Linguæ &
Rivista di lingue e culture moderne

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Silence and lying: the taboo around the Disappeared in Northern Ireland in Mary O'Donnell's novel *Where They Lie*

https://doi.org/10.14276/l.v26i2.4659

2 / 2024

ISSN 1724-8698

Urbino University Press
Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo

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Silence and Lying: The Taboo around the Disappeared in Northern Ireland in Mary O'Donnell's novel *Where They Lie*

ABSTRACT

In her fiction and poetry, Mary O'Donnell has often touched topics dealing with explicit taboo subjects, masturbation, anorexia, menopause, abortion or domestic violence. In her 2014 novel, *Where They Lie*, O'Donnell tackles a different taboo, the neglected and disturbing topic of the Disappeared during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. These men and women were kidnapped, killed and buried somewhere in the country, mostly by Republican paramilitaries because believed to be informers. Reticence and lies surround the Disappeared in current discourse and O'Donnell's novel aims at breaking down this taboo.
The purpose of this essay is to fathom the narrative strategies O'Donnell uses to face and to deal effectively and emotionally with the taboo of language surrounding the tragedy of one of the most touching and still unsolved issues in recent Irish History.

KEYWORDS: Northern Ireland; the Troubles; the Disappeared; silence; grief.

1. The Writing of Mary O'Donnell

As a poet and fiction writer, Mary O'Donnell is a special voice in the landscape of contemporary Irish writing. Her extensive production is varied, as she moves at ease between different literary genres and forms of expression (Gonzáles-

Arias 2009), having published eight collections of poetry, four novels and three collections of short stories. She has been involved in translation projects, has written critical and academic essays and has been a drama critic for the *Sunday Tribune*. Furthermore, she has taught creative writing and presented literature programmes for the radio, in particular "Crossing the Lines" for RTÉ about European poetry in translation. She has received numerous awards for her work, including prizes from the Fish International Short Story Competition and the Cardiff International Poetry Competition.

She was born in Monaghan, a border town, the county being an area in the Republic only a few miles from the border with Northern Ireland, which gives her a "privileged position to witness the social and historical changes in both the Republic and Northern Ireland in the recent decades" (Jaime de Pablos 2023, 209). O'Donnell has repeatedly underlined the relevance of her South Ulster roots (O'Donnell, Palacios 2010, 168) in "the making of her artistic self" (Gonzáles-Arias 2009) and Inés Praga-Terente has emphasised her position between two cultures and traditions (Praga-Terente 2014, 147). From this liminality O'Donnell develops her poetic discourse interweaving her personal concern with the present of contemporary Ireland in its various shades with the constant awareness of what was and is going on in the North (Mills).

Her wide spectrum of interests covers areas mostly, but not exclusively, related to the female experience and the range of issues and thematic richness of her work (Ní Dhuibhne 2018, viii) make her difficult to classify or categorise (O'Siadhail 2014, 213; Fogarty 2018, 159). Gender identity, the passing of time, sexual awakening, the ageing female body, the role of women and their elision from history characterise her poetry and fiction. However, her novels in particular "consciously treat taboo subjects such as infertility, sexuality, grief, violence and desire" (Fogarty 2018, 163). Interestingly, in an interview with Anne Fogarty in 2018, Mary O'Donnell wonders if these taboo subjects are "really 'taboo' any more" (ibid.) in the twenty-first century. Rather, touching challenging topics is part of her programmatic intention to write in order to disclose what is hidden, to reveal what is generally not spoken about and kept silent, and unveiling lies is often at the heart of her fiction. In fact, as she said in an interview with Helen Thompson in 2003, "Lifting facades has to be one of the joys of being a writer" (Thompson 2003, 124-25). Mary O'Donnell lifts

facades on the situation of women writing in Ireland in the 1980s, something she and other poets did "in a well of silence" (O'Donnell 2000, 155), but she also sheds light on explicitly taboo subjects in Ireland in the 1990s, such as "masturbation, anorexia, menopause, abortion" (Villar-Argáiz 2018, 41), topics "to be avoided in the official discourse" (Ozga, Piechnik 2021, 7). Originally meant as a strong prohibition in actions and language, the word taboo "in everyday usage is something prohibited by custom" (Walter 1991, 295), something to be avoided in doing and saying and thus surrounded by silence. It is "something too horrible even to think of" (Ozga, Piechnik 2021, 94), and therefore unsayable or unspeakable. Taboos become part of social norms and may change according to contexts and times (ibid., 7). To a large extent, O'Donnell breaks silence unveiling a variety of taboo topics.

The purpose of this essay is to consider examples of taboo in Mary O'Donnell's poetry and fiction before focussing on her 2014 novel *Where They Lie*. Here O'Donnell openly deals with the interrelation of taboo and silence in a precise context in space and time, as she tackles the neglected and disturbing topic of the 'Disappeared' during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. This is the term generally used to describe or define the sixteen people who, between the early 1970s and late 1980s, at the heart of the Troubles, were kidnapped, killed and buried somewhere in the country, mostly by Republican paramilitaries, because believed to pass information to the British forces. Most of the bodies have never been found, some of them were instead discovered by chance, but over the years or decades information about their fate, death and place of burial was not disclosed or was misdirected. Reticence surrounds the Disappeared in current discourse and O'Donnell's novel aims at breaking down silence and retrieving untold and unwritten stories that have not found closure yet. The novel thus provocatively challenges the taboo of what is silenced and has been kept undisclosed. However, this is not O'Donnell's first step in facing taboos in an extended sense, as taboo topics or taboo references recur throughout her career.

2. Taboos in Mary O'Donnell

Mary O'Donnell addresses taboo already in her first poetry collection *Reading the Sunflowers in September* (1990), whose poems focus on female experiences and the female body in different ways. For example, in "Excision", O'Donnell shockingly tackles female genital mutilation: "She grapples in child innocence, mad / with hysteric hurt as the women hold / her down and bind with florid pain" (O'Donnell 1990, 15). In "State Pathologist" the "domestic secrets" of a woman's body are revelatory of domestic violence, the "code of bruises" or "wrenched hair" are signs of "Crimes of passion" (ibid., 51), a type of crime and taboo typically surrounded by silence. Anorexia is at the heart of the title poem, which according to Luz Mar Gonzáles-Arias is "a thought-provoking reflection on eating disorders" (Gonzáles-Arias 2010, 257): "Such starvation is an art" (O'Donnell 1990, 18), the body speaks for the self who cannot put distress into words, in what Elaine Scarry calls "resistance to language" (Scarry 1985, 4). In a similar way, the poem "It Wasn't a Woman" from her 2020 collection *Massacre of the Birds* makes a list of forms of abuse, whose heaviness is stylistically emphasised by the interlacing of title and text, the lack of capitalisation and the virtually total absence of punctuation: "'It Wasn't a Woman' / who used a stick to abort the baby in an 11-year-old girl" (O'Donnell 2020, 33). Likewise, "# Me Too, 12 Remembered Scenes and a Line" lists in chronological order personal memories of "the number of times I myself was predated on as a younger woman" (Jaime de Pablos 2023, 206), each three-line stanza opening with a year: "1968, County Wexford, the light flick / of the Colonel's hand up my summer dress / as I dart from the hotel stairwell" (O'Donnell 2020, 35).

Taboo topics mark her fiction in both short stories and novels. Transvestism and transgender characterise the final part of the story "Strong Pagans" from her first collection of the same title (1991) as a way to "subvert the established social order to achieve self-realization and happiness" (Jaime de Pablos 2018, 114). The short story "Aphrodite Pauses, Mid-Life" from *Storm over Belfast* (2008) focuses on the way Carol faces menopause, a taboo word which never appears in the text, crossing a boundary between fertility and

infertility, aware of her "about-to-be-permanently-silent body" (O'Donnell 2008, 209). In a similar way, the taboo of infertility is at the heart of the story "Breath of the Living", of the poem "Antarctica" ("I do not know what other women know", O'Donnell 1990, 7), and of the novel *The Light-Makers* (1992). The explicit sexuality of her 1996 novel *Virgin and the Boy* found negative responses among some critics (Thompson 2003, 119) for its "outrageous (hetero)sexual transgression" (St. Peter 2000, 5) and in *The Light-Makers* the sinister scene of the stag party brings to the fore the cruelty of a fertility rite. The taboo of death looms in the poem "Cot death" and in the "dystopian" story "The Deathday Party" (Jaime de Pablos 2018, 104), while her novel *The Elysium Testament* (1999) looks "at the taboo of death from another angle" considering the death of a very young child (Fogarty 2018, 159) as a result of his mother's abuse. The taboo of domestic violence interweaves with "the taboo subject of a woman's repugnance for her own child", which reverberates stylistically in a maternal narrative which "is itself uncannily split and fragmented" (Fogarty 2000, 78). The taboo of death finds different expressions and is magnified in O'Donnell's writing about the Troubles, which is consistent with her concerns with various facets ad forms of taboo in her writing.

3. The Troubles in O'Donnell's Writing

Though the Troubles do not specifically represent a main concern in Mary O'Donnell's writing (Villar-Argáiz 2018, 54), a few poems indulge on the conflict, often making reference to childhood and young adulthood memories. The sonnet "Legacy", written after the death of Bobby Sands (ibid.), exploits the stylistic form traditionally related to lyricism and feelings to confront and juxtapose the "Poor little bigot from the black North" and "we poor little bigots from the free South" (O'Donnell 1990, 66). The blackness of the North is reiterated by the lexical choice of items traditionally related to the Troubles, "terrors", "stripes of blood", "bins and drums", "furls of hate", while the cries are "impotent" (ibid.). O'Donnell goes back to her birthplace in the poem "Border Town", characteristically composed in couplets and clearly divided into two parts, dealing with past and present respectively, "once" and "now" (ibid., 92). In "Derry Nocturne" the city is repeatedly a "tomb city" where the

speaking voice frets ("I fret in this tomb city", ibid., 152) and then feels "trapped" in the oxymoronic "screaming silences" (ibid.) contrasting with the musical reference embedded in the title. In "A Southerner Dreams the Future" the dream is of a future free of conflict and violence, "Not a blasted street, a shattered limb / in sight" (O'Donnell 1998, 21). The Troubles and the sectarian conflict in the North are rooted in the consciousness of the Monaghan-born writer, who has always been aware of the proximity of the border and of the events beyond the border as a local and universal frame of anger and violence.

Before casting attention to the aftermath of the conflict and its violence in *Where They Lie*, it is worth considering the short story "Border Crossing", from the collection *Storm over Belfast*, set in 1974 at the time of the Troubles, the only story dealing explicitly with the border and the sectarian divide. The stylistic choice of first-person narration and of the present tense increases the immediacy of the events. In fact, the nameless 18-year-old girl crosses the border to have sex with her Irish boyfriend for the first time; at the same time, the reference to historical occurrences takes a special relevance. The farmhouse where senator Billy Fox was murdered by IRA gunmen in March 1974 "stands darkened" as a result of fire, but it also looks "innocent and ordinary" (O'Donnell 2008, 189), as a permanent sign of violence disturbingly marking the landscape and entering everyday life, while checkpoints recur on different occasions. Unlike the story, the novel *Where They Lie* is set in the early twenty-first century, thus at a time in which the Belfast Agreement, or Good Friday Agreement of 1998 had officially put an end to decades of violence. However, the legacy of the Troubles still reverberates in the lives and experiences of the novel's protagonists, who are trying to come to terms with a painful past.

4. *Where They Lie*: The Disappeared and the Silence of a Communal Taboo

The expression 'The Disappeared' is for Peake and Lynch a "moniker" that "signifies a group of 16 individuals separately abducted, killed, and secretly buried by republican paramilitaries over the course of The Troubles" in unmarked graves (Peake and Lynch 2016, 453). In a recent study, Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc provides a definition of what Human Rights Law calls "forced

disappearances" as follows: "The practice involves executing enemy combatants, political opponents or civilians, and hiding their bodies for a political or military purpose" (Ó Ruairc 2024, 1). He points out that in Ireland the phenomenon is not limited to the Troubles and the IRA, but had its "forerunners" (ibid., 2) in the 1920s during the Civil War and goes back to the end of the 18th century, as "the practice of forced disappearance was undoubtedly relatively commonplace during the 1798 rebellion" (ibid., 11). The Disappeared thus mark Ireland's history for over two hundred years, even though disappearances connected to the Troubles have repeatedly attracted significant attention in the media (ibid., 2).

Mary O'Donnell's novel *Where They Lie* is a work of fiction that has its roots in the period of the Troubles whose aim is to break the silence that surrounds the "Disappeared", an area "that has not been explored by many writers from the Republic" (Walshe 2018, 93). It is not a historical novel about the Disappeared, rather a novel on what is unsaid or what cannot be said about the tragedy of a specific historical moment in recent times, a novel on those who have survived, on grief, loss, the impact of the past and history on the present. Set in the first decade of the new century, the novel locates the disappearance of twin brothers Sam and Harry Jebb in the 1990s. O'Donnell thus takes historical liberty, suggesting that certain wounds are still open. Sam and Harry Jebb's business on both sides of the border, "moving along the border from one equestrian event or sale to another" (O'Donnell 2014, 107), may have made them suspicious of being informers.

Graham Dawson refers to the 'Disappeared' as an example of "communal taboos" (Dawson 2007, 75) which still haunts present day Ireland as "one of the most traumatic and until recently silenced episodes related to the Irish Troubles" (Estévez-Saá 2018, 106). The interrelation of taboo, silence and trauma underlies a disappearance and its aftermath, heavily haunting the void, the limbo of uncertainty, which remains for many families in the silence that surrounds the disappearance of their beloved ones (Dempster 2019, 4). Often whispers and rumours, if not misinformation and lies, went around, in a way deceivingly counteracting silence, together with "hyperbole, speculation…even fantasy" (Ó Ruaric 2024, 322) or "superstition, folklore or spiritual beliefs surrounding sudden death and unconventional burials" (ibid., 323). Mostly it

was said that these people had left the country and started a new life elsewhere, but the most disturbing feature surrounding the Disappeared was that they were informers, or "touts". A tout is in Patrick Radden Keefe's words "a folk devil – a paragon of treachery" (244), a stigma that involved the whole family at large.

A case in point, and maybe "one of the most infamous events of the Troubles" (Cummins 2010, 27) was the disappearance of Jean McConville, a widowed mother of ten children, abducted in December 1972 from her flat in Belfast, allegedly for having passed information to the British Army through a transmitter. Her body was found only in 2003 by a passer-by on a beach in Co. Louth. In these long years the family met a "wall of silence" (Keefe 2019, 72) that protected the IRA in West Belfast. Only nine bodies were found and investigation is still being carried out by the Independent Commission for the Recovery of Victims' Remains, created after the 1998 Belfast Agreement with the objective of recovering the bodies and providing closure to the cases and the families' grief.

A net of silence surrounds the Disappeared; as Lauren Dempster claims, "'Disappearing' is to a significant extent *about* silencing: silencing those 'disappeared', their loved ones, … silencing knowledge of the crimes committed" (Dempster 2019, 31). Quoting Jennifer Schirmer, Dempster claims that disappearing is the perfect crime as it is invisible (ibid., 30), absence of individuals merging with absence of bodies. Silence is a form of denial (ibid., 136) but it was also a political strategy on the part of the IRA, the sentence "I have nothing to say" was the rule in case a member was arrested and questioned by the police.

Interestingly, *Where They Lie* was published in May 2014, more or less at the same time when Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein leader, was arrested and being questioned in relation to the disappearance of Jean McConville. Such coincidence may give the novel an overtly political perspective which yet eschews politics (Walshe 2018, 93) to focus on the emotional lives of the four characters who mourn the twins. They are Gerda McAllister, who was with the boys at the moment of abduction, the boys' sister Alison, her husband Gideon, Gerda's brother; and Gerda's former lover, Niall, a Dublin teacher of the Irish

language. In *Where They Lie* O'Donnell interweaves taboo, silence and trauma playing with the multiple meanings of the novel's title.

In fact, the title plays on the ambiguity of the verb "to lie" and its multiple referents. On one hand, the expression "where they lie" implies the possible location of the unretrieved bodies, the hiding place of death where the bodies of the Jebb twins may or may not be found. From this point of view O'Donnell plays intertextually with Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" – "The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low" (l. 7). This uncertain burial ground is also at the centre of what is said about the fate of the twins, as "to lie" also refers to saying what is not true, to the lies that surround their disappearance, the misinformation provided by the alleged informer Cox and/or his claims to be able to reveal where the bodies lie. Lies interlace with the taboo of language about the Disappeared, with the "silence filled with hauntings" that underlies a traumatic experience (Goarzin 2011, 12). In fiction as in real life, the Disappeared are not there, they remain ghosts and are truly lost in life as well as in narrative.

The physical violence that led to the torture and murder of Sam and Harry Jebb is magnified in the psychological violence their family and friends have to undergo as indirect victims in the obsession of not knowing. From this point of view the novel can be read through the lens of Cathy Caruth's classic trauma theory in "the complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma" (Caruth 2016, 4). In the dynamic between not knowing and gradually getting dubious and deceiving information about the reasons for the boys' disappearance, their burial place, and the identity of the perpetrators of such violence, *Where They Lie* can be read as a trauma narrative in which traumatised characters try to suppress what they know or the traumatic experience. Gerda McAllister, the journalist and friend who was with the twins in the moment of abduction, is plagued by recurring nightmares in which she relives the experience. For example, Part 1 is characterised by the obsessive recollection of the "Four men and two women" who broke in, "All wore balaclavas" (O'Donnell 2014, 1). Not by chance does the novel open with Cox's telephone call which acts as a provocative trigger to keep Gerda's memories and recollections painfully alive. The recurrence of her nightmares highlights the way in which the experience repeats itself (Caruth 2016, 2),

which is stylistically made more relevant by the use of the present tense – e.g. "When I dream of that night, I am circling over my body", "I watch television", "I glance out of the window" (O'Donnell 2014, 2); "In the dream, my eyes start to prickle with tears", "I feel cool metal on my pubic bone", "my body is sliding and dissolving. They are screaming at me … At that point I always wake up" (ibid., 3-4). These repressed memories leave traces in the persecutory presence of the traumatic experience as PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, Niall considers the changes the event has caused in Gerda: "Any normal person who'd been through what she'd been through would carry the trauma. But she also turned into an over-energetic sex maniac, a shopping-mall addict, binge-drinker and incessant, repetitious spinner of tall, illogical tales" (ibid., 10). In a similar way the aftermath of trauma displays physical traces in Alison: "Ever since the boys' death, Alison had had a small bald patch on the right side of her head, small enough to be concealed, except when the wind was strong enough. Stress-related alopecia" (ibid., 100).

Interestingly, the short story "Storm over Belfast", from the 2008 collection of the same title, provides a springboard for the development of the novel. In both, O'Donnell sheds light on the on-and-off relationship (Walshe 2018, 94) between a young man from Dublin and his Belfast ex-girlfriend. In the novel, Gerda is trying to come to terms with the trauma of having been present at the abduction and disappearance of her friends, and of being unable to have information about their fate. As José Manuel Estévez-Saá points out, the depression of the woman in the compression of the short story finds an outlet and an explanation in the novel, and the "intimate relationship" (Estévez-Saá 2018, 108) between story and novel represents an interesting case of direct intertextuality. In fact, the story is a "prequel" (Fogarty 2018, 166) to *Where They Lie* but also an inset text incorporated nearly verbatim in the novel's first chapter. The interdependence between novel and story is clarified in an interview with Lia Mills, in which Mary O'Donnell explains she "hadn't quite finished with the title story" (Mills 2014), and felt the need to expand its narrative material. Furthermore, the electric storm which is a subtext in the story is briefly retrieved at the end of Chapter One, when "Over the mountain, an electrical storm was breaking" (O'Donnell 2014, 15). The novel takes up this fil rouge occasionally using references to storms in relation to Gerda (ibid., 23),

compared to a storm when invading other people's lives, but also a victim of the storm of trauma that plagues her life.

At the opening of the novel, Gerda receives a phone call, and it is soon clear that throughout the novel her daily life is obsessed and persecuted by continuous and repeated mysterious and disturbing phone calls, in which someone called Cox keeps telling her he has information about where to find the twins' bodies, where they lie. Silence and lies are thus embedded at the opening of the novel while references to silence recur in this section, highlighting the silence around Sam and Harry as well the silence that actually characterises Cox's speech. The telephone "went silent" (ibid., 1), visiting the twins in Co. Tyrone kept Gerda away from "who was involved and who stayed silent" (ibid., 2). Remembering the break in, "I dammed up my lips" and "Sam and Harry were also silent" (ibid.).

Passages of the telephone conversations are usually italicised, which is a textual marker, an interesting textual choice in a novel about lies, creating a distance between past and present, truth and lies. This graphic device also gives rise to doubts about the reliability of what is being said, so that on some occasions the voices of Gerda and Cox are undistinguishable, on others the impression is that Gerda is dreaming, or that Cox is only a product of her imagination. Gerda paradoxically feels free to speak about her trauma with Cox's disembodied voice, who constantly repeats that he is just offering his help and materialises when she accepts to meet him hoping to obtain the information he promises, he is silent though he speaks. In Chapter 6 his speech act is characterised by isolated words marked by full stops: "I. Am. Trying. To. Help. You!" (ibid., 67). The fragmentation of the sentence implies the capacity of language to hide rather than disclose (Ephratt 2008), so that words and silence seem to overlap. As a matter of fact, when finally Cox provides some sort of information about where to find the boys' remains in a remote peninsula in Co. Antrim, and Niall, Gideon, Gerda and Alison's digging does not lead to anything, nothing is found except some debris and Cox's revelations turn out to have been a lie.

Language tries to hide the trauma, in the same way as the "case of the disappeared was initially and conveniently silenced" (Estévez-Saá 2016, 29). The abduction of the boys is referred to as the "events" (O'Donnell 2014, 5),

alluding to their remains Cox says they were "disposed of" (ibid., 11). When Gideon comes across a report on the Disappeared in the Sunday paper he reflects on the use of the word: "It was a strange use of language. They were never referred to as 'those who had disappeared' but as an entity, as if 'the Disappeared', a collective noun could possibly recreate the nature of those who had gone" (ibid., 99-100).

Gerda's name has a special relevance, as it is the name of the protagonist of Andersen's fairy tale "Snow Queen", which haunts the subtext of the novel. The splinters of the evil mirror of the fairy tale seem to have somehow entered the hearts of various characters, not only the violent intruders who abducted the boys, but Gerda in particular, whose life and heart have changed forever. Notably, the fairy tale becomes part of one of the telephone conversations with Cox, and Gerda tells him the story to counteract his silence: "I think she [my mother] named me Gerda so that I could travel wherever I would or needed to, if necessary to the north of the Snow Queen, to Baba Yaga…." (ibid., 111). And as a matter of fact, Gerda travels north following Cox's directions, yet his words "in the story lies the truth" (ibid.) implicitly suggest that other lies are instead lying in the background.

In a similar way, the mysterious Cox has a widely used name, nickname or surname appropriate for someone who may not exist. The name may derive from the Old English "cock", which means a "heap" or "mound", and its topographic relevance connects the name to the heap or mound where the bodies may lie. His voice is persuasive, coaxing, so to speak. As a colloquial abbreviation of coxswain, Cox is someone who steers the boat of Gerda's needs, a puppeteer, who finally directs Gerda, Alison, Gideon and Niall to the nightmarish landscape where he claims the bodies are to be found. This is the place not of discovery of the bodies but of revelations, it is a moment in which the truth about Sam and Harry Jebb comes to the fore, unearthing Gerda's "complex relationship with the dead twins, involving sex but also accumulated information which may have caused their murder" (Lehner 2020, 59). Several taboos are thus broken, in which silence dominates in a variety of ways on the lives of the living and the dead.

The novel contains several intertextual elements, scraps from newspaper articles and radio programmes, and especially the U2 song "Mothers of the

Disappeared" Gerda listens to obsessively. The song puts grief into words, pointing out what is not said and cannot be said. The presence of the song pervades all the second part of the novel in an attempt to break the silence about the Disappeared. Interestingly, O'Donnell does not use direct quotation from the text, rather focuses on the sound effect: "the pulsing sound of the U2 anthem for the Disappeared swelled in the room, the drumming, the guitars, that voice pushing into every corner, around the cobwebs" (O'Donnell 2014, 154), the "dirge" (ibid.) has a persecutory form, "the music wailed" (ibid., 155) breaking the silence of suffering.

5. Conclusion

The word "closure" referred to disappearance is generally connected to the retrieval of the bodies (Cummins 2010, 42) and often recurs in the novel highlighting the impossibility of knowing the truth (Estévez-Saá 2016, 26) and pointing out the impossibility of such closure. Interestingly the novel remains literally open with the final words "Then the door opened" (O'Donnell 2014, 223). By doing so, Mary O'Donnell is consistent with her stylistic credo of leaving her endings unfinished, "I don't believe in 'closure' endings because I don't believe in the idea of closure" (Fogarty 2018, 164). *Where They Lie* closes with an opening, in a circular pattern the boundary between beginning and end becomes fluid, which reminds the reader that the story and certain wounds are still open. The door that is opening on the last page metaphorically suggests that the taboo around the Disappeared still remains surrounded by silence and lies.

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