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**“MIXING MEMORY AND DESIRE”:
FORM, IDEOLOGY, AND SEAN O’FAOLAIN’S
POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRELAND***

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Abstract

This essay considers Sean O’Faolain’s intense interest in memory in his short stories on post-revolutionary Ireland. Neutral in classical storytelling, which anticipated the Irish short story, memory is ideological in O’Faolain’s writing since it is fraught with a desire for little narratives on national identity as an alternative to the hegemonic notion of an Irish Ireland. This yearning is first articulated as a nostalgia for a unified nation in the context of a postlapsarian Ireland where normalization leads to the vulgarization of national identity. However, it gradually shifts to a problematics of memory when boredom is the governing principle of the national life, and ultimately becomes a parable of the dilemma of a modern writer

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engaged in unraveling the foreignness of the Irish character by dramatizing the failure of memory and storytelling. In his last work he recurses to quasi-autobiography to illustrate the productivity of memory's failure: With his faulty memory, the autobiographer, and his twin, the storyteller, is probably the most necessary liar to recuperate the hidden part of the Irish nature residing in the thinness of Irish life.

Key Words: form, ideology, Sean O'Faolain, post-revolutionary Ireland