

The old man had depended on the boy who keeps his spirit up. The boy evokes strength and courage of his own youth. The boy, to some extent, fills his loneliness. For that reason he remembers the boy several times by saying, "I wish the boy was here", "I wish I had the boy", and "the boy keeps me alive" (71). Whenever the old man needs to mobilize his own inherent courage and capacity, he thinks of the boy. Thus, the boy keeps his spirit up, not only in a psychological level but also in a spiritual sense as well. In the same way Di Maggo, the baseball player, stands as a symbol, like Manolin, an endurance of pain, who performs well against the hardship and pain in the foot ball field.

In the struggle, Santiago loses his harpoon and the rope, which leaves him vulnerable to other sharks to attack. He is discouraged and in the darkness, he feels that he should not have gone out so far. Though he knows well that the battle is futile and also the defeat is unavoidable, he fights with courage and says, "I'll fight them until I die" (100). More and more sharks attack and eat away the fleshy part of the body of the fish, leaving only skeleton, head and tail. At last, he reaches wearily to his shack, and sleeps deeply. The next day the boy, Manolin finds the old man asleep, and weeping at his condition, he goes to fetch some coffee for the old man. The amazed fishermen gazing the skeleton of the fish, "He was eighteen feet from nose to tail" (106) in length. The old man gets up and talks to the boy his future journey, instead of his adventure. The boy informs him that the coast guards and aeroplanes have been searching for him. The boy wishes to fish with the old man in spite of his family opposition. In his shack, the old man sleeps, defeated in one battle and prepares to fight another, dreams of lions. Santiago's capacity to bear the pain is immense. His pain and suffering reminds us of the crucified figure of Jesus Christ. Thus, Hemingway beautifully envisages the doctrine of Christian Love and compassion and human interdependence in this short novel. Santiago is not deterred by the prospect of death. His capacity to sustain the pain and strain is distinctive. His optimism is boundless which gives him courage and strength to fight makes him to achieve moral victory. He is nostalgic and recalls is erst-while African trips where he associated with his youth, his powers of mind and strength of his body. He is proud of being a fisherman and about his achievement. In both the stories, the protagonists, Santiago and Fusi stand as a symbol of pride and strength. Both are determined to win. Their courage and confidence convince them man is not a victim in the hands of circumstances. Their capacity and the Christian virtues have been blended end evolved them as undefeated men. The 'pride' in them motivated to achieve greatness. Without 'pride' the battle would not have been fought. What Santiago tells, "But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not be defeated" (89). Both exhibit an unflinching determination in their fight. Their resolution, to act, to fight, and never give up that enables them to avoid the imminent defeat. Their victory is a victory is won in defeat.

The sea and the lake in the stories emerge as characters, and the land and sea mentioned have also a geographical reality. The major part of the action takes place in the water. The description of the nature in *God is not*

the Fish Inspector and *The Old Man and the Sea* has striking reality. The old men are exposed to the vagaries of the Nature. The technique used by the writers is simple and ethical. Their use of heroism, humility and moral virtues of endurance undoubtedly make these two stories memorable. Fusi is angry old man unlike Santiago. Fusi does not bear the humiliation but on the other hand Santiago bears it with a smile, though he was called 'saloa'. In a restaurant, the inmates make fun of him and he simply smiles. Whereas, Fusi retaliates reacts immediately because his pride does not allow him to bear humiliations. Both *God is not the Fish Inspector* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, are about a struggle against defeat. Santiago sympathizes with every creature of the sea. One may call it as a man's place within the Nature. The honour and bravery are the human virtues and both are part of the subject of eternal law. Hence, Santiago declares, he must either kill or be killed. Santiago reflects while the weary warbler flies towards shore, where it has to meet the hawk, the world is filled with predators, and no living thing can escape the inevitable struggle that will lead to death. Therefore, he feels that either kill the fish or be killed. While sailing towards harbor he philosophizes over the connection between sin and suffering. "Everything kills everything else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive". () Both are old in an age but young in spirit, stubborn and short-tempered also very emotional beings; who staunchly believed in their capabilities. These positive human qualities keep them active and adventurous even in their old age. No doubt, hope, love, pride, mercy, strength, action, glory, compassion, honour are human virtues. The glory and honour come not from fight but from their indefatigable determination to fight. Santiago philosophizes, "Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who" (79). These qualities enable Santiago to avoid defeat, which is unavoidable in his life. Both Fusi and Santiago are men of pride. The pride motivates them to achieve greatness. This greatness and strength leads them to victory won in defeat. These two stories are not simple as they appear to be. They have deep moral and philosophical implications. Santiago's struggle cannot be compared to the struggle of Fusi. The former's fight is with the external forces of Nature while the latter's internal one. Fusi's struggle with the external forces appears as not that significant as Santiago's. It does not mean that Fusi does not face the external forces. The external forces are just confined to his domestic space and with the fish inspectors. Thus, Santiago's struggle acquires Epic significance than Fusi's. In a way, both the stories make an impression deeper, stirring and touching.

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The Ignored Irish Speak in Mary Gordon's *The Other Side*

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Abstract: Women writers have a major share in American literature. Society and culture have played a major role in changing their roles from just a wife, into any field of their choice. Amidst a range of tension and war, they still emerge triumphant in penning down what they feel and think, thanks to the innate creative spirit in them. *The Other Side*, as the name indicates, is the name by which the Irish immigrants referred to the promised land across the Atlantic. It is the only novel of Gordon set entirely on the immigrant experiences of the Irish.

Keywords: American women writers, Irish immigrants, identity.

American literature is multi ethnic in nature due to its vast immigrant settlers forming the core of its population. It is the melting pot of the world since people from all over the globe have a feel and touch of the culture, language and vastness of this country. According to the words of Mark Twain and Benjamin Franklin, America is what "We [they] built America out of different races and the process made us [them] Americans" (Singh 296). We have a variety of literatures since people across the world gather here for various reasons. Though there may be Americans in general i.e., the Native Americans, there are Jewish Americans, Irish Americans, Latin Americans, Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans who come under one major banner – the Americans. Hence there have been new voices every year from various parts of the world to form various sub-genres of American literature. The Irish Americans are different from the other groups mentioned above. The Irish Americans are Americans who trace their origin and ancestry to Ireland and most of whom have stepped into an alien soil due to the Potato Famine which eroded the people and their land. It was a mass of Irish Americans that descended on the unknown continent that it "became an ethnic community within an ethnic community". Irish people wanted to consider themselves as distinctive people among all the other ethnic groups in America. Yes, they are and they have proved their might through the various deeds in the alien land. Down the years there have been many Irish American Presidents who have had their Irish roots. *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History* points out that "By the time John F. Kennedy was elected in 1960, Irish occupational status exceeded national averages and was higher than every other white ethnic group except the Jews". (Meagher, Timothy J.) It is no wonder that they dominate among the other immigrants though they entered the country with hardly any means for their survival. In this context, it is essential that we talk about an Irish American writer of the present day. While American writers are in galore, Irish American writers are not highlighted because they come under the common purview of American

literature. *Outsiders Inside* by Bronwen Walter points out that:

The scattering of Irish people has been on an extraordinary scale in the wake of the catastrophe of the Famine in 1840s. They and their descendants have become embedded in two of the largest industrial economies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, those of Britain and the United States, in ways that have hardly begun to be recognized (1)

It is true that it was a huge mass that left Ireland in search of greener pastures. This is another huge Diaspora, an exodus as that of the Israelites towards the promised land of Canaan. Women writers have a major share in American literature. Society and culture have played a major role in changing their roles from just a wife, into any field of their choice. Amidst a range of tension and war, they still emerge triumphant in penning down what they feel and think, thanks to the innate creative spirit in them. They are no more docile and passive, but dominant and active changing their course as per the norms of the day. It is to be appreciated that American women writers, writing about women, weave a dense and complicated narrative of contemporary issues. Irish American women writers are not many in number. One among them is Mary Gordon, the 2008 New York State Author who has etched herself in this field to bring to light the plight of the Irish Americans. Mary Gordon, an acclaimed prose writer and well-known novelist has six novels, two collections of short stories, two memoirs, a novella, and an essay to her credit and is currently working on a book *Reading Jesus*. Gordon, hailing from a staunch Catholic background has mapped her identity in all her works. Having a mixed background of an Irish-Italian mother and a Jewish Catholic father, she tended to lean towards her father than her mother. She came into the literary scene with the publication of her first novel *Final Payments* in 1978. Hence many read her works not just on the basis of her large collection of work but on a larger context where she still continues to portray the contemporary American society. The feminine accent is seen in all her works. A reading of her works will show how she cares for women. Hence her novels are purely exploration of women's struggle to get a status in the society. In a nut shell, she is more than just a Catholic writer. *The Other Side*, as the name indicates, is the name by which the Irish immigrants referred to the promised land across the Atlantic. It is the only novel of Gordon set entirely on the immigrant experiences of the Irish. It is a narrative in 5 parts where the action takes place within a limited time frame of one day – August 14, 1985. Though the actions mentioned pertain to one particular day, Gordon vividly uses a series of flashbacks to highlight the plight of these people telling the story of all the incidents in each one's lives leading up to this particular day. People of five generations of the same family have gathered together to bid good bye to the matriarch of the family, Ellen. The story knits together scrappy incidents from the lives of the number of characters who have gathered there. Yet the story centers on Ellen, married to Vincent for sixty long years. She relives her

life in Ireland though she works and becomes a political activist for liberal causes. Her behaviour towards her children and grand children are not worth to be spoken of since they have none of the virtues gained from Ellen. The novel is a good example of a dysfunctional family in America – all because of a woman who headed the family. The novel is about the contributions of the immigrants, the Irish Americans to the American life and society. While the novel talks about the family structure and concentrates on the theme of love and its failure also, Gordon portrays the economic and social conditions too. The novel talks about certain typical traits of the Irish. Irish are generally termed Catholic. So the characters in the novel are basically Catholic but the intensity and religiosity is highly questionable. While Vincent, the patriarch is a church goer, Ellen is described as person who has none of the saving graces of a true Christian. Gordon portrays the Irish Catholic church to be puritanical in nature. It is also resistant to social and economic change. Ellen comments about the Irish saying: “What could you expect of them, a rosary in one hand, a pistol in the other, a flask of poteen in the pocket just in case their other remedies should fail them”. By thinking of the past events, Ellen condemns the church. Her experiences of her life in Ireland have made her to hate the Church and put all the blame on it. She blames Ireland for all the problems and sufferings that she underwent. Ellen's character is counterbalanced with the character of Vincent. Theresa, an unloved daughter of Ellen is a Catholic fanatic and a charismatic lady whose is deeply engrossed in evangelism. She is portrayed as an unloving woman with a cold nature. Her excess religious devotion and services have damaged the lives of her children. There is the outcome of Ellen's indifference as a mother. She is a medical secretary, who poisons everyone around her with her anger, wrath and jealousy. As a charismatic Catholic, she is said that she talks to the Holy Ghost. In spite of having the power to heal and do miracles, she purposely withholds it from her mother. That no priest was called to Ellen's bed side while she was dying is a point to be noted. “Constant words fill the air around her bed ... What kind of life would have brought up these words? She lived a hard life, but not the kind to know these words” is the description used by Gordon on how Ellen lies dying with no one to spiritually or morally support her.

The characters cling to the church for various reasons but they do neither live up to the expectation of the church nor to their own satisfaction on the basis of the doctrines they have heard. Dan and Sharon are alienated from the church because of their non conformity to the teaching of the Church on extramarital sex. Gordon ironically states that the Catholic belief has become just a tradition set by the forefathers than a set of moral code of conduct and beliefs. While considering the family life of the Irish Americans in the novel, Vincent and Ellen fail as parents. Ellen does not show any love and affection to her daughters. She shows her love to her son John. She is an embodiment of anger and rage. The same anger is shown towards the church and towards a stranger. She humiliated the

daughters and abandoned them later. She is tender hearted to her grandson Dan. While Vincent had been a soul force in her life, at the end of her life she is afraid if he might leave her. Though Vincent loves his children and especially his grandchildren, and tries to be a knitting force in his family, as a father his role becomes a zero. Gordon's mothers are always special in the other way. Here is a mother who has not mothered her children. Ellen witnessing her mother's evidence of miscarriages, series of stillbirths, insanity and her father putting away her mother in a country house in the care of another woman has affected her deeply. The consequence of this is the behaviour of Ellen and the conflicts that she faces down the generations. Her motherhood had been poisoned by the fate of her own mother. Camille, the granddaughter nurtured by Ellen has become very successful as a lawyer in divorce, and devotes herself to women clients. Magdalene, Camille's mother is an alcoholic. In *Reading Irish-American Fiction: the Hyphenated Self*, Margaret Hallissy points out that:

In *The Other Side* Ellen MacNamara's flight from the fate of her own mother in Ireland becomes one element of the dominant personality that she herself becomes as a mother. Mothering, failures of mothering, loss of a mother, the inability to become a mother: all are key issues in these novels; and all are rendered more complex by the fact that a mother or grandmother is from another country (22)

These lines are true of Ellen and they are a true depiction of the entire set of characters portrayed in the novel. Ellen has influenced her family more than Vincent – in a negative way. After the Irish landed on 'the other side', as they called the American continent, they took up various jobs for their survival. Once they the other side, they had a different dimension of the acquired place and aspired to a social status which was only a closed door once to them. The novel depicts the survival skills of these immigrants that have enabled them to flourish in their present home country. Vincent points out that the immigrants did the work of building up the nation. He whole heartedly accepts the first job he is offered i.e., digging the New York City subway system, though he was trained as an ironworker in Ireland. He later moves to work as a signal repairman and machinist. He is also actively involved in union organization. By the beginning of the century many people moved into better skilled jobs with a good pay. Further, Irish Americans were in great demand for jobs requiring verbal proficiency- teaching and law. In *The Other Side* Jack, the lawyer takes Daniel as his partner and joins his cousin Cam. They make their way up with their ability of their speaking skills. From their generation onwards, we have Irish Americans coming up in all the fields of their choice in an alien country. On the other hand, women took up petty jobs to make up their living. Some took jobs as domestic servants, while others took up stitching and knitting. In this novel, Ellen took a degrading job as a maid, and then worked as a seamstress in a garment industry. Women have also climbed the social ladder as the men did. Magdalene, Ellen's daughter owns a beauty salon; Marilyn, Theresa's daughter becomes a nurse and Sheilah is a social worker