Title: ‘Irishness’ in Caribbean and Latin American Literature: The Diasporic and Liminal

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Abstract: My dissertation examines representations of the diasporic Irish within the varied literary imaginaries of the Caribbean and Latin America and argues that these representations create a literary paradigm surrounding ‘Irishness’. The project begins by offering a racialized historical overview of the Irish commencing with the conquest of Ireland and following up to the modern day. I then relate observations elucidated by this overview to current conceptions of Irish identity while specifying many of the diaspora spaces to which the transatlantic Irish arrived. I utilize a transamerican approach to literature which permits cross-cultural and multilingual readings of texts that would otherwise remain in isolation to each other. Putting my study into dialogue with scholars like Robin Cohen, William Safran, Avtar Brah and Laura Zuntini de Izarra, I define the terms ‘diaspora’ and ‘diaspora space’ while seeking to underscore the corollaries between these concepts and representations of the Irish in diaspora. After establishing the ways in which I understand and use these terms, I employ the works of Victor Turner and Sandor Klapcsik, among others, to lay down my theoretical framework of the liminal and liminality. In doing so I directly interconnect theories of diaspora and liminality which provides a unique theoretical perspective, and later interject my own nascent theory of the ‘figure’ to better deconstruct the Irish characters under study. Reading a selected corpus of literature from writers such as American-Guatemalan Francisco Goldman, Cuban Zoé Valdés, Jamaican Erna Brodber, Mexican Patricia Cox, American Carl Krueger, and Argentines Rodolfo Walsh and
Juan José Delaney, through the liminal process allows me to analyze literature from multiple perspectives while decentering previous literary criticism that has not recognized this multiplicity embedded in liminal readings of narratives. Over the breadth of the project I look to these and other scholars in my efforts to (re)define, dissect, work and wield the terms ‘diaspora’, ‘liminal’ and ‘liminality’ in a variety of fashions, adding to them my own ideas of perpetual liminality, while extracting and examining the representations of ‘Irishness’ found through each of my textual analyses.