Place and belonging: The experience of return migration for the second generation Irish from Britain

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Place, belonging and second generation return migration from Britain to Ireland

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Abstract: The enduring connections between the children of migrants and their parental homelands suggest that the parental home place/s frequently remain meaningful and significant to next generations. This paper aims to explore the concept of belonging in the context of second generation return migration. It is based on research with a small group of the children of the Irish in Britain who, as adults, chose to move to Ireland; a return to a perceived home. The term 'belonging' captures the desire for some sort of attachment (Probyn, 1996). In the case of second generation returnees it is the desire for an attachment to place, the feeling or expectation that 'I belong here' (Antonsich, 2010). A qualitative methodology was used in order to explore the relationship these migrants have with Ireland and places in it and the results show how three experiences of 'belongingness' emerged. The first is the belief, that this is undoubtedly the place that the person belongs, in spite of what others may think or say. The second is a sense of not belonging, a feeling of displacement. The third is a reflexive sense of belonging; an acceptance of the benefits of a loosening of ties to place with evidence for maximising the benefits of dual belongings.

Keywords: belonging, place, return migration, second generation Irish, Irish in Britain

Introduction

There is a growing literature on the links between the children of emigrants and their parental homelands; this includes transnational behaviours which maintain connections with place of origin (Levitt and Waters, 2002) as well as return migratory movements (Conway *et al.,* 2005; Christou, 2006; Teerling, 2011; Wessendorf, 2013). The enduring connections between the children of migrants and their parental homelands suggest that the parental home place/s frequently remain meaningful and significant to next generations. This challenges assumptions of

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assimilation into the host society and also indicates a need to consider multiple motivations for migration.

This paper is based on research with a small group of people who were born in Britain to the Irish migrants of the 1950s and who have returned to live in Ireland as adults. The aim is to explore the sense of belonging in the context of this second generation return migration. Following Antonsich, the paper explores the sense of territorial belonging claimed in the statement 'I belong here' (2010, p. 645). For Antonsich, this includes the 'personal, intimate feeling of being "at home" in a place (place-belongingness)' (2010, p. 645) as well as the 'discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play' in the specific place in which belonging is claimed and which therefore 'condition one's sense of place-belongingness' (2010, p. 649); this can be summed up as the 'politics of belonging' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 197).

In Ireland this is particularly relevant given the recent and rapid reversal of Ireland's migration pattern from one of emigration to immigration and the extent to which this has challenged Ireland's cosy image as a place of welcome. This is best summed up by Hickman (2007, p. 16):

> Despite a fostered reputation of being the country of 1,000 welcomes, immigrants have often faced a hostile reception in Ireland past and present. The 'Ireland of the welcomes' is not always apparent if you visit from Northern Ireland or if you visit from England, are of Irish descent and have an English accent. In both these instances an at best ambivalent, and often adverse response, can greet claims that a visitor might make about 'being Irish'.

Return to the parental homeland for the second generation Irish from Britain does not therefore guarantee a straightforward sense of 'I belong here' and it is this experience which this paper shall explore.

Place, Belonging and Migration

For most of us, place, and whether or not we belong in a particular place, is unthought of and taken for granted most of the time. Cresswell, for example, states that 'our consciousness of place all but disappears when it appears to be working well' (1996, p. 10) and Probyn suggests that 'if you have to think about belonging, perhaps you are already outside' (1996, p. 8). Edensor (2002) argues that for most people, most of the time, there exists a feeling of belonging to place which arises from an unreflexive sense of identity. An individual develops a sense of (national) place through an experience which is 'grounded in the everyday, in the mundane details of social interaction, habits, routines and practical knowledge' (2002, p. 17) and this feeling of belonging in place typically requires no effort, is unquestioned and unconscious. The claim 'I belong here', when it is stated, is therefore straightforward and uncontroversial for the individual and for those around him/her (see Skey, 2011, for an example in the context of English national identity). Implicit in this unreflexive sense of belonging is Bourdieu's concept of

habitus; the ability to act appropriately, in a specific social field, without conscious or calculated effort (Bourdieu 1990). It is not suggested here that habitus *creates* an emotional attachment to place; rather it confers a sense of unreflexive identity which may convey an innate right to belong. May defines belonging as 'a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings' (2011, p. 368) and argues that this sense of ease is created through having learned the unwritten 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). However, it is possible, as May (2011) goes on to argue, that people can live in a familiar world and operate within the particular habitus and yet still feel that they do not belong. Therefore, belonging requires more than just learning and employing a set of rules; it also includes the emotions people have about places and their desire or yearning 'for more than what is' (Probyn, 1996, p. 6). McCreanor *et al.,* state that, 'the experience of belonging can be the glue linking place and identity' (2006, p. 197). Exploring the nature of this 'glue', therefore, allows a richer understanding of the emotion people have about places and how this shapes and motivates behaviour.

Migration, a stepping out of place, challenges an individual's taken-for-granted sense of belonging and their unquestioned right to claim 'I belong here'. Employing the appropriate 'rules of the game' may now be less straightforward, thus reducing the feeling of ease and raising the reflexive awareness with which an individual operates in new surroundings. For the children of migrants this reflexive sense of belonging in place is heightened further. The combination of lives lived in one place while shaped by the dispositions of their migrant parents means that although second generations experience a society as insiders (Hickman, 2007, p. 21) they may also be aware of other choices available to them in terms of where they claim they belong, although these choices are rarely straightforward.

With specific reference to the second generation Irish in Britain, recent autobiographical writing usefully clarifies some of the issues of belonging and the related senses of displacement and hybridity for this group, who 'belong completely to neither one culture nor the other and are caught between their parents' heritage and their present context' (Greenslade, 1992, p. 220). Walsh, for example, in *The Falling Angels*, refers to 'the constant switchback of [his] relationship' with England and Ireland in a memoir which attempts to describe 'the condition of being between two cultures' (2000, p. 30). Casey also considers this in her novel, *Over the Water*, in which she reflects on her relationship with the two countries wondering which 'is my true home' and stating 'I do not know where I belong' (Casey cited in Arrowsmith, 2000, p. 35). Therefore, issues surrounding belonging are perhaps part of the second generation condition; a way of being which Arrowsmith argues is 'truly, genuinely inauthentic' (2000, p. 42) (see also Harte, 2003). For these writers, there is a search for the reassurance of belonging to *one* place and a sense of loss and confusion that they cannot confirm their belongingness in either England/Britain or Ireland. However, this unrequited search for belonging is not the only option for second generations. Bromley (2000) illustrates how, through the British-Asian character of Meena in Syal's semi-autobiographical novel, *Anita and Me*, it is possible for second

generations to successfully navigate the two worlds of their parental and natal culture and create their own relationship with place/s. As a result of the dual influences of her Asian family and her childhood in the British Midlands, Meena concludes that 'the place in which I belonged was wherever I stood and there was nothing stopping me simply moving forward and claiming each resting place as home' (Syal cited in Bromley, 2000, p. 148). Her British-Asian experience has, in a sense, empowered her to claim belonging wherever she should choose rather than limit herself to one, possibly idealised, place.

Research with the second generation Irish in Britain has identified a desire to claim a hybrid identity label (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2003; Hickman et al., 2005; Walter, 2006) with the associated assumption of dual belongings. Hybrid labels such as London-Irish or Manchester-Irish, for example, 'acknowledge the duality of [second generation] placement' in a specific British city while also retaining 'an ongoing and acknowledged displacement' from Ireland (Walter, 2006, p. 20 italics in the original). Regardless of this desire to articulate a hybrid 'British-Irish' identity, it remains an identity charged with 'inauthenticity both from those pressuring them to be English and from those denying their Irish identifications' (Hickman et al., 2005, p. 177) based on their white skin and English accents (see Walter, 2008). As a result the second generation are often 'invisible' within the white majority in Britain (Hickman et al., 2005) and therefore, unlike Meena above, are disempowered, unable to fully belong in Britain or Ireland.

Despite the individual voices of the second generations quoted above, belonging is more than just an individual feeling, it is also about an understanding of who 'we' are (May 2013). The personal feeling of place belonging is frequently about 'who I belong with' which implicitly includes assumptions about 'who I do not belong with' or 'who does not belong with me'. Therefore, exploring belonging contributes to understanding how groups define themselves and the behaviours in which belongingness is challenged illuminate the edges or boundaries of the group. In the context of recent return to Ireland, Ní Laoire (2008) illustrates the dual and opposing positionings of Irish born returning migrants who are assumed to be simply homecomers to a society in which immigrants are always foreign and 'other'. Thus, the individual experience of return is shaped by the wider discourses about migration which exist in Ireland at present. This results in a heightened sense of displacement for these returning migrants since there is no space to acknowledge their experiences during their time away and their possible need for readjustment. Ralph also notes that 'returnees often find themselves discursively positioned as "different", as outside mainstream Irish society' (2012, p. 446) and in his study of Irish returnees from the US, also found that while they did not 'stand out' like other migrant groups in Ireland, they nevertheless struggled with the day-to-day demands of fitting in as soon as they returned (see also Conlon, 2009).

For Probyn, (1996), belonging is experienced through social interaction and created and recreated in everyday encounters; therefore, it is while taking part in Edensor's 'mundane details of social interaction' (2002, p. 17) that an individual

feels their belongingness, or not. The fact that these social interactions are shaped by the wider socio-political structures at work in a place means that exploring an individual's experience of place-belongingness also sheds light on the politics of belonging in that particular place, thus connecting the individual to the politics of a place at a specific time (May 2013).

Therefore, this paper presents an experience of place-belongingness for these second generation return migrants, which is shaped by the politics of belonging in Ireland at the present time. The narratives indicate a range of feelings of belonging (or not) in Ireland and their stories help to explain what creates this 'glue' between place and identity.

Background to the study

Since the 1990s, Ireland has experienced positive net migration made up of Irish born returning migrants with, for the first time, increasing numbers of immigrants of other nationalities. Within this new flow of immigrants were the British born who compose Ireland's largest foreign born population of 230,157 in 2011 (CSO 2011). These figures include the children of the Irish in Britain who, although British born, may well describe themselves as Irish and perceive Ireland to be home. It is difficult to extract this second generation group from the statistics in order to quantify their presence; census data on Birthplace 'England and Wales' and Nationality 'Irish' inevitably includes large numbers of people who may have returned to Ireland during childhood, a return migration pattern which was particularly evident in the 1970s (Ní Laoire, 2004). This paper is based on research which, rather than proving the existence of second generation return through statistics, focused on the experience of that return in order to try to understand how people develop emotional attachments to particular places. Understanding return migration and particularly, second generation return, requires a consideration of decision making which includes the '"non-economic" issues that inform much migration behaviour' (Halfacree, 2004, p. 239). The emotion people have for particular places and the fact of the migration event as a culmination of past experiences combined with future aspirations means that migration is, as Fielding writes, 'a statement of an individual's world-view, and is, therefore, an extremely *cultural* event' (1992, p. 201). Thus, exploring the migrant's feelings of belonging to a particular place offers an explanation for the feeling that 'this is the place I want to be/am meant to be' in the absence of (or in addition to) economic factors.

In the 1950s, over 400,000 people left Ireland with the majority going to Britain (Delaney, 2007). This paper is based on the experiences of their children who have now 'returned' to Ireland. They are referred to as return migrants since, although they are not returning to their place of birth, Ireland is seen as a place of origin. During various interviews and without any prompting, participants referred to their migration as 'going back', 'going home' or 'returning' and defended their responses when questioned. In addition, they also, unreflexively, referred to their 'home' in Britain. This is a group of migrants who grew up in Britain in Irish families and communities at a time when claiming Irishness in Britain,

outside of the family, could be problematic (Hickman *et al.,* 2005). Typically, they attended Catholic schools, often took part in Irish cultural activities, such as traditional music and dance, and also made regular trips 'home' to Ireland during the school summer holidays. In this way, they acquired a familiarity with Irish 'ways of being' (Glick Schiller, 2004), the practices of daily life which shaped being Irish in Britain and differed from the host English/British population as well as from the Irish in Ireland. Many participants described their 'meat and two veg dinners', the Irish accents of their parents, the contact with home in Ireland through letters and newspapers, and social lives which revolved around the local Catholic church or Irish Centre. Through such practices, these children acquired a particular habitus; a set of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990) which enabled them to act within their family and the Irish community without conscious or calculated effort and in this way they learned to 'fit' into this particular social field and gain a sense of belonging to the group. At the same time, while growing up in Britain they inevitably also learned to 'fit' in other non-Irish social fields, for example, at school, thus developing a particular second generation habitus which is flexible and exhibits a certain amount of reflexivity depending on context (Sweetman, 2003). One important aspect of the habitus of this second generation group was the idea that home was elsewhere; an idea confirmed by regular visits to this home where they gained a direct experience of (usually) rural Ireland and their family and communities there. This often led to what Buckley describes as 'an unshakeable sense of continued belonging to their native neighbourhoods in Ireland' which resulted in 'anchoring' their identities there (1997, pp. 111-112).

It is unsurprising therefore, given Ireland's changed economic circumstances since the 1990s, that (some of) the children of the Irish in Britain would seek to return. Having grown up with an ongoing connection to 'home' in Ireland, this could be seen as the place to which they inevitably felt they belonged. Many of those interviewed expressed a strong desire to be physically in place; in Ireland, the country and sometimes specifically in their parents' home places. For practical reasons, they may have chosen a location according to employment opportunities, for financial reasons or based on a partner's needs; what came across in interviews was the significance of Ireland as a perceived place of origin and connection. At the same time, as shall be shown, the social experience of emplacement has required them to justify their claims of 'I belong here' and challenged them to prove themselves to others and, at times, to themselves. Analysis of their narratives presents an experience of belonging which is therefore felt at the intersection of place-belongingness and the politics of belonging (Antonsich, 2010, p. 653).

Research Methodology

Participants for the study were recruited through letters to four County newspapers (*The Clare Champion, The Mayo News, The Kerryman* and *The Limerick Leader*) and one free newspaper, *The Galway Advertiser*. Notices were also placed in small shops such as local convenience stores which are often attached to petrol stations; these were in the same counties as referred to above. There was one radio interview (Mid-West radio) and participants were also sought through a small number of personal contacts. The letters and notices were titled, 'Born in Britain to Irish parents?' and after contact was made, further information was sent out specifying that participants needed to have moved as adults, independent of their parents. It was also decided to focus on the cohort of people born in the 1960s who would loosely be the children of the 1950s emigrants from Ireland. Second generation returnees therefore opted-in to the study and volunteered their stories. Information was collected from thirty people. First, they were asked to 'write me something about how you have come to be living in Ireland'. This was followed up with in-depth interviews which took the general themes of growing up in Britain, the decision to move, and life in Ireland since the move. Using this qualitative methodology enabled an exploration around the question 'why did you move?' (Ní Laoire, 2000, p. 239). Personal stories illustrate the way in which belonging is felt in everyday encounters and recreated with each social event (Probyn, 1996, p. 13) and this methodology allowed participants to recall day-to-day events which shaped their sense of connection to Ireland as well as to explore the social encounters which have confirmed or denied their feelings of belonging in this place.

This paper draws from my PhD research on second generation return migration from Britain which addressed the experience of growing up 'Irish' in Britain and how a sense of connection to Ireland may have shaped migration decision making. It was motivated by my own experience of growing up in Britain in an Irish family and my choice to move to Ireland, as an adult, in 2004. My positioning as an 'insider' to the research meant that I could often relate to the emotions with which participants recalled past experiences and their feelings about place/s in Ireland. This included, for example, memories of the long journey by car/train and ferry from urban Britain to 'home' in Ireland or the feeling of being Irish in Britain and English in Ireland. This was useful in enabling me to explore some issues further, particularly when one person described her feelings that Ireland was home as 'intangible' or for those who talked of particular sensory memories such as the taste of red lemonade or the ubiquitous smell of turf smoke. My own memories, which were triggered during the process of data gathering, helped me to delve deeper, to question and explore the life events being recalled and in this way build a picture of the second generation return experience.

A summary table of the participants referred to in the following section is shown in Table 1.

Table A1. Background information on the participants referred to in this paper[1]

Pseudonym	Year of birth	Origin in Britain	Current location	Reason given for move
James	1960	Essex	Co. Kerry (town)	'At a pivotal point of change and crisis I remembered my childhood vow [to return]'.
Thomas	1960	Yorkshire	Co. Cork (town)	'Just maybe the Irish [branch] needs a bit of help, so I came over and started to talk to them about it and they said yeah come over, so I did and ended up here in Cork'.
Amy	1965	Birmingham	Co. Galway (village)	'The biggest single reason was the death of my mother: my home in Britain was my parents' home, my Irish home'.
Marion	1960	London	Co. Clare (rural area)	'Where we live now is like where he [husband] grew up... in Hampshire in a small village... he always loved Clare'.
Susan	1968	London	Co. Galway (town)	'I was on holiday here visiting a friend in Clare, he said: "Why don't you come and do that course you keep talking about?"'
Dermot	1970	Leeds	Co. Galway (town)	'[On return from Australia] It would be just easier to stay in the travelling frame of mind and hop over to Ireland for a trial... and that's what I did basically'.
Jackie	1966	London	Co. Galway (village)	'A job came up in Galway and we were "Oh my God, this is Ireland". It was very exciting'.
Fiona	1970	London	Co. Offaly (rural area)	'I came over to Ireland [for a year] to spend more time with my [returned] parents and to end a relationship'.

[1] **Note:** Stating a straightforward 'reason for move' oversimplifies many of these migratory movements. The physical and cultural proximity of Ireland and Britain means that the 'reason for moving' may not be the same as the 'reason for staying' since the possibility of return to Britain or repeated circulation is an option. In the case of Dermot, for example, his move was the non-committal 'just see what happens' of someone in his early 20s; during his 'trial' he met his future wife and decided to stay permanently. For Susan, although she moved to study for an MA, her choice of course and destination was shaped by her curiosity about the place she thought should be home and her decision to stay after her course had ended was an extension of this. She also had the security of knowing that she could easily return to London if she changed her mind.

The findings

Analysis of the interviews identified three different experiences of belonging for the participants after their migration to Ireland. The first is a feeling that 'I belong here' although this feeling of belonging to place of origin had to allow for a lack of understanding for these claims by others at times. The next two participants illustrate a feeling of 'I don't belong here'. Despite growing up with a strong sense of being Irish in Britain, their return to Ireland as adults, and their experiences in the everyday have left them questioning their reasons for being here and whether or not their futures will be in Ireland. The final group indicate a reflexive sense of belonging. Their comments are similar to those of British-Asian, Meena, referred to earlier, in the sense of maximising their connections to multiple places.

'I belong here'

For some participants the feeling of 'I belong here' was without doubt. They felt that they had come 'home' in the sense that this was the place they were 'meant' to be. At the same time this feeling was inevitably shaped by the specific 'discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion' (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649) that operate in Ireland around newcomers and particularly for those who speak with English accents and yet claim an Irish identity. For this first group, their belief in the fact of 'I belong here' was usually with an acceptance of the inevitable lack of understanding from others. However, their emotional connection could override this. In this first example, James illustrates his belief that Ireland is the place he is 'meant' to be and that this is a link between him and the physical place; 'primarily an emotional bond with the country which is indefinable. I don't know how to explain it but it's a very strong emotional thing'. By returning during what he described as, 'a pivotal point of change and crisis' in his life, he was sure that this place would look after him because of this emotional bond (I was) 'convinced that somehow if I returned to Ireland for good, that somehow I would be "looked after", certainly not by the State, nor the people, but by the place itself which I had always felt I truly "belonged" to'. Although describing a link with the physical place in a spiritual sense, it is his family's embeddedness in the local area which gives this place meaning for him. As a result, he felt that this was also his place in a way that England never was or could be:

> Driving here today I drove past the [name] graveyard, there's four or five of my relatives buried there. Last night I took my partner's mother and sister to visit [name] Church, seven or eight of my relatives in there. On the way here I drove past where my grandfather was born and where all my family are from, so when I look at this landscape I know my position in it, it doesn't matter if other people don't know about it. Whereas in England you look across the landscape, what does it mean to me? Nothing to do with me at all.

Despite the strength of his belief that 'I belong here', his experience has been shaped by discourses of exclusion which fail to recognise his connection to this place and which he has accepted as a fact of being here:

> My own sense of identity has at times been challenged by a very small minority of people in Ireland who insist on identifying me as 'English' despite me never having had that conception of myself before. However most people once I have patiently, (and believe me sometimes patience is required), explained my strong family connections to Ireland seem to accept me as Irish.

Another example of belonging to the physical place was given by Thomas who grew up in rural Yorkshire and now lives in Co. Cork. He described his childhood as follows: '...the Irish home was music and singing and boozing and the usual *craic*. I mean that's what it was there, they were a little enclave. My father was a drummer and a musician, he loved it. I was just a kid being brought up in an English environment with all Irish people around me'. Although he visited his mother's family in Ireland every summer, unusually, he did not describe this as a very positive experience. Instead he felt that, 'I was an "English Proddy", that's what the local kids used to call me so it wasn't a very good experience for me, put on the boat in Liverpool and sent over'. He grew up with a certain amount of confusion about his Irish identity and as he got older he rejected that identity in preference for an English one. During a visit to Ireland as a young adult his sense of attachment was recalled as, 'I just couldn't quite work it out, there was something there but I didn't know what it was, just I had Irish parents but I didn't have any connection any more; it was too long'. He explained this sense of 'cultural familiarity' as follows: 'my mother and father sowed seeds in me about Ireland, the fact that my father never spoke about Cork, it was the unknown of my life'. He felt that the circle is complete, that through a series of events the place had brought him back, and he explained this as, 'something about this land I was born from and all my ancestors were born from this island', as if the fact of his family's engagement with this place in the past had created a spiritual connection with him which is contained in the land. For Thomas, it was the habitus of his Irish childhood which stirred this sense of belonging in him as an adult. The place and how to 'be' in this place was familiar to him and this therefore created a sense of ease into which he could fit.

In this final example, Amy, like James, indicates an acceptance that her claims to be Irish are not always understood despite her own sense of herself as an Irish person: 'I have always perceived myself as Irish. Both my parents were Irish, Dad from Donegal, Mum from Mayo. The church in Birmingham where they were married, St Francis's, served a mainly Irish community. The schools I attended were full of children like me'. Since her move she found that 'it grates when I am described as English, it's an innocent mistake, not meant to be offensive, but I have always perceived myself as Irish'. However, she did not take it personally or let it make her feel unwelcome. For Amy, her move to Ireland was prompted

by the death of her Irish parents in Birmingham; significantly, the house she grew up in was an Irish home and with the death of her parents this link to Ireland was gone. Therefore, moving to Ireland was one way of reconnecting with some elements of Irishness she had acquired from her parents: 'Many people have asked me why I moved here? The biggest single reason was the death of my mother, my home in Britain was my parents' home, my Irish home. With Mum's passing a year after Dad's, England just wasn't home any more'. While living in England, the illness of her parents (and a sister) had limited her career prospects due to the time she committed to caring for them and she felt that at work she had become a 'second class citizen'. In Ireland, however, it was a relief to find an employer who 'understood that family trumped every time'. In this way the dispositions of her habitus, acquired in her Irish family in Britain, operated to make her feel 'relief' and therefore 'at ease' in opposition to the stressful work situation she had found herself in previously, thus confirming her feelings of belongingness.

'I don't belong here'

In the next two examples, the experience of being at the intersections of place-belongingness and the politics of belonging led the participants to conclude that they do not belong here in Ireland. In the first example, Marion moved from inner London to the house in which her father grew up in rural Co. Clare. She described a feeling of displacement due to the way the identity she grew up ascribing herself now contradicts the identity she is now ascribed by others: 'I almost feel like I'm a displaced person if you like because when you were a child growing up you were always Irish, you always considered yourself to be Irish and since I've arrived here everyone considers me to be English'. And she illustrated this further with the following comment: '...and even friends, you know when they were playing the rugby in Croke Park for the first time there were a few comments made. So they would see me as English even though my "pedigree" [is Irish]'. Her experience of belonging to the nation is felt at the level of the everyday in her local area where the national identity she grew up with is no longer recognised since she is now considered to be English, an identity assigned to her based on her London accent. In addition, she found it hard to 'fit' with the dispositions of this rural area which may in part be due to having grown up in a large city: 'One of the hardest things I find about living in [village name] is how everyone is related to everyone and it's almost like "I can't say anything because she's married to [vague relation]" so I feel that they just don't want to be seen to be upsetting people because everyone is related'. Despite moving to her father's homeplace she does not have an extended family locally and, therefore, is not 'held' in this place by the networks of family loyalty in which she feels other people are connected. The feeling of not belonging has implications for the way she describes her identity – 'in England I would've said, without hesitation, I'm Irish, now I would say I'm English' and as a result, 'I must admit and I look to my future and I think I don't want to live here. I don't want to be here when I'm retired, I don't want to spend the rest of my days here'. Despite this, the practicalities of moving back to England were also a concern

which indicated, as in the earlier examples, her belief in the importance of her family connection to this land:

> Realistically if we did move back we would have to sell. We wouldn't have the money to buy somewhere in England and still have this place. I don't know what I would do. My great-grandfather first bought the land and the house we live in my grandfather built. How could you sell it? It really is a tough decision. To be honest that just adds to my feelings of desperation here.

In this second example, Susan illustrates the feeling of 'longing to belong' identified by Wessendorf (2013, p. 133). Although she did not describe her move to Ireland as returning 'home' she talked about a relationship with this place as something she was entitled to: 'I do remember feeling like I wanted to be from the same place as my Mum and Dad. I didn't like the fact that I was born in England and I did sort of feel like there was somewhere else that was really home. It meant I sort of had a right to live here, that I should feel at home here'. She also describes a feeling of not belonging to Britain despite having been educated in the British school system and having worked there before her move: 'I also remember having a huge fascination with the place and that somehow Ireland's history was more relevant to me than England's. I could never relate to England's imperialism. It was like the British establishment and the English monarchy had absolutely nothing to do with me'. Now living in a town in Co. Galway she stated that, 'I just find it so hard, I don't know why, I just feel it's so hard to explain who I am to those people'. And rather than experiencing difference as a result of how others see her, for Susan, it was the other way around: 'I think I see myself as different to them, so different to them and I find it really hard to relate to them'. Her inability to explain herself to those around her left her feeling that, if she was without financial and family commitments in Ireland and free to choose where she lived, 'I think I would go to London, I would go home', a return to where her Irish parents and three siblings still live.

At the intersection of the personal feeling of place belonging and the wider fact of the politics of belonging, these examples illustrate an experience of displacement and detachment which is felt in everyday encounters. Both participants left the interviews and returned to their homes, their work and their families, to the worlds in which they are 'embedded' (May, 2011, p. 370). Their comments indicate that despite this, the fact of living in a place and being part of its routines, even a place which is perceived as a place of origin, does not necessarily guarantee a feeling of belonging.

Reflexive belongings

For this final group, there is evidence of living an acceptance of the mismatch between their identity labels and the multiple places to which they feel attached. It is a more positive scenario with indications of more fluid attachments to people and places. Belonging and not belonging are not necessarily the positive versus

negative opposites of each other since, as Probyn (1996) argues, in the experience of not belonging new options are created. Dermot's account below illustrates this possibility of multiple belongings and the way he has adapted to the realities of his identity-place experiences. He grew up in Leeds but always with a sense that he belonged elsewhere and that England was not home:

> The idea of moving to Ireland was constantly there growing up, my parents often spoke of it, not sure how much of it I was supposed to be hearing but I picked up the vibe that it was always a possibility. It likely was a contributing factor in the overall feeling that England wasn't really home or that something was amiss there.

The sense that home was elsewhere became a taken for granted aspect of his life in Leeds and perhaps this contributed to the ease with which he continues to feel that home is elsewhere. He stated that, 'I wouldn't call myself a Mayo man or a Galway man even though I live here'. And, having lived in Ireland since 1998, he still felt that Leeds was home: 'I love going back to Leeds, nearly as much as I used to love going to Ireland for the school holidays. As much as I'm at home here in Ireland and the people are all fine and everything, the only time I think I'm properly "at home" is when I'm in Leeds having a pint in the company of Leeds-Irish people'. In this, he recognises his 'community of identity' (Antonsich, 2010, p. 653); it is not just the place but the activity of having a pint and the social environment with other Leeds-Irish people that shapes his feelings of belonging with this group. Dermot also stated that he did not vocalise directly his claim to be Irish; as with James, Amy and Marion quoted above, he had learned that, generally, his claim would be misunderstood, thus illustrating the power relations which prevent him from outwardly 'choosing' Irishness:

> I don't claim it, not verbally anyway, the reality is, it seems to be something that gets projected on to you not something you get to choose. I always introduce myself as from Leeds/Yorkshire, play the North of England badge for a while (which is mine to wear after all if I want!) then before too long the Irish catch on (and often just tell me in case I didn't know) that I'm not English at all.

Dermot has learned the 'rules of the game' in which it is not acceptable to boast an Irish identity in an English accent. Instead, he knows that the 'game' is played by proving his cultural insiderness in other ways and allowing the identity to be assigned and thus be 'awarded' the right to belong.

Jackie also described a feeling of not quite belonging and saw this as a positive thing. When asked about whether or not she thought much about being London-Irish or her 'English-Irishness', she stated: 'It's part of my identity and I suppose I quite like it really'. As a result she felt 'just slightly outside' although she did not clarify what it was she felt just slightly outside of. She felt that her 'London + Ireland' life had shaped her in a unique way, illustrating that straightforward belongings to place are not necessarily an ideal state and the fact that 'for many

of us there exists a tension between wanting to be similar to and belong with others, and wanting to be unique and different from others' (May, 2011, p. 373). Like Dermot, Jackie was aware that she did not have an automatic right to belong in Ireland as an Irish person stating: 'You always feel like you have to prove it to people. I may sound English but actually I'm the same as you'. In her Co. Galway village she found that, 'many of my friends are girls who have been away and come back as opposed to always having been there', suggesting that she had found a sense of belonging through a community of returned migrants, the experience of migration being more important than the 'identity marker' (Kiely et al., 2001) of a particular place. Her comments also indicate that she had found a way to belong while maintaining her sense of herself as unique and different.

A similar experience was described by Fiona who grew up in London and now lives near a small village in Co. Offaly; the village where her father grew up and to where her parents returned. Extracts from her interview describe a comfortableness with her difference:

> Oh, I saw myself as different and I always will be. Even though I'm married in [village name] and I've had a role in the school and the hurling club, I still see myself that its quite cliquey in the sense that people who went to school together stick together so the people I've become friends with would be people who've maybe moved away from [village name] and come back.

She found some of the traditions of rural Ireland unusual to her:

> In terms of deaths, the whole idea in the beginning of going to everybody's funeral even if you didn't know them used to be bizarre and [husband's name] used to say to me, 'no one is ever going to go to your funeral', he really believes you have to be there to be seen whereas I wouldn't have that view at all.

In contrast to Marion earlier, she has accepted that she is 'different' to other people locally and even jokes about her 'Englishness' within the family: 'they see me as English and they'll often make comments about "the English one" and my husband as a joke would call me "George" sometimes with my English ways'. For these three returned migrants, therefore, there is an acceptance of not fully belonging in Ireland which is retained as an important aspect of their identities. They are embedded in worlds in which they know how and to what extent they wish to claim belonging without denying their place of birth.

Conclusion

The heightened sense of where and in what circumstances migrants can claim 'I belong here' means that their experiences provide a useful way of exploring the frequently unquestionned and taken-for-granted nature of place and belonging. For the second generation Irish of this study belonging, or the search for belonging, was frequently about a belief in connection to place through individual and family

history and engagement with the physical place, the land, over time. This was illustrated most explicitly by James and Thomas ('*I belong*') but also by Marion; her feeling of not belonging being all the more poignant because of her awareness of her role as custodian of the family place. Combined with this belief is the fact that belonging is about knowing the 'rules of the game' and employing the appropriate dispositions in a place. A number of people accepted that in order to claim belonging in Ireland they needed to explain themselves or adjust their behaviour; this included 'putting up with' being assumed to be English (James) as well as being aware of the need to prove their Irishness in other ways (Dermot). For these migrants, belonging is an achievement of ease by adapting and making the best of a situation, although the comments suggest that belonging perhaps never becomes fully second nature. Instead, the reflexive awareness of how to belong becomes a second nature way of being and, therefore, part of the habitus of being second generation Irish in Ireland. Conversely, not knowing, or feeling uncomfortable with, how things are done creates a feeling of unease in a place and, therefore, gives rise to a sense of not belonging.

Although experienced in the everyday, the accounts of the return migrants of this study also illustrate how belonging is shaped by the wider socio-historic factors at work in a place. Many of the comments illustrate the way that, in Ireland, there is a general lack of recognition for the claims of the second generation from Britain and this is most often in response to their English accents. Accent is therefore an important 'reinforcing shibboleth which makes members of an [this] outsider group more easily recognisable as such' (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p. xxx). Accent indicates who belongs and who does not belong in the Irish national family; an attitude shaped by the long history of Irish-British relations (see also Hannafin 2016).

Despite these important audible differences, as migrants per se, the British born are mostly absent from the national conversation about immigration and the 'new Irish' (Gilmartin, 2013). In the hierarchy of belonging in Ireland, they are perhaps not quite foreign enough and in a similar way to the Irish returnees of Ní Laoire's (2008), Ralph's (2012) and Conlon's (2009) research they are assumed to experience a straightforward adaptation to life in Ireland. As a result, they rarely feature in current discourses about migrants. For the second generation Irish, the combination of this with the relative silence on the mass emigrations of their parents' generation in the 1950s, perhaps explains the lack of acknowledgement of these 'British-born Irish'; a situation frequently alluded to in the research and illustrated most explicitly by Susan's difficulty referred to earlier in explaining who she is on a daily basis.

This paper contributes to the growing interest in second generation return migration by exploring the sense of belonging to place that these migrants seek and experience. Using the analytical framework proposed by Antonsich (2010), I have attempted to map belonging for the second generation Irish from Britain at the intersection of place-belongingness and the politics of belonging. If 'the experience of belonging can be the glue linking place and identity' (McCreanor

et al., 2006), then it is a glue shaped by the discourses at work in an place and felt in everyday social relations. For these migrants, their Englishness makes them audible and different at the everyday level and yet invisible at the scale of the nation, resulting in a range of outcomes for individuals in their claims of 'I belong here' in Ireland – their perceived home.

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