***Study Guide Questions***

In the present work we are going to discuss our personal experience of Colm Toibin’s Brooklyn.

Brooklyn is both a “coming age” story and an immigrations story. These two topics are mixed in the entire story. Immigration is the process of coming to live permanently in a country that is not your own one. At the beginning she feels the nostalgia from her family and from Ireland culture. Still today the theme of immigration is present in our society. About the topic of “coming of age” the writer tell us typical experience of that time, for example her feelings with her first love, her difficulties to relate to other guys, her problem with physical appearance and her first sex experience with her first love. She realizes that she has more responsibilities in her life and enter into adults’ world.

After reading the novel the intelligent reader can understand that both themes are the most relevant in all the novel, indeed when Eilis decides to move to New York because of the hardship of the period, she has a cultural shock. Only in the second part the reader understands that Eilis starts to adapt in the new country. To tell the truth, at the beginning of the story she is a passive, introverted and shy. She is psychologically dependent on someone or something and feels inferior compared to her sister Rose. Indeed, Eilis and her mother do not have a spontaneous relationship. She does not put as much attentions on her as she does with Rose. She is the most important person in the family because she takes care of their economic situation because she is the only one who works. Her characterization is made through the narration voice. The narrator is in the third singular person.

The character of Eilis reminds of the figure of Robinson Crouse by Daniel Defoe. They are migrants who change their life to shape a better future. They reflected the mentality of Puritanism who wants to move far away because thanks to the hard work they receive safeness.

We think that Rose and Father Flood devise the plan to send Eilis to America in order that she can shape a better future. Indeed, if she had stayed in Ireland and never come to America she would be passive.

Brooklyn is structured through the use of multiple contrasts and dualities. Analyzing the novel we finds some contrasts between the several characters(the relationship between her sister, her home mates ), Irish and American’s mentality and the environment. Rose is dynamic and charming, the complete opposite of Eilis. Another contrast between Eilis’s and Georgina’s character. Indeed Georgina is very confident and strong, she helped Eilis on the ship and she gave her some advices for her new life. Eilis on the contrary is shy and reserved, others easily influence her and she often let them decide for herself.

However, we find some dualities when we read the novel. For example when Eilis goes to Brooklyn she feels at home indeed she goes to live in an house were there are only Irish girls, but differently like her, these girls more thought to appear.

The reader has difficulty figuring out when the novel takes place. Although the time is not specified, the intelligent reader can still understand that the Novel is set in a time when there is Catholic mentality that influences all the people.

The sex scene in the third part creates astonishment on the reader point of view, because in the past and for Puritan's mentality a young girl could have a relationship before marriage. In addition, in Brooklyn as in Ireland she lives in a churchy place where it is prohibited.

Both on the Famous Nylon Sale, at the University and Eilis come across several groups of immigrants. They have decided as her to move to America and finds some parallelism between her story and their one. She chance upon new situation and multiplicities of people and races.

The choice to leave to Brooklyn in our point of view can be seen from two points: one regarding her marriage engagement with Tony which is presented by Miss Kelly and Eilis’ mother as a duty, but if we considering things from Eilis’ point of view probably she felt the desire to return to Brooklyn (although is forced to give up his love for Jim) because in that place had managed to create an identity for the first time in his life she did not depend on comparison with her sister. At the end we think that she is passive again, because she prefers to maintain her churchy mentality instead of give up her great love. Indeed someone come to a decision for her without her permission.

If Eilis had stayed in Ireland and never come to America we think her life would have been different she would keep the job as Miss Kelly, she would still be exploited, she would continue to live in the comparison o his sister and she would still have been a passive character. If she came here today her story would not be different, indeed immigration is still present in our society.

The different final of the novel highlights the great ability of the writer who convey a past story with some contemporary elements. Nowadays a lot of young people could be in the protagonist's shoes.