Taylor. The loss of his father, the dysfunctional relationship with his mother, his incapacity to establish normal relations, his addictions, and the influence of the changing social context are the clearest. As a result, readers get a more empathic bond with him. Moreover, the emotional shield of Jack is more relaxed, and his internal sphere becomes more accessible.

Finally, both books are quite rich in terms of descriptions, locations, and landscape, social issues, elements of identity, and morality that would bring a complete spectrum to the following analysis.

4. Jack Taylor, the TV series

Jack Taylor novels were adapted for TV series on the Netflix platform with a total set of nine episodes. They correspond to the novels *The Guards*, *The Magdalen Martyrs*, *The Dramatist*, *Priest*, *Cross*, *Purgatory*, and *Headstone*. However, there are two chapters (*The Pikemen* and *Shot Down*) that do not fit the books. The whole production, according to the books, is set in Galway. At times, some other places appear, but the battlefield remains the same. On the question of the temporary period, the TV series occurs in early 2000.

The series goes around the main protagonist Jack Taylor, an ex-Garda fired because of his addictions and problems with authority, that constantly drifted his demons and miseries wherever he goes. Compulsorily became a private detective, Taylor tries to straighten his life with the idea of leaving behind drugs while deals with the different cases. However, no matter how hard he strains, he always falls in the same vicious circle.

Regarding this point, one of the highest reasons behind his relapsing is related to his incapacity to handle frustration. Jack is not a good company, generally speaking: a heavy drinker at nights, king of hangovers and mental gaps during the day. Besides, he is arrogant, stubborn, unsophisticated, and ironic. But, it must be said that, he also shows such honesty and moral values that, irretrievably, make it easy to empathize with him. He has a clear limit between the fair and the unfair, and he uses whatever tool he needs to achieve justice, although that means use immoral processes. Taylor, according to Mannion, “acts, often violently, on behalf of others” (58), being an example of his tendency to advocate the voiceless. His motto, then, might be “the end justifies the means”.

This cyclical movement between his facts and his desires would be a recurrent element throughout the episodes. His hidden and deepest wishes remain, in a sense, stable because he is, paradoxically, a man of faith. Not only from a religious perspective -that too- but also as that natural driving force that makes humans believe in a better future. Hope is an important but unnoticed element as well. Moreover, the attitude of Jack Taylor is the result of the difficult times of his past and, beyond to justify him, it would be fine to understand the reason that made him be as he is. Apparently, the protagonist seems to be incapable to establish healthy relationships, and there are no clear references to his family. The only background provided about his family is rapidly introduced in the first episode *The Guards* that, assuredly, will be analyzed more profoundly later. But now, in order to introduce his personal organization, the father of Jack passed, and his mother who is still alive does not care too much about him. His relationship is distant and toxic. And here resides one of the angles of his circle of eternal perdition: his family shortcomings. Parental support has been denied to him, in a way or another, and he does not have one who really cares about him. He really tries to channel his life to prove to all of those, not only to him, that he is more than capable and worthy, but just when he is on the right way, his mother manages to diminish his attempts, and so on, so forth. The infinite loop begins again, the environment wins, and demons remain.

Nevertheless, Jack is not the only character in this TV series. The cases are complemented with the presence of the rest of the cast, whose main characters are Kate Noonan, Cody Farragher, Father Malachy, and Superintendent Clancy. The Garda Noonan is a young officer that used to be the colleague of Jack and between both of them, there is an array of unsaid, or unresolved, things. Despite the fact that she cannot help him in his investigations because of a professional conflict of interests, she always gives in although the consequences that it brings. The character of Kate is plenty of meaning

because she represents justice, effort, and patient as well as she is an example of correctness and good life. In this sense, I consider that Jack sees her as the anchor to a better life, his daily reminder that there is still hope for happiness. On the other hand, she depicts the purest form of what being a Garda means and, in some moments, young Taylor, his primitive version, reflects on her.

The second figure is Cody Farragher, the sidekick of Jack. He is a cheerful, intelligent, and naïve young man that wanted to start his detective career collaborating with the protagonist. They underwent several situations that reinforced his emotional bond. Following, Father Malachy is, as his name declares, a Cristian priest that would be continuously involved with Taylor, occasionally in the different investigations and some others because of his friendship with Mrs. Taylor. Finally, the last character is Superintendent Clancy, who plays a rivalry with Jack in many times. They used to be colleagues once, but Clancy currently wants to tear the protagonist apart from the cases and, if possible, to society.

Moving into the location, Galway became the base of the action, as it was previously mentioned. Even though the importance of the crime novel's location will be examining afterward, it is noteworthy two ideas at this point. To begin with, the presence of a small city in Noir terms breaks the American conception -tradition- of the genre, apparently, to give a more authentic approach. Irish identity has been related to nature and the landscape because of their incorruptibility and authenticity, and big cities such as Dublin or Belfast do not seem to fit in this framework. Dublin, which became the home base of many companies, square better with the hard-boiled place, brought from America, because of its growing and changeable tendency.

Also, the humorous perspective of the series would not have been placed so perfectly in another location. For example, the central office of the detective is the Crane Bar, a

pub. Despite being chaotic and plenty ironic, it is must be argued that the greatest deals have reached in a bar, which finally results quite realistic. And that is the magic of Jack Taylor: the ambiguity between what is expected about current life, and the things that Jaylor does. Even the professional shape of the protagonist is absorbed by his authenticity.

Finally, the Netflix version provides a degree of visual elements that perfectly represents the noir genre. Thus, as Philip Simpson argues:

The element of violent crimes does not in itself define noir; rather noir is stamped by its prevailing mood of pessimism, personal and societal failure, urban paranoia, the individual disconnection from society and cynicism... Noir's universe is bleak, divested of meaning. Flawed human beings in these stories must somehow make moral decisions with no transcendent foundation of morality (p.189).

To conclude, this graphical version of Jack Taylor is fresh, funny, intelligent, and real.

5. The comparative approach

One of the most intriguing questions regarding a book and its adaptation into the small screen is whether would have been possible to transmit the story and its degree of accuracy. On the whole, TV series, mini-series, and movies can adapt the plot, but some shades seem to be dismissed. Of course, being able to transport every little detail is almost impossible, but the selection of the most relevant is the key to success. Therefore, elements such as preciseness, faithfulness, reliability as well as similarities and differences are going to be in the center of the spotlight of this analysis.

To begin with, it can be agreed that the Netflix version of Jack Taylor is faithful to the book, at least in general terms. The characters are quite suitable, general locations and the sphere are well transmitted and the plot follows, largely, the timeline of the book. Galway is amazingly represented in Noir terms, with that creepy, threatening, and dangerous sensation over every episode that makes coherent that high rate of crime. Also, the performance of Iain Glen as Jack Taylor visualizes, even more, the internal war of the protagonist. Something interesting of this version of the protagonist is his visual, constant duality: his facts point to his personal downfall and disquiet (repeated state of violence, drugs and hangovers), but his body language expresses his goods attempts and inner thoughts, such as the way he looks to someone, or his suffering from injustices. Finally, the structure of the TV series behaves as the book does: brief dialogues, but concise; a rapid movement of the action, and the context is accurately placed as the basis of the action, giving more importance to the corrupted society than to the crime itself.

Going further, there are several similarities that it is interesting to emphasize. Firstly, temporality is a shared element in both versions. There are not many clues related to the time, being the night the most recognizable period of action, which perfectly fits with the

Noir genre. Crime and conflicts use to work more efficiently in darkness as it is been proved in *The Guards* and *The Magdalen Martyrs* where murders were committed at night. Furthermore, the duration of the episode, over 90 minutes, quickly strikes watchers because it is not usual in the streaming format. Then, there are found many similarities in the treatment of the time.

To continue, cultural references are widely used, going from music, literature, or art to religion in an attempt to depict Irish identity. The general habits of a nation are the most symbolic representation of its citizens, and the series gets the perfect scope to show them. For example, the funerary ceremony during the wake of Damian Flood displays the traditional treatment of death in Ireland and how religion is present in daily life. Also, art behaves like one more character since the beginning: a painting about *Once a gard, always a gard*, books in Jack's bedroom, Irish folklore in pubs... Those elements do not usually appear in Noir novels regardless they are pieces of evidence or clues. Besides, Irishness is present in the language (*Sláinte*), traditions (*Visiting graves is a respected, honoured tradition in Ireland* (92), and economic-political issues (*The message from the visionaries had been that Ireland would be saved! The Celtic Tiger gave the lie to that* (126). In contrast, it must be said that the references provided in the series cannot reach the large number of manifestations from the novels. Almost every page of the book contains a small prologue that introduces the episode, and they vary among proverbs, quotations (*When did a private detective solve a crime? Never*), thoughts (*The leavings of an inarticulate thanks*), poems, and songs (*Inviolata* by Johnny Duhan).

Those references are, in fact, the ones that help in the construction of the protagonist. For instance, the book *The Hound of Heaven* appears in both versions of Taylor, which rapidly suggests the importance of its meanings, in *The Guards*. On the one hand, that book of poems implies his taste for artistic manifestations, poetry in this

case, outlining his cultured knowledge; on the other hand, the religious thematic indicates his faith and his attempts to go on the rails again. Reader's perspective about Jack is based on those thoughts and feelings which are camouflaged on the small screen, so watchers cannot approximate the different levels and worries of Jack as readers do. The novel gives a more prolific vision about his sufferings: *I'd once heard depression described as being under murky, fetid water and not being able to break the surface. That fit.* (12, *The Magdalen Martyrs*). Also, something that has been missed is the influence that literature had on Jack's life:

“Don't mind your mother. She means well. But you keep reading”

“Why, Dad?”

“They'll give you options”

“What's options?”

“Freedom, son”

This dialogue catches the attention of the readers and makes it impossible to keep reading without thinking about the powerful meaning of those words. Once again, a different sheet of Taylor is discovered. Finally, another curious fact is the meta-literary references about crime novel: “It's *The Blonde on the Street Corner* [...] Crime novel written in 1954 by David Goodis” (37, *The Guards*).

Finally, there are more slight variations between both versions: Some characters were added, some others removed, name's protagonists have changed (Netflix's Kate Noonan is called Catherine Bellingham in the novel), and the humorous component of Jack so obvious throughout the novels is missed, or, at least, thinned.

5.2 Galway

Regarding the location, “the city is the fourth main character; its shapes, coddles, beguiles and seduces, and to do this it has been ever present like a banshee², just slightly in the mist, keening” (Bruen, n.p). The streets of Galway have been superbly portrayed. The city is transformed from a quiet, crowded place into the center of organized crime so empty. It seems that almost all the significant places of the city appear in that series, and the action is not based on a static stage. This mobility among places ensures the sensation of Galway as a large city while it is the opposite.

In this sense, Galway works as the axis of the success of Jack Taylor’s production, including novels as well as the series. The pioneering selection of Ken Bruen of a small city as the heart of his novels not only became him one of the greatest revolutionary writers of the genre, but also establish that something more important than the crime itself is the set of circumstances, and context, that bred it. The natural condition of the streets, people and dialogues, props, and houses quickly form connections between the action and the watchers. A sense of belonging and authenticity is an irremediable bond and, when this feeling appears, “emotional geography” emerges. The term is used to explain the role of emotions (hope, fear, or desire, among others) have in “shaping society, and in defining and transforming people and place” (Wright, n.p). The fundamental emotions related to a place are usually shared by the community because, in general terms, people tend to associate problems, or joy, to the specific place and moment that occurs. Particularly, fear is closely related to the territory, and panic, violence, and instability seem to remain in the social mental structure.

² In Irish folklore, a female spirit, usually taking the form of a woman whose mournful wailing warns of an impending death.

As some scholars said:

Without doubt, our emotions matter. They have tangible effects on our surroundings and can shape the very nature and experience of our being-in-the-world. Emotions can clearly alter the way the world is for us, affecting our sense of time as well as space. (Davidson & Milligan, 524)

For that, the construction of this dark Galway is brilliant. Noir sphere has been built throughout the citizens that live there, and locations. For example, the actions are focused on open places, such as The Long Walk or the Ballynow Quay, but then, when the story becomes more dangerous, it tends to be located in small or sealed places such as blind alleys or old buildings. This really works to transmit those sensations of oppression, anxiety and the impossibility to escape. The series, then, is a reference in terms of depiction of the Irish popular culture and the Irish Noir genre.

5.3 Additional comments

To conclude, one last element to consider is the global scope of both versions of Jack Taylor. Thanks to the current technological advances, the consumption of online streaming and TV watching has been increasing considerably during the last years, and the rise of platforms such as HBO, Amazon Prime, Disney +, and Netflix truly impelled a new visual era. But the fact is, that beyond the innovations of the cinematic field, which marked a before and after was the global pandemic, COVID-19. The general lockdown enacted to avoid the spread of the virus resulted in a set of new daily habits such as making crafts, exercising at home, telecommuting, or series-marathon running. Contextualizing, it is estimated that “adults spent an average of six hours and 25 minutes each day staring at screens”, according to Rajan (n.p), increasing over 30% in relation with previous months.

Taking this into consideration, the scope of the online Taylor differs from the literary version. Netflix, the platform in which the Jack Taylor series is listed, counts with over 180 million customers, while the book holds a more limited market space. In this sense, it cannot be denied that the period of lockdown also incremented the number of book sales, but still, the scope remains unparalleled. Besides, the different translations of the book are being discontinued, which reduces significantly the literary version.

6. Conclusion

After having analyzed the different elements, it can be concluded the following ideas: in the first place, the TV series embodies, in a more accurate perspective, the components that involve Jack Taylor's sphere. The way in which the series had been designed projects the perfect vision of the Irish popular culture, especially in Galway. An undeniable sense of authenticity is provided throughout the different episodes as a result of the use of the Galwegian accent, the real locations such as the Spanish Arch, the Galway Cathedral, and the Crane Bar, and the social representation. Furthermore, those elements assemble a solid structure for the reliability of the action.

Secondly, the character of Jack Taylor is not as simple as some reviewers claim. To a certain extent, a noir protagonist follows some general features, generally called *clichés*, to represent a lifestyle and the shadows that conform to it. However, Taylor is not only an archetype, he is also a hybrid. His character shows such realistic traces that he touches the extreme, being pathetic and depressing sometimes. In this sense, it is undoubted that a plane *-cliché-* protagonist would never awake those sentiments among their consumers. Then, the protagonist is moved from the commercial kind of detective to evolve in an independent form of an investigator.

Moreover, there are fine details that make Taylor different from other Noir, or hard boiled, protagonists. There are popular references surround him regardless of the moment of the action, from art, history, religion, and health. Still, Taylor crosses among several social issues like no other does. He is the type of a middle-low class person, son of the fragile social framework caused by all historical changes. Finally, he is the product of different circumstances, but not merely exclusive from shared features from the Noir genre.

To the best of my knowledge, the use of the emotional geography in a new sense of crime novel, as it was the Emerald Noir, was the most prolific decision in literary terms. The traditional American hard-boiled stands out the crime itself and the different hierarchies within it, but Irish crime inserts the context as the real creator of crime, corruption, and sickness, being the crime a mere result. Those two perspectives make, in my opinion, the authentic distinction between Hard-boiled and Noir.

Continuing, the degree of adequacy and reflection of the historical and social context is been differently exposed. While the book describes several themes from a more profound perspective, the series operates on the surface. It is true, too, that literature and cinema are different resources with alternative tools. In this sense, the gap of details is neutralized by actresses and actors thanks to the possibility of visualizing what and where things are happening.

Moving into the current state of the Irish crime novel, the genre keeps its position as one of the most consumed. Quite rightly, it is evolving into new stylistic forms and topics and, among others, the domestic mystery thriller is settling its legitimacy over the rest of the trends such as *The Mountains Wild: A Mystery* written by Sara Stewart and Catherine Ryan Howard's *The Liar's Girl*.

Finally, the success of Ken Bruen is clearly determined by his ability to state the truth in his novels. There are not options to disguise or to forget, he finds a way to show the reality -and angst- of life in a natural way, even the most difficult events. His realistic perspective includes all social groups, from top to bottom and right to left, making active participants whoever touches Jack Taylor's novels. Also, his fresh and intelligent style facilitates entry into his world: "elegant, smooth, spare, and silky as the best aged Irish whiskey. Sharp, swift, and blackly comic" (Portsmouth Herald).

To conclude, the main objective of this paper was to understand the different events that promote the rise of the Irish crime novel and, after that, being able to analyze how is depicted the same character throughout alternative resources. The findings suggest that books are more related to the deepest and delicate elements of the story while online streaming provides a more visual approach and facilitates its spread due to social habits. The components of a character and the perspective of the readers hardly fit in the cinematographic convention. The complexity of the internal life and the stream of consciousness of a character is hardly transmitted into 90 minutes episodes and, after all the different innovations and trends, literature remains to be the best tool to analyze the most important and transcendent themes of life.

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