LEITURAS CRÍTICAS

FÁBIO WAKI (Org.)

Laura P. Z. Izarra (Ed.)

FAPESP

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DA IRLANDA PARA O BRASIL

LEITURAS
CRÍTICAS

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Da Irlanda para o Brasil

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Sumário

Prefácio

A presente publicação *Leituras Críticas*, da série *Da Irlanda para o Brasil,* chega ao público com as novas vozes de estudos irlandeses do país, sob a organização de Fábio Waki, pesquisador da Cátedra W. B. Yeats. A série teve origem na pesquisa realizada para o Projeto Temático da FAPESP, "Da Irlanda para o Brasil: Textos Críticos", da qual participaram pesquisadores e pós-graduandos de quatro instituições de ensino superior brasileiras (Universidade de São Paulo, Universidade Estadual Paulista, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Universidade Federal do Paraná). O trabalho, desenvolvido sob minha coordenação no período de 2006 a 2009, buscava estudar as diferentes tendências da crítica, da ficção, do drama e da poesia de escritores e críticos irlandeses e da diáspora em duas épocas de fim de século, dezenove e vinte, para descobrir novas articulações estéticas que viessem a renovar e dialogar com as teorias da crítica literária no Brasil. O primeiro livro dedicado à crítica do Shaw, de autoria de Rosalie R. Haddad, é de 2009 quando a Cátedra W. B. Yeats de Estudos Irlandeses estava em gestação e seria fundada em setembro desse mesmo ano na Universidade de São Paulo. A seguir, Peter James Harris publica seus estudos sobre a recepção de peças de teatro irlandesas produzidas em Londres de 1980 a 2005 e, Munira H. Mutran apresenta a batalha das estéticas sobre o debate existente no final do século dezenove. A série renova o objeto de pesquisa

desde várias perspectivas revisionistas histórico-literárias olhando também para a produção do século vinte e um.

O panorama cultural do fim do século dezenove revela as complexidades da época vitoriana em declínio, os debates sobre ciência, progresso, educação, política, religião, sexualidade, grande fluxo de emigrações aos países de língua inglesa assim como à península ibérica e à América do Sul. Já a virada do século vinte apresenta grandes desafios. A modernização tardia presente no desenvolvimento sincopado da agricultura, da indústria e da educação irlandesa, reflete os efeitos do capitalismo que culminam nos anos noventa com o triunfo aparente do Tigre Celta, seguido por sua queda e, em 2014, pela transformação econômica do país, a Fénix Celta. Isso provoca uma reversão da diáspora, um aumento do fluxo de imigração, e mais recentemente, o acolhimento de refugiados, transformando a Irlanda num país cosmopolita. Porém, esse sucesso é arranhado pela atual crise econômica mundial e o recrudescimento das guerras territoriais globais trazendo incerteza enquanto um futuro de violência e sofrimento reaparece fantasmagoricamente nos dias de hoje.

Em tal espectro de temporalidades sobrepostas, a relação conflituosa com o passado e o futuro, ora do sujeito moderno, ora do contemporâneo, abre espaço para a criação de novas estéticas de representação em contraponto com sua tradição literária. A literatura irlandesa apresenta três momentos de grandes transformações a partir da metade do século dezenove: primeiro, com Oscar Wilde e na virada do século vinte com Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, George Moore, James Joyce, James Stephens; já avançando na metade do século, com Samuel Beckett, Frank O'Connor, Elizabeth Bowen, Flann O'Brien, Patrick Kavanagh, entre muitos outros. Por último,

após os anos de 1950 e na virada do século vinte e um, há dois movimentos quase simultâneos. O primeiro, com Seamus Heaney, Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, John Banville, Sebastian Barry, e a nova geração de escritoras – Edna O'Brien, Eavan Boland, Anne Enright, Marina Carr, entre outros. O segundo, com a literatura escrita pela primeira e segunda geração de imigrantes que começa a ter visibilidade e criar uma narrativa da experiência quotidiana não representada anteriormente. Os vários gêneros subvertem convenções estabelecidas e questionam sua essência explorando novos caminhos que nos levam a olhar os contextos históricos e culturais através de novas formas e técnicas de representação. É assim que a série *Da Irlanda para o Brasil* se torna relevante ao mapear as linhas de força dos debates atuais sobre a Irlanda contemporânea detectando as contradições nas diversas formações intelectuais.

Nas primeiras décadas deste milênio comemoram-se vários eventos que marcaram grandes mudanças no mundo, como o centenário da Grande Guerra. Na Irlanda, destaca-se as revoluções pela independência parcial de 1922; os vinte e cinco anos do Tratado de Paz de 1998; os cinquenta anos em que a República da Irlanda saiu de seu isolamento em 1973 para integrar a União Europeia e iniciar um novo ciclo de renovação; e, em 2025, os cinquenta anos das relações diplomáticas Brasil-Irlanda. A literatura produzida nesta época incorpora perspectivas críticas que modificam o debate cultural envolvendo vários campos do conhecimento e um revisionismo histórico-literário. O homem de fim do século é um duplo empírico-transcendental que usa a linguagem como meio entre o desconhecido e o conhecimento de si, mostrando a relação conflituosa do ser com sua origem, dificultada por um conhecimento fragmentado. A multiplicidade infinita do eu, gerada pela fragmen-

tação, cria uma imagem pós-moderna da realidade e a arte adquire uma nova e reveladora função.

A série de livros *Da Irlanda para o Brasil*, portanto, tem como objetivo construir uma ponte entre dois espaços geográficos de contextos literários distintos, procurando uma base comum nas preocupações estéticas da época, e apresentar as transformações dos paradigmas existentes que marcaram novos rumos nas artes e na crítica literária na virada dos séculos dezenove, vinte e vinte e um na Irlanda e na diáspora, facilitando a travessia dos textos críticos para se incorporar ao debate literário no nosso contexto.

Se escritores do primeiro Renascimento Irlandês tentaram explicar o fenômeno da multiplicidade da realidade e da identidade anglo-irlandesa, questionando a própria linguagem a partir de um contexto nacionalista, dentro da Irlanda e no exílio, os escritores contemporâneos enfrentam o mesmo dilema contextualizando-o dentro de uma realidade histórica (a interação entre o passado e o presente) poeticamente revisitada e recriada por meio de diversos tipos de linguagem e discursos, formando parte de uma "revolução cultural" que gera uma nova conscientização do significado simultâneo de "ser irlandês" e "ser cosmopolita".

Leituras Críticas reúne as novas vozes da série *Da Irlanda para o Brasil* que compartilham seus textos críticos e reflexões sobre autores irlandeses – romancistas, dramaturgos, poetas e críticos – arte e cultura, a maioria inéditos no Brasil. A introdução que os precede tem a função de contextualizá-los e de focalizar questões de grande interesse para os cursos de Letras e de Teoria Literária, como um apoio para o ensino da literatura. Os textos, selecionados a partir de sua grande relevância, apresentam as características dos movimentos

criativos das épocas de fim de século e revelam conceitos estéticos subjacentes relacionados às inovações artísticas e ideológicas desses períodos e das primeiras décadas subsequentes. Sua circulação no âmbito da crítica literária brasileira amplia o conhecimento no campo das estéticas e promove um diálogo transcultural sobre a contemporaneidade.

Laura P. Z. Izarra

Introdução

Fábio Waki

A Irlanda enfrentou a maior parte do século XX como um dos países mais pobres da Europa Ocidental, consequência imediata de sua longa trajetória como colônia a serviço dos interesses ingleses.

Se, entre os séculos XVII e XVIII, políticas de natureza colonial – como a estratificação entre católicos e protestantes, o confisco de terras e o estabelecimento de monoculturas – consolidaram uma estrutura de miséria por entre a população irlandesa, no século XIX, essa situação de precariedade veio a atingir um ponto de efetiva ruptura com o traumático período da Grande Fome (1845-1852), resultante tanto de fatores naturais – como pragas nas safras de batatas – quanto de fatores político-econômicos – como as rígidas políticas de exportação de produtos primários para a Inglaterra e a negligência inglesa em atender às necessidades básicas da população irlandesa.

Essas constantes mazelas sociais levariam a Irlanda a experimentar a maior onda emigratória de toda a Europa, com cerca de 10 milhões de seus habitantes vindo a se dispersar para países como Estados Unidos, Canadá e Austrália somente na segunda metade do século XIX.

Entre meados da década de 1990 e os primeiros anos dos anos 2000, porém, a Irlanda passou por uma significativa transformação social e econômica conhecida como o Tigre Celta (1994-2008). Esse período, na contramão dos séculos anteriores, foi marcado por um rápido crescimento econômico que em poucos anos elevou o país à condição de segunda maior renda per capita do continente europeu. Essa evolução decorreu de fatores na prática iniciados na metade do século XX, como a implementação de políticas educacionais mais eficientes, um maior controle dos gastos públicos e uma atração de investimentos estrangeiros em diversos setores da sociedade e da economia.

Tais mudanças implicariam em uma efetiva melhora da qualidade de vida do país, vindo a provocar mudanças demográficas igualmente notáveis, com a chegada de novas ondas migratórias a partir dos anos 2000. O país, até então relativamente homogêneo, passou a abrigar imigrantes de regiões tão multiétnicas como o Leste Europeu, a América Latina, a Ásia e a África.

No entanto, o Tigre Celta viria a encarar um verdadeiro desafio com a Crise do Euro em 2008, particularmente expressiva entre as camadas jovens mas economicamente ativas da população – em especial a geração *millennial* (nascida entre 1980 e meados de 1990) – e entre as ramificações do setor imobiliário. Embora sua recente prosperidade econômica tenha permitido ao país sobreviver de maneira consistente a essa crise, ele por certo não lhe passou incólume.

Jovens dessa geração, por exemplo, caracteristicamente encontram dificuldades para estabelecer residência de modo a continuarem às suas vidas familiares e profissionais, vindo a contribuir para novas instabilidades no mercado imobiliário e na economia do país, e,

em casos mais extremos, vindo mesmo a engrossar novas ondas de emigração para outras regiões do continente.

Embora mais branca e rica, a Irlanda carrega uma história colonial que a aproxima culturalmente dos países do Sul Global: sua experiência como vítima de um império e as mazelas materiais e imateriais resultantes de tal dinâmica são paralelas às vividas por países desse hemisfério social.

Foi com essa perspectiva que, em outubro de 2023, coordenei o *Colóquio de Estudos Irlandeses – Perspectivas do Sul Global* como parte da minha pesquisa de pós-doutorado junto à Cátedra W.B. Yeats na Universidade de São Paulo e à Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP).

Esse evento, como indicado em seu nome, teve como objetivo reunir pesquisadores interessados em explorar tais conexões entre as experiências coloniais da Irlanda e do Brasil, dois países que, apesar de seus evidentes progressos econômicos nos séculos XX e XXI, continuam a enfrentar os desafios presentes de seus passados de exploração.

A publicação da série *Da Irlanda para o Brasil*, da Cátedra W.B. Yeats de Estudos Irlandeses, apresenta a coletânea *Leituras Críticas,* contendo sete ensaios resultantes de algumas pesquisas compartilhadas durante o evento. A coletânea tem o objetivo de contribuir para um diálogo informado sobre tais transformações e sobre os paralelos pretéritos e presentes que irmanam essas duas nações.

O textos nesta edição foram mantidos o mais de acordo possível com os originais propostos pelos autores, de modo a respeitar as mútuas influências entre as línguas portuguesa e inglesa.

O texto "The Irish Keening Tradition and its Ethnopoetic Legacy", de William Alexander Nickerson, examina a tradição do *keening* irlandês, uma prática ritualística de lamentação funerária liderada por mulheres. Originada no século VII, o *keening* combina elementos orais e panegíricos, sendo uma expressão cultural profundamente enraizada na espiritualidade e no papel das mulheres nas comunidades celtas. A resistência cultural simbolizada pelo *keening* veio a se tornar um ato de afirmação identitária e de resistência ao colonialismo, especialmente sob a influência de eventos sociais, culturais e religiosos ao longo da história irlandesa. Com o passar do tempo, o *keening* evoluiu de uma prática oral para formas escritas e performáticas, preservando aspectos culturais e ampliando sua relevância na literatura. Escritores modernistas como James Joyce e J.M. Synge recontextualizaram o *keening*, explorando sua profundidade poética em obras literárias que investigam o luto e a identidade irlandesa.

O artigo "'A Veil as Red as Blood': the Salomes of Oscar Wilde and Richard Bruce Nugent", de Ana Carolina Vilalta Caetano, analisa as versões da figura bíblica de Salomé apresentadas por Oscar Wilde e por Richard Bruce Nugent. A peça *Salomé* (1891), de Wilde, reimagina a princesa bíblica como protagonista de uma história de desejo e tragédia, destacando sua obsessão destrutiva pelo profeta Jokanaan (João Batista). Já em "Slender Length of Beauty", de Nugent, Salomé é retratada em um conto marcado pela dualidade, onde seu amante Narcissus e o profeta Iokanaan são revelados como irmãos gêmeos. Wilde explora na sua peça a dinâmica entre o amante e o amado, retratando o eros como uma força destrutiva e paradoxal, e enfatizando temas como desejo, eros e transgressão, nos quais o olhar e a paixão parecem ser responsáveis pelo caos trágico e emocional do enredo. O conto de Nugent, por sua vez, expande a Salomé de Wilde em um

estudo sobre obsessões homoeróticas e identidades fragmentadas, culminando em uma fusão simbólica entre Salomé, Narcissus e Iokanaan, e assim explorando um apagamento de identidades por meio do desejo. Ambos os autores então exploram a narrativa de Salomé para retraçar os limites entre desejo, violência e transcendência, ressaltando como o amor pode devorar e ser devorado.

"Paradigm and Exceptionalism in the Green Atlantic's Racial Event", de Victor Augusto Pacheco, examina as interseções entre raça, identidade e antinegritude como paradigma para uma formação ontológica da contemporaneidade. A análise parte de eventos recentes, como os protestos de 23 de novembro de 2023 em Dublin, desencadeados por um ataque violento atribuído a um imigrante, e os conecta a processos de racialização na Irlanda. O autor examina esses processos, mais exatamente, ao longo de uma linha que se inicia com uma política de inferiorização do povo irlandês durante o domínio britânico e que culmina em uma busca por uma nova identidade branca no século XX. A pesquisa destaca, ademais, como as experiências históricas irlandesas são frequentemente romantizadas como analogias com a escravidão negra, muito embora os contextos de opressão social e sofrimento estrutural sejam substancialmente diferentes. Inspirado por Denise Ferreira da Silva, Pacheco toma o "evento racial" como uma ocorrência atemporal, desconectada de narrativas lineares, e explora como a antinegritude estrutura tanto o conceito de humanidade quanto as hierarquias raciais. Seu argumento é o de que o excepcionalismo irlandês, oscilante entre vítima e agente colonial, contribui para a construção de uma identidade que é paradoxalmente subalterna e exemplar.

"'On the Edge of What We Can't Control or Understand': Writing from and about Liminal Moments and Places in *The Inter-*

national" é uma análise da representação do trauma cultural e da liminalidade na obra *The International* (1999), de Glenn Patterson. A autora Jessica Grant Craveiro utiliza conceitos de *trauma coletivo*, *identidade cultural* e *espaços liminares* para compreender como o romance reflete os impactos do conflito conhecido como The Troubles (1968-1998) na Irlanda do Norte: a seu ver, etiologias de um trauma cultural que acabou por fragmentar identidades e comunidades devido à centralidade de uma violência sectária entre católicos e protestantes. A análise de Craveiro destaca como Patterson retrata momentos liminares nesse período – isto é, momentos de transição entre o pré-conflito e a tentativa de sua resolução em busca de paz. Na trama, o conceito de liminalidade está representado sobretudo no hotel – The Continental – onde se passa grande parte da história, uma espécie de "não-lugar", conforme a teoria de Marc Augé, na medida em que simboliza um espaço provisório onde identidades sexuais e religiosas são neutralizadas.

Esther Gazzola Borges explora no ensaio "'I Know that I Have to be Certain Things to Get by in Life': Queerness & Migration in *The Henna Wars*" as experiências de dois personagens queer e imigrantes no romance *The Henna Wars* (2020) de Adiba Jaigirdar. A análise se centra na amizade entre Nishat Ahsan – uma jovem queer e muçulmana de Bangladesh que emigra para a Irlanda – e Flávia, uma nova aluna bissexual e de origem brasileira-irlandesa – em um tenso processo de busca por identidades sexuais e socioculturais. A autora emprega o conceito de "diáspora queer" de Anne Fortier para entender como essas personagens, por sua sexualidade e condição migratória, vivem em um estado constante de "não pertencimento", navegando entre duas culturas e frequentemente sendo rejeitadas por ambas. A autora também recorre às ideias de Homi Bhabha sobre

"identidades híbridas" para ilustrar como essas experiências moldam a busca das personagens por autenticidade e pertencimento. O artigo também explora as teorias de Edward Said para ponderar sobre o impacto do "orientalismo" na vida das protagonistas: enquanto Nishat tem sua sexualidade negada e associada a estereótipos, Flávia se vê constrangida a lidar com a objetificação sexual de sua pessoa e com as expectativas impostas pela sociedade ocidental sobre seu corpo negro e sua sexualidade.

O artigo "O Labirinto do Intertexto: A Recriação do Espectro de Hamlet nos Ulysses Brasileiros", de Pedro Luís Sala Vieira, examina como as traduções brasileiras de *Ulysses*, de James Joyce, lidam com as alusões intertextuais à peça *Hamlet*, de William Shakespeare. Centrado nas versões de Antônio Houaiss (1966), Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro (2005) e Caetano Galindo (2012), seu estudo aborda os desafios de se recriar as referências shakespearianas em outro idioma, destacando o caráter labiríntico da tradução. O autor primeiro enfatiza como entre os textos ecoam temas como traição, paternidade e espectralidade. Ele utiliza o conceito de "labirinto rizomático" de Umberto Eco para descrever o processo tradutório, caracterizado por múltiplas possibilidades e interseções. Nesse contexto, traduzir torna-se um ato de recriação, no qual o tradutor é simultaneamente leitor e intérprete, relendo e reconstruindo o texto em outro idioma. Vieira conclui que cada tradução reflete o contexto sociocultural e o estilo de seu tradutor, demonstrando como a intertextualidade em *Ulysses* é recriada de maneiras únicas. Ele enfatiza a importância de ver a tradução como um tipo de crítica, que não apenas amplia o acesso dos leitores ao texto, como também enriquece a interpretação que podem fazer dele.

Por fim, "A Primavera dos Sistemas de Mundo: Yeats, Bataille e as Semiotizações do Ocultismo", de Alcebiades Diniz Miguel, investiga as interseções entre ocultismo, literatura e semiótica a partir das obras *A Vision* de W. B. Yeats e os projetos do grupo Acéphale liderado por Georges Bataille. Utilizando uma abordagem discursiva e isotópica, o autor analisa como essas produções desafiam a percepção convencional do ocultismo e expandem seus limites em termos filosóficos, poéticos e sociais. O texto parte das críticas de W. H. Auden e Theodor Adorno, que associam o ocultismo a irracionalidade ou regressão cultural, para demonstrar que, ao contrário, ele constitui um campo discursivo complexo e dinâmico. Miguel apresenta o conceito de "isotopia", oriundo da semiótica greimasiana, como uma ferramenta para compreender o ocultismo como um campo tridimensional, estruturado em tradição, mistério e exegese: tais elementos, segundo o autor, criam tensões entre transformação e estabilidade dentro da produção literária e discursiva. Miguel argumenta que tanto Yeats quanto Bataille utilizam o ocultismo como meio de ruptura com narrativas tradicionais, propondo novas formas de engajamento com o saber e a estética. Ele conclui que essas obras transcendem os limites da isotopia ocultista tradicional ao integrar reflexões sociais e políticas, destacando o papel transformador do ocultismo em contextos culturais e históricos específicos.

O *Colóquio de Estudos Irlandeses – Perspectivas do Sul Global* e esta coletânea de ensaios só foram possíveis graças à Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo.

Campinas, 26 de novembro de 2024.

The Irish Keening Tradition and its Ethnopoetic Legacy: a Very Brief Overview

William Alexander Nickerson

Introduction

A history of traditions is never absolutely conclusive, nor need it be; though the uncovering and examination of long-lost practices, rites, and intonations might shed light upon their modern and contemporary *counterparts* or *derivatives*. The investigation of a "deeper human past" requires a certain degree of leniency (or outright summarisation) regarding worldly, cultural, and millennium-spanning *ethnopoetic properties* – which Jerome Rothenberg (2017) aptly named *poesis*, or acts of language that are not unanimously recognised as such; and so, passive acts of poetic longing. Ethnopoetics represents a search for the fundamental need to understand what it is to be human, and to explore human

potential to its fullest. (SANTOS, 2020, p.136) In a manner of speaking, the Celtic lament shares no more common ground with the Greco-Roman *lessus*[1] than it does with the Anglo-Saxon *epicede* in *The Exeter*[2]; still, one might find there are elapsed commonalities within the poetry of loss – the essentially human properties – whether in oral form or written composition, which may well have "cross-communicated" or even traversed both geographical and temporal boundaries, crystallising the "ancestral cradle" wherein hundreds of authors, faceless or renowned, sought and found poetic solace, and who, in turn, went on to influence countless generations to come.

Henceforth, understanding classical European funerary customs and rites may illuminate the Hibernian keens that followed, as the former likely exerted some influence on the latter. It can be inferred that when the Romans conquered the Britons – having already had their own culture labouriously shaped by the Greeks in nearly every aspect – they would have introduced or at least altered certain cultural practices that were subsequently disseminated. However, some argue that the Britons successfully resisted the brunt of Romanisation.

Literary investigation recognises a persistent yet sometimes overt societal concession and characterisation of emotional outbursts or suppressions as distinctly masculine or feminine in nature. While temperament is not inherently tied to gender, its depiction throughout

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1 The *lessus* was shunned upon by the upper-classes and greatly restricted by Roman authority on account of its foreseeable political & religious connotations. See ERKER, 2009, p.147.

2 The 990CE book *The Exeter* features a mourning song in Old English called "The Wife's Lament", which explores in ubiquitous humanity the ordeals brought by the pains of separation.

history has been undoubtedly influenced by generalised expectations imposed by "traditional gender roles."[3] This phenomenon can be observed in *mourning* and *lament* ceremonies portrayed in literature across Indo-European civilisations. "[A distinction] between the sexes [was] apparently developed from the much more intense and prolonged contact of women with the world of the dead." (ERKER, 2009, p.136)[4] It is well established that women have long been the custodians of fertility – or life – yet their role in confronting and representing death must not be understated, particularly in the cultural depiction of death and its companions (grief, mourning, loss, melancholy etc.). Sophocles went so far as to suggest that women "enjoyed moaning," while Euripides claimed that "it is in women's nature to charm their ills by having them always at the tip of their tongue." (ALLARD ET AL, 2018, p.33) However one may interpret this, the female ritual lament has, in itself, emerged as a significant oral genre throughout history. Margaret Alexiou identifies three key

[3] Whether it be Seneca's proclamation that "Grief wounds women more than men" (From Seneca's *Ad Marciam, Consolatio*, 7.3) or Cicero "[describing] gestures of mourning [...] 'like women' [...] as worthy of contempt" (ERKER, 2009, p.137), it is clear that the perception of female roles within long-established funerary rites comes from the habituation women shared with one another regarding the passing of their partners on account of the commonalities of war.

[4] In "The Gendered Construction of Emotions in the Greek and Roman Worlds", Allard et al (2018) suggest how the notion of "bravery" or "hatred" are typically perceived as "manly" emotions, while "grief" and "lamentation" denote behaviours widely associated with the feminine persuasion: "There is a division between emotions classified as 'manly' and those thought 'womanly', both in Hellenistic Greece and then in Republican and Imperial Rome." (ALLARD ET AL, 2018, p.26) "We are driven to conclude that it is not the emotions themselves which are gendered, but rather the way they are expressed or how they are dealt with." (ALLARD ET AL, 2018, p.32)

terms for lament, wailing, and "chest beating": *thrênos*, *góos*, and *kommós*. (ALEXIOU, 2002, p.102)

Allard et al. noted that "from Homeric Greece to Seneca's Rome, a time of public mourning invited the staging of the grief of women from the family of the deceased", and that, generally, "this was expressed through tears and lamentations or, at times, by incantations chanted in front of the house of the deceased, known in Rome as *neniae*." (ALLARD ET AL, 2018, p.36) The responsibility for mourning and conducting funerary laments often fell to kinswomen or hired professionals, as thoroughly outlined by Alexiou in *Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* and corroborated in Erker's paper.

Erker explains:

> [Hired] professional mourners[,] [...] so-called [P]raeficae [...] did most of the mourning and lamenting during funeral rituals in Rome, although often they did not even know the deceased person. Their ritual performances were not fed by emotions and personal attachment; rather, they employed a number of codified gestures and lamentation." (ERKER, 2009, p.138)

It is through these early notions of *poesis* within Irish ethnopoetics that we observe the emergence of a ceremony of comparable regard, form, structure, and purpose – one that was funerary, celebratory, and ritualistic in nature. This eventually evolved into the *keening* tradition as it came to be known.

The *Caoineadh*

The *caoineadh* was an early form of funeral *sean-nós* lament, an old Irish dialect dirge in which the focal speaker, the *ban caointhe* – a condottiere, older, wiser, and often anonymous woman[5] – would rock back and forth rhythmically whilst chanting unaccompanied *rosc* verses. These were long, sombre, unrhymed, and alliterative verses, lamenting and weeping over the recently deceased. A *caoineadh* was a culturally entwined public ceremony, reserved for well-beloved or prominent members of the community: prolific farmers and merchants, respected elders and leaders, soldiers fallen in battle, or innocent children. These performative ceremonies held such importance within the small communities that failing to keen over someone's death could be seen as an act of defiance or disrespect. As such, a *caoineadh* for a land agent, for instance, would have been highly unlikely. Stemming from ancient practices, the direct involvement of women in these rituals was essential. As mentioned above, the spiritualisation of femininity in Classical Europe wielded immense power. The *caoineadh* followed a panegyric structure, built around a leading figure or figures whose voices resonated unconditionally among the onlooking crowd. The *ban caointhe*'s raspy, nonchalant voice would entrance the audience, stirring feelings of sorrow and mournful compassion. Women gathered around would join in chanting. These ritualistic, melancholic incantations were often directed toward the dead themselves, while offering those attending the funeral a space to mourn and grieve sublimely. Bystanding women would habitually bond with one

[5] COILEÁIN, 1988, p.100. Notice the similarity with the *Praeficae*.

another during these processions, displaying or even performing distinct vocalisations that underscored their shared sorrow: *fet*, *gol*, and *éigem* (MILLS, 2018, p.1) – hissing, wailing, and shrieking. The collective participation of women in Celtic keening practices ultimately solidified the Irish lament as a distinct oral genre. These ceremonies evoked a hypnotic sense of melancholy and despair, creating a communal trance of bleakness. The burden of a loved one's passing was borne not only by the deceased's close-knit circle of family and friends but also by neighbours and people from across Ireland's farthest reaches.

The dismal daze experienced by many of these wailing women – and grieving men – while keening was rooted in a deeply autochthonous confrontation with death. Over centuries, this traditional practice gradually enveloped itself in – or incorporated – a shroud of artistic sentiment. The Irish lament tradition dates as far back as the 7th century, with its *poesis* potentially drawing from the funerary practices of the Romans.

The lasting impression of the keen in Ireland created an overwhelming need to catalogue these continually emerging oral artefacts, sculpted by female-led (though not exclusively female-focused) poetry. This had not occurred before, as men had typically held the highest bardic ranks. It was perhaps through these societal roles in artistic keening ceremonies that women poets found solace, for a *caoineadh* could proclaim many things – even unto death. The earlier tradition of orally diffused *caoineadh* eventually shifted toward a written configuration, which coexisted with the oral form while also reinforcing and preserving traditional Irish values and beliefs. As Andrea Brady observes in *Law and Mourning*, "The passionately

embodied actions and utterances of keening women were read by other mourners specifically as affirmations of the social value of the deceased, but they also represented a commitment to indigenous religion and culture and resistance to colonial repression." (SARAT, 2017, p.78) Thus, the keening's influential role in shaping ethnopoetic literature should not be underestimated.

The Old Keening

The older keens ranged from archaic and straightforward ditties to complex songs and poems. While many keens were characterised by repetition and mono or disyllabic syntax, some of the more renowned examples were quite sophisticated, melodic, and deliberately poetic.[6] Sean Ó Coileáin, a poet from County Cork, argued that "the circumstances which produced the keen not only provide the social (one might almost say ceremonial) context of its performance but also had a direct bearing on its composition and form; they are not simply attendant on the oral product but shape that product to a considerable degree." (COILEÁIN, 1988, p.97) The keening's high malleability allowed participants to contribute to it, enhancing its ceremonial value within a larger communal setting. Writers would often incorporate themes that resonated deeply with the community – be it of shared joys or fears – through spontaneous contributions. Brady elaborates that "these improvised verse

[6] An example of a simple structure: "Agus óchón, agus óchón, agus óchón, is óchón" (And alas, and alas, and alas and alas) or "Tá rú reidh, tá tú thiós, ara abhó ó go deo" (You are ready, you are below, goodbye forever). Recordings provided by *The Folk Revival Project* (2023).

compositions occupy a liminal position between poem and song, or between highly organised thematic compositions and musical wailing" (SARAT, 2017, p. 76). Ó Coileáin also noted the *caoineadh*'s general simplicity:

> The verse itself was of a most elementary kind. The number of syllables was not fixed; one could have two or three stresses to the line; generally only one assonance had to be observed, and that only for the duration of the stanza which [...] could be terminated at will and a different assonance established for a similarly indeterminate period. (COILEÁIN, 1988, p. 102)

More often than not, "simple" and "respectful" were interchangeable concepts. Keeners were acutely aware of the symbolic value their chants held within their community. It made sense that some keens would remain simple, ensuring that the focus remained on honouring the deceased. After all, it was a ceremony for the dead, embodying funerary patter. Yet, in cases where keeners had a more personal connection to the deceased, the *poesis* could evolve into profound poetic expression. Ó Coileáin further explained the spontaneous nature of the *caoineadh*:

> [There is an emphasis on] the extemporaneous nature of the keen [such] as [...] the facility with which 'the keener will put the verses together and shape her poetical images to the case of the person before her' [and] the simplicity of the rhyming system in that 'vocal rhymes are sufficient for poetry' [...] [and] at the close of every stanza of the dirge, the cry is repeated, to fill up, as it were, the pause, and

> then dropped; the woman then again proceeds with the dirge, and so on to the close. [...] The keener, having finished a stanza of the keen, sets up the wail . . . in which all the mourners join. Then a momentary silence ensues, when the keener commences again, and so on – each stanza ending in the wail . . . The lamentation is not always confined to the keener; anyone present who has 'the gift' of poetry may put in his or her verse: and this sometimes occurs." (COILEÁIN, 1988, p. 102)

It wasn't long before keeners began documenting and sharing their funerary compositions, likely as a means of prolonged mourning. The 8th-century lament *Dónal Óg* – one of the more complex surviving keens – features a rhyme scheme, alliteration, assonance, metaphors, and other prominent literary devices. It represents not only a case in which a time-worn *caoineadh* remained literarily relevant, despite being over a millennium old, but also the keener's poetic disposition and intentionality. Irish writer Rosemarie Rowley deftly translated this anonymous keen in 1998:

> *You promised me and it was a lie*
> *You'd wait for me at the sheep's paling*
> *I whistled and called three hundred times my cry*
> *And all I heard was a small lamb wailing*
>
> (ROWLEY, 1998, vv. 4-7)

This is an intricate and shrewd *caoineadh* for its time. Its hyperbolic nature nods to the overwhelming grandness of loss, almost venturing into metalinguistic territory, as the wailing of

a small lamb symbolises the keener's own mourning. Rowley's translation expands understanding of the *keen's* sorrowful imagery, despite omitting many of the physical ritualistic elements associated with the *ban caointhe's* chanting:

> When I go to the Well of Loneliness
> I sit and cry till my heart's a stone
> All my life is around me, save a true caress
> From he with his amber shadow on his high cheekbone
>
> (ROWLEY, 1998, vv. 37-40)

The *poesis* of the *caoineadh* fostered poetic growth. What was once a heavily performative act sought new ground in written forms. The dirge could explore delicate and subtle concepts, such as the "Well of Loneliness", while still fulfilling its social role. *Dónal Óg* stands out for its rarity and atypical poetic progression, providing essential insight into the ethnopoetics of Irish panegyrics.

> Black as the sloe is my heart inside each day
> Black as a lump of coal in a smithy's forge
> Black as a footprint in a shining hallway
> As a dark mood overcoming humour's urge
>
> You took the East and you took the West from me
> You took my future and my past, it is hell
> You took the moon and you took the sun from me
> And, I greatly fear, you have robbed me of God as well.
>
> (ROWLEY, 1968, vv. 53-60)

Yet another literary artefact as complex as *Dónal Óg* – if not more so – and one of the most notable and widely recognised surviving keens is the 18th-century *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire*, or Dark Eileen's *The Lament for Art O'Leary*, committed to writing some 30 years after its original composition. (SANTOS, 2020, p.139) There are at least three primary variations of the text, which incorporate several sections added by the deceased's father and sister, further accentuating the poetic richness achieved through the collaborative nature of traditional keening practices. (MARREN, 1993, p.50; DILLON, 1968, p.216) This *caoineadh* encapsulates both religious and political undertones, set against the foreground of a wailing woman's grief. It vividly portrays Irish resilience and fearlessness while evoking olden ways of life. The Lament serves as a sombre window into how keening became intertwined with Irish culture on a broader scale.[7] Eileen's husband, a Roman Catholic Captain of the Hungarian Hussars, was shot dead under the orders of Protestant High Sheriff Abraham Morris. This not only plunged Eileen into utter despair but also became a poignant symbol of defiance, challenging everything she and other Catholic Irish people so passionately upheld.[8]

Oh, white-handed rider!
How fine your brooch was
Fastened in cambric,
And your hat with laces.

---

7 Notice the similarity with the lessus.

8 Santos on Eileen: "The ferocity of her language is exceeded only by the awesome control thereof, every word etched, indelible, and incontrovertible. The lines are spoken in a rhythm of such throbbing intensity as to suggest that a culture capable of this utterance can never die." (SANTOS, 2020, p.143)

When you crossed the sea to us,
They would clear the street for you,
And not for love of you
But for deadly hatred.

(DILLON, 1968, p.219, vv. 36-46)

Eileen's *caoineadh* retains the central characteristics of keening while also evoking the collective suffering of a people. Strongly reliant on the wailing performance of its female author – whose leading cries of mourning transformed into ferocious provocation and an aggressive song of resignation, punctuated by heartfelt battle cries – it boldly and skilfully addressed uncomfortable and, at times, forbidden subjects. While it carries a deeply Catholic atmosphere, it is the veins of political defiance and resistance to persecution that became defining elements in the keenings that followed. The Lament symbolised a deliberate gathering of profound grief and perhaps marked a shift from traditional *poesis* to modern poetic intent. It stands as a literary landmark, an architectural creation – a two-way bridge between the Celtic dirge and Irish literature. In this, the words and voices of the keeners resonated not only as a tribute to the dead but also as a reflection of the collective yearning for a shared sense of true Irishness.[9]

My bitter, long torment
That I was not with you

[9] In Coileáin's words: "'The Lament for Art O'Leary' is not a literary composition, nor merely an oral composition either, but part of a dramatic performance of which the verbal element is but one factor." (COILEÁIN, 1988, p.103)

When the bullet came towards you,
My right side would have taken it
Or a fold of my tunic,
And I would have saved you
Oh smooth-handed rider.

(DILLON, 1968, p.222, vv. 138-44)

The extensive documentation and literature surrounding Eileen's dirge largely focus on the political aesthetic it embodies and its symbolic significance for the Irish people. However, what the Lament also subtly reveals is that pivotal moment when the spoken word transitioned into the written form. The deeply traditional panegyric *caoineadh* found new life through literary augmentation. Keenings like the Lament possessed such inherent literary merit that they went on to influence the emerging medium of modern literary works, inspiring writers such as William Butler Yeats, George William Russell, John Millington Synge, and James Joyce.[10]

The Modern Keening

The experimental nature of the *modern* keening cannot be overlooked. While the largely unembellished lyricism of female-led *caoineadh* prioritised function over form, later depictions of keening shifted towards valuing the latter. *Poesis*, which had evolved into *poetic*

[10] J. H. Delargy writes about this: "Both oral tradition and written literature have exercised considerable influence one on the other; the early sagas contain a wealth of motifs borrowed from a still older orally preserved tradition." (DELARGY, 1969, p.30)

intent over the centuries, transformed once more under the influence of *drama*. The performative edge of the *caoineadh*, once thought lost, made a swift return, placing the *ban caointhe* in a new yet familiar role: *theatre acting*, as opposed to *funerary acting*.

While Eileen stood at the forefront of the old keening tradition, the Celtic Revivalists were the architects of the *modern* iteration. Yeats, Russell, and Synge, heavily inspired by the Ulster Cycle of Mythology, sought to honour and preserve their "departed" ancient Gaelic traditions. These dramatized folk-tales included plays that incorporated *caoineadh* elements in new formats and were performed orally at the Abbey Theatre. For instance, several Celtic Twilight interpretations explore the legendary tale of *Deirdre*, a quintessential Gaelic folklore archetype first appearing in the Red Branch Cycle of Celtic mythology around the 1st century – often referred to as the "Helen of Ireland." Synge, a masterful portrayer of Irish tradition – as evidenced by his now-renowned yet once-controversial play *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) and his one-act play *Riders to the Sea* (1904), both of which feature traces of *caoineadh*, particularly the latter – translates the art of keening into a written, performative study in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. This play depicts the tormented Deirdre keening over her lover's grave, a final lament in which "her mind becomes more and more transparent so as to behold the essence of this world – [the] naked reality of life itself [...] with her sorrows externalised, [...] her self-pity [...] at this stage transformed into a serenity." (WAKAMATSU, 1987, p.17)

> "It is I, Deirdre, will be crouching in a dark place; I, Deirdre, that was young with Naisi, and brought sorrow to his grave in Emain

> [...] It will be my share from this out to be making lamentation on this stone always, and I crying for a love will be the like of a star shining on a little harbor by the sea [...] To what place would I go away from Naisi? What are the woods without Naisi or the sea shore? It was the voice of Naisi that was strong in summer – the voice of Naisi that was sweeter than pipes playing, but from this day will be dumb always [...] There is Naisi was the best [...] the choicest of the choice of many. It was a clean death was your share, Naisi; and it is not I will quit your head when it's many a dark night among the snipe and plover that you and I were whispering together. It is not I will quit your head, Naisi, when it's many a night we saw the stars among the clear trees of Glen da Ruadh, or the moon pausing to rest her on the edges of the hills." (SYNGE, 1910, pp.71-73)

At first glance, Deirdre's lament and Eileen's *Lament* share many similarities: grieving a lover's death, wailing, hopelessness. But a subtle difference lies in the fact that Deirdre's vocalisation arises entirely from a written monologue, while Eileen's written composition materialised from an oral dirge. Angela Bourke compared the "keening woman's performance" to that of a "tragic actor," both requiring considerable intellectual stamina as well as a great reserve of emotion. (O'BRIEN, 2006, p.56) It is this subtle distinction that sets them apart. The old *caoineadh* is *poesis* come true: political defiance and genuine loss. The modern, by contrast, is a dramatization and a display of the Irish people through a wholly new lens – not only examining what it meant to be Irish but what it meant to grieve Irish. Synge and Eileen explored similar themes but from contrasting perspectives. While the cultural role of the *caoineadh* evolved in Irish literature, its ethnopoetic value remained consistent

throughout. Thus, it could be argued, as per Delargy's explanation of the oral confluence between Irish oral and written traditions, that a certain back-and-forth identity lingered between the old and the modern keenings. Synge's modern depiction of the *caoineadh*, sharing sufficient common ground with the old, went a long way in shaping perceptions of how the oral *caoineadh* was understood and valued.

> Gaelic medieval romance shows unmistakable evidence both of the written literature, and of folk-elements, native and foreign; while, in more recent times, the paper manuscripts of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries have exercised a greater influence than has hitherto been suspected on Gaelic oral literature. (DELARGY, 1969, p.30)

Not to reproach the ways of Synge – or Yeats, for that matter – but to build upon them, came one lilting James Joyce. Perhaps none would tap this well of autochthonous ethnopoetics better than the modernist author who birthed *Ulysses*, the daytime contemplation of the Irish funerary ritual, women, and state of mind, as well as *Dubliners*, from which came the famous short story (or folk tale) *The Dead*, a moral "chamber drama" of sorts: anti-secular, poignant, and undeniably critical of an Ireland Joyce mourned for. In the short story, the living are constantly keening for a troubled nation and their own troubled souls.[11] Both books ooze a pervading sense of Irish grief, lament, and sorrow. Within them, Joyce seemed to prioritise the Irish

[11] See "The Living in Joyce's 'The Dead'" (1988) by Rachel V. Billigheimer and "Sex and Politics in 'The Dead'" (1986) by Thomas Dilworth.

character over the very narrative in which they were (proficiently) sustained. In 1939, however, his final book took this theme much further: daytime pensiveness gave way to nighttime wailing; the funeral transmogrified into *funferal*.[12]

Finnegans Wake is largely a product of Joyce's fascination with and commitment to the autochthonous Irish dialect itself, prominently featuring the languages that shaped it (English, French, Gaelic) without reservation. Its oral qualities enact a clear mimesis of Irishness – of folk tales, folk speech, and folk places (*béaloideas*, *gaeilge*, and *dindshenchas*).[13] Hence, it flourishes in laying bare all notions of Irishness, though strangely exotic and mildly unreadable by traditional standards. It is a stuttering[14], melodic, labour-intensive "Book of Kells," nurturing culturally infused speech patterns that are pure, imbued, *Éirennach-poesis*, much appreciated by the Revivalist movement. And in its *wakeness*, it employs not only an ethnopoetics of mourning on a much larger scale – the keening for a lost memory of not just an individual but of Ireland as a whole – but also a call-back to mourning traditions through its prosodical bardic refinement: "Finally, in *Finnegans Wake*, Dubliners are reintegrated into the land from which [...] their ancestors were evicted. In place of grotesque English names, the place-names of Ireland are reimbursed with 'retellings' of the deeds of Ireland's past." (MAGUIRE, 1998, p.320).

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[12] See Katherine O'Callaghan's "Behush the Bush to Whish!': Silence, Loss, and 'Finnegans Wake.'".

[13] See Peter Maguire's "'Finnegans Wake' and Irish Historical Memory" for *dindschenchas*.

[14] See David Spurr's "Stuttering Joyce".

> It was long after once there was a lealand in the luffing ore it was less after lives thor a toyler in the tawn at all ohr it was note before he drew out the moddle of Kersse by jerkin his dressing but and or it was not before athwartships he buttonhaled the Norweeger's capstan. (JOYCE, 1939, p.311)

The resemblances of *Finnegans Wake* to the old keening lie partly in its mellifluous, quasi-inebriated incantation littered with autochthonous affirmation: quasi humming passages mimic the primordial keen:

> [...] Wold Forrester Farley who, in deesperation of deispiration at the diasporation of his diesparation, was found the round of the sound of the lound of the thedunandurraskewdylooshoofermyportertooryz ooysphalnabortansporthaokansakroidverjkapakkapuk. Byfall [...] (JOYCE, 1939, p.257)

It is not so much "miswritten" as it is deliberately portraying "acts of speech" (or acts of thought) channeled through literary signs and devices such as onomatopoeia and alliteration, occasionally leading to the creation of the enigmatic 35-syllable thunderwords, which resemble stuttering or inebriated speech. In the aforementioned snippet, thunderword #6 repeats the mantra "*shut the door*" in nine different languages (Danish, Irish, Italian, French, German, Greek, English, Russian, and Turkish), possibly alluding

to a door of "innocence and purity."[15] *Ban caointhe* in *Finnegans Wake* is quite literally embodied through the reader, who is encouraged to chant in remembrance of a paralysed, spiritually dead Ireland – Joyce's *Caoineadh to Éire*. Hidden in every nook and between every line, *Finnegans Wake* humorously mourns the Irish people and perhaps even the Irish dialect itself. As Peter Maguire observes: "The dead speak to each other in a dying language. Conversely, Joyce's text is based on the premise there is no future for the Irish Language Revival." (MAGUIRE, 1998, p.323)

> NIGHTLETTER
>
> With our best youlldied greedings to Pep
> and Memmy and the old folkers below and
> beyant, wishing them all very merry Incar-
> nations in this land of the livvey and plenty
> of preprosperousnes through their coming
> new yonks
> from
> jake, jack and little sousoucie
> (the babes that mean too)"
>
> (JOYCE, 1939, p. 308)

Due to the book's unconventional storytelling and pacing, simply opening *Finnegans Wake* to a random page is as effective as combing through it linearly. By doing so, the reader encounters

[15] Adam Harvey, founder of JoyceGeek, broke down each of the ten thunderwords in the book.

countless hidden panegyrics, prayers, and supplications. Therein lies Joyce's *Caoineadh to Éire*, an old-keening-inspired *funferal*, brimming with autochthonous wordplay and mournful ideation. This modernist approach paved the way for the contemporary keening; in a post-post-modernist Ireland, non-conformist *caoineadh* sought to embrace that distinct *Éirennach-poesis* and imbue it with layers of symbolism and artistic intent.

The Current Keening

Establishing a precise contemporary literary genre fully encompassed by the keening is no easy task. Given the experimental techniques passed on to new generations of Irish writers, singers, and performers, modern keens can be difficult to identify, although the *caoineadh* continues to flourish in reinterpretations of old tales.[16] It is, however, possible to observe similarities between the expressiveness of various art forms. Thus, contemporary keening may also draw from the performative elements associated with the rhythmic movements of the *ban caointhe*. It is safe to presume that the keening aspects of the *caoineadh* have evolved significantly over the centuries: from expostulate and ritualistic practices to mythical

[16] For instance, Dermot Bolger's 1989 play *The Lament for Arthur Cleary*, which is a contemporary reinterpretation of Eileen's dirge set in present-day Dublin, or Fionna Davidson's 1998 album *The Language of Birds: Celtic Legend, Harp & Song*, which sees her *Deirdriu of the Sorrows* performance sublimely mimicking the overall *Syngean* dramatic staging whilst not entirely abandoning the feel of an olden *ban caointhe* keening over the dead, which draws greatly from that element which Kathleen O'Brien calls "*keening in the post*-caoineadh *era*." (O'BRIEN, 2006, p.27)

and legendary traditions, to culturally ingrained and behavioural traits within traditional practices.

Consider Joseph Ronald Drew, a 20th-century Irish singer and writer, founder of one of the most prestigious and enduring Irish traditional folk bands, *The Dubliners*. His invocation of Deirdre is entirely distinct – yet strikingly familiar – in its storyteller-like ambience. Or take Kwannon's eerie incantations from 2010's *The Twisted Book*. Even if these contain only trace elements of *caoineadh*, they undoubtedly carry the *Éirennach-poesis* of death and loss.

I remember the night that he came in from the wintery
Cold and damp
A giant of a man in an oilskin coat, and a bundle that

Told he was a tramp
He stood at the bar and he called a pint, then turned
And gazed at the fire
On a night like this, to be save and dry is my one and
Only desire
So here's to those that are dead and gone, the friends
That I loved dear
And here's to you and I'll bid you adieu, sayin'
"Donegal Danny's been here, me boys,
Donegal Danny's been here"

(DREW, 1973)

Contemporary Ireland is brimming with both traditional and modern panegyrics, whose reciprocal influence on one another's artistry continues to shape cultural expression. This interplay

cements their roles within the Irish keening legacy as highly valued, autochthonous forms of expression. As such, their prevalence within the Irish zeitgeist represents a rich and compelling subject, meriting further, in-depth historical and literary analysis.

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"A Veil as Red as Blood": the Salomes of Oscar Wilde and Richard Bruce Nugent

Ana Carolina Vilalta Caetano

Written originally in French during Oscar Wilde's stay in Paris, *Salome* (1891) is a one-act tragedy that recounts the night of John the Baptist's death. Wilde's iteration of the myth reimagines the role the nameless princess from the Bible had in the beheading of the prophet, making her the main character of a grotesque romance gone awry. *Salome* was later translated into English by Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde's lover, and published in London by Elkin Matthews and John Lane in 1894, with explicit illustrations by Art Nouveau artist Aubrey Beardsley. *Salome* gained popularity in the United States during the beginning of the twentieth century, and the growing fascination with both the play and the biblical figure became known as "Salomania", a term coined by the newspapers of the time (POUEYMIROU, 2011, p.201). In the 1920s, Salomania regained traction in the context of the Harlem Renaissance, Wilde's

play helping establish two important theater groups, the *Ethiopian Art Players* and the *New Negro Art Theatre Dance Group* (Idem, ibidem, p.202, p.209). It was ultimately through theater that the Decadent movement, dandyism and Wilde quickly became topoi in the works created during the Harlem Renaissance. Thus, this article aims to illustrate the dialogic relationship between Wilde's *Salome* and the short story "Slender Length of Beauty", written by the Harlemite Richard Bruce Nugent as part of a collection known as *Bible Stories* (1925-1930).

The Salome myth appears originally in the gospels of Matthew and Mark, associated with the untimely death of John the Baptist. He is a central figure in the New Testament and the prologues define his identity as a prophet and itinerant preacher, and establish his mission as the one to foresee the coming of the Messiah. John believes himself unfit to baptize Jesus, but upon insistence does it, and is blessed by hearing the voice of God. Later, he is imprisoned by Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, for openly criticizing his marriage to his brother's ex-wife, Herodias. According to the gospels, Herodias encourages her daughter to dance for Herod on his birthday banquet, and to ask for a favor in return. She does and, as instructed by her mother, demands John's head on a platter. Herod believes John to be a holy man and is frightened by his power, but, due to the weight and public nature of his promise, kills him nonetheless (Mark 6:14-29, Matthew 14:1-12[1]). Herodias' daughter is never mentioned by name. Later, Jewish

1 In Matthew: "But at a birthday party for Herod, Herodias's daughter performed a dance that greatly pleased him, 7 so he promised with a vow to give her anything she wanted. 8 At her mother's urging, the girl said, 'I want the head of John the Baptist on a tray!' 9 Then the king regretted what he had said; but because of the vow he had made in front of his guests, he

priest and historian Flavius Josephus would assert that she was called Salome (1737, *Antiquities of the Jews,* Book VIII, Chapter 5, 4).

Wilde reimagines this event and the princess in his French play. A fragmented and unstable court becomes the background for Salome's destructive infatuation with the imprisoned prophet Jokanaan. She is given a paradoxical personality and the agency to choose the reward for her dance, this time not being a pawn in her mother's game. Nugent would incorporate elements of Wilde's *Salome* in his short story "Slender Length of Beauty", which recounts the night of the banquet and Salome's complicated entanglement with two men, the beautiful Narcissus and the religious prisoner Jokanaan. Both literary works utilize transgression and eroticism to convey the intimate relationship between love and death, devourer and devoured, lover and beloved, centralizing a passion that is often blinding.

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issued the necessary orders. 10 So John was beheaded in the prison, 11 and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother [...].". Available at: <biblegateway.com>.

In Mark: "For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.' 23 And he vowed to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.' 24 And she went out and said to her mother, 'For what should I ask?" And she said, 'The head of John the Baptist.' 25 [...] And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother [...]". Available at: <biblegateway.com>.

"I Saw Thee and I Loved Thee": Oscar Wilde's Salome

Oscar Wilde's *Salome* depicts a diverse cast of characters – two soldiers, the Syrian captain Narraboth, Herodias' page, the guests, and the royal family – during the banquet that leads up to Jokanaan's beheading. The Tetrarch holds the prophet captive and isolated in a cistern, but, transfixed by his sermons, Salome convinces the guards to allow her to visit him. She falls madly in love with Jokanaan, but he is disgusted by her advances. Later, when Herod asks her to dance for him in exchange for a prize, she immediately chooses the prophet's head on a silver platter, believing it to be the only way she will be able to fulfill her wish to kiss him. Herod reluctantly concedes and Salome kisses Jokanaan's mouth after a final delirious speech. Appalled, the Tetrarch orders his soldiers to kill her, and she dies crushed beneath their shields.

The play was supposed to be performed in 1892, one year after its first publication, with Sarah Bernhardt in the titular role. However, production was cut short by the official theater censor, who deemed the depiction of biblical characters on stage inappropriate (DIERKES-THRUN, 2011, p.4). In 1896, French director Aurélien Lugné-Poë managed to bring *Salome* to the stage, but Wilde never got to see it, as he had been sent to prison in 1895. Less than ten years later, Max Reinhardt would stage performances of the one-act tragedy in Berlin and Richard Strauss would turn it into an opera.

Salome begins on the terrace above the banqueting-hall, with an almost geometric pattern of gazing. Leaning over the balcony, the Syrian Narraboth watches the princess, and the page warily observes him and reprimands him for it. Two soldiers offer commentary on

what is transpiring below at the party, noticing that Herod is looking at someone. Narraboth associates Salome with the rising moon and the page associates the rising moon with a "woman who is dead" (WILDE, 1985, pp.21-22), and, although their lines are thematically related, there is a clear disconnection between the characters, who only seem to be taking turns at talking, but not listening to each other. The initial moments of the play are essential in exposing the gaze as a driving force for the tragedy and in establishing an atmosphere in which death, similarly to the moon, looms closer.

Salome's first line, uttered as she finishes climbing the stairs to the terrace, reveals that she was the one Herod had been watching earlier. The princess is fleeing the banquet, simultaneously trying to hide from the Tetrarch's insistent and ambivalent glances and distancing herself from the crudeness of the court.

> [*Enter Salome.*]
>
> SALOME
>
> I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. In truth, yes, I know it.
>
> THE YOUNG SYRIAN
> You have just left the feast, Princess?
> SALOME
> How sweet the air is here! I can breathe here!
>
> (WILDE, 1985, p. 28)

Her escape illustrates how power and gaze are intimately related. In his analysis of nude paintings, art critic John Berger asserts that "[men] act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at", and that, consequently, women become objects of vision, "a sight" (BERGER, 1972, p.47). By convention, "a sight" does not occupy an active role and must survey herself to gain control over the process of being perceived (Idem, ibidem, p.46). This perspective is especially interesting when analyzing *Salome* as a spectacle of the corporeal and the erotic. Linda and Michael Hutcheon argue that the "dramatic narrative, the text and the music" of Richard Strauss' opera, inspired by Wilde's text, work together to position "the body of Salome front and center, where audience members (like Herod) could not take their eyes off her", and that "Salome's body was decidedly the obsession of late-nineteenth-century European culture" (HUTCHEON e HUTCHEON, 1998, p.12). In many ways, the play exposes the burdens and powerlessness intrinsic to being desired, and, by extension, the beloved.

Wilde's writing and aesthetic inclinations are heavily influenced by Ancient Greek culture and literature (EVANGELISTA, 2009, pp.125-127), and *Salome* echoes the destructive nature of *eros*, described as a pathology capable of disrupting the body. In Greek poetic tradition, desire enters the victim through the eyes: it is the image of the beloved that creates the need to transgress all physical limits (CALAME, 2013, p.12), reawakening in the lover a "nostalgia for wholeness" (CARSON, 1998, p.53). Desire operates on a paradox of lack and obtainment in which its appeasement would implicate its end, but its endurance would result in the lover's insanity (CALAME, 2013, p.9). Thus, *eros* is unrealizable and closely linked with the inescapability of tragedy.

Desire, vision, the body, and impossibility are interwoven into every relationship in *Salome*. When Jokanaan's voice echoes from the cistern, Salome's ramblings and complaints are abruptly interrupted by a need to see him. Narraboth, the captain of the guard, harbors feelings for Salome and has been watching her the whole night, so she knowingly turns to him to fulfill her wish, using a ruse based on the promise of reciprocity in a transaction that fundamentally subverts her role as a passive sight.

> SALOME
>
> [*Smiling.*]
>
> You will do this thing for me, Narraboth. You know that you will do this thing for me. And to-morrow when I pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at you through the muslin veils, I will look at you, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at you. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! you know that you will do what I ask of you. You know it well.... I know that you will do this thing.
>
> (WILDE, 1985, p.30)

The tantalizing possibility of Salome revealing her face, combined with the openness to *eros* through vision, convinces Narraboth to bring the prophet to her. His hope, as the lover, is that the act of gazing will be the initial step towards loving, a characteristic movement of the erotic in Greek poetic tradition (CALAME, 2013, pp.12-13). But, of course, this was only a trick and the princess does not look at him again, not even as he inevitably kills himself and his body falls by her feet.

Jokanaan's first lines to Salome are hateful speeches about her mother, Herodias, whose marriage to her former husband's brother is considered dishonorable and sinful. Initially, he even demands to speak to the queen, telling the soldiers: "bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words from him who prepareth the way of the Lord." (WILDE, 1985, p. 31) The princess is disgusted by his behavior and his appearance, but also strangely enraptured, claiming that he is "terrible" and "wasted", but desiring to get closer to him. In *Erotism*: *Death and Sensuality* (1962), French philosopher Georges Bataille argues that "men are swayed by two simultaneous emotions: they are driven away by terror and drawn by an awed fascination", that taboo and transgression are reflections of that, and that "the taboo would forbid the transgression but the fascination compels it." (BATAILLE, 1962, p.68) Salome's reaction to Jokanaan exemplifies these conflicting feelings and the rest of the play masterfully illustrates the erotic nature of transgression, with its axis of attraction and repulsion.

Bataille defines transgression as that which exceeds limits but does not destroy them. (Idem, ibidem, p.67) His theoretical work connects transgression with eroticism, and eroticism with fusion, for the lover "strips the beloved of her identity no less than the blood-stained priest his human or animal victim." (Idem, ibidem, p.90) To the philosopher, the "final aim of eroticism is fusion, all barriers gone" (Idem, ibidem, p.129), an idea intimately linked to Anne Carson's inventory of *eros* in Ancient Greece, in which she contends that the single fact that makes a difference to the lover is "the fact that you and I are not one." (CARSON, 1998, p.57) Bataille believed that the erotic was related to sacrifice, and sacrifice to death, the ultimate form of continuity, fusion (BATAILLE, 1962, p.13).

When Salome moves closer to Jokanaan, his immediate response to the guards is "I will not have her look at me" (WILDE, 1985, p.31), a clear refusal to occupy the role of the sight, and consequently of the beloved, that reveals his awareness of the power of the gaze. His words, however, do not stop the princess.

> SALOME
>
> Jokanaan, I am amorous of thy body! Thy body is white like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judæa, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the perfumed garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea... There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Let me touch thy body.
>
> (WILDE, 1985, p.32)

Her speech utilizes similes and language present in the third section of the Hebrew bible, known as the *Song of Songs* or *Song of Solomon* (CAETANO, 2023, p.27). The collection of romantic poems is recited alternatively by a man and a woman, the man conventionally assigned the active part of the lover. In *Salome*, the gender dynamics are inverted, and the prophet becomes the passive object of desire. Salome exalts Jokanaan's physical beauty and chastity, associating his whiteness with a field that has never been mowed, and the final sentence, "let me touch thy body", unveils her desire to transgress the

limits in order to metaphorically corrupt him, not only in the sexual sense but also in the religious, taking her familial ties to Herodias, associated by him to "Babylon" and "Sodom", into consideration.

> SALOME
>
> Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whitened sepulchre full of loathsome things. It is horrible, thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair that I am enamoured, Jokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide themselves by day. The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world so black as thy hair.... Let me touch thy hair.
>
> (WILDE, 1985, p.32)

His rejection causes Salome to change her discourse, an action that could be either interpreted as evidence of the volatility of her affections or of her desperation to charm the prophet through her excessive compliments, a tactic that does not work due to the fixity of Jokanaan's religious beliefs. It is clear in his rejection of the princess' advances that he sees her as a cunning sinner, a sort of siren trying to drown out the voice of God, a fact made worse by the fact that she is a woman, a natural descendant of Eve (Idem, ibidem, p.32). Salome tells him that his body is "hideous", subsequently claiming

that it was his hair that enamored her. Here she becomes Delilah, another sinful woman responsible for great betrayal and pain. The *Song of Songs* is still present in the borrowed images of Lebanon, fruits, and lions (HEBREW BIBLE, 2023, pp. 18-19), and her final line once again pushes the limits and blurs the line between sacred and profane. Salome's final complementary monologue to Jokanaan has another change in discourse. Now, his mouth becomes the focus of her attention, and this marks, in many ways, both of their deaths, as it is her desire to kiss him that ultimately leads her to demand his head on a silver platter and causes Herod to kill her.

> SALOME
>
> Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns which they have placed on thy forehead. It is like a knot of black serpents writhing round thy neck. I love not thy hair.... It is thy mouth that I desire, Jokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate-flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of the doves who haunt the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings!... It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth.... Let me kiss thy mouth.
>
> (WILDE, 1985, p.33)

As an insult, the princess compares Jokanaan's hair to the crown of thorns used to torture Jesus during his crucifixion, an anachronistic detail that aligns both men in holiness and importance. Salome also compares him to Medusa, the Greek gorgon capable of transforming men into stone with her gaze. Then, she turns to his mouth. Referencing once more the *Song of Songs* (HEBREW BIBLE, 2023, p.20), she uses similes to emphasize the redness of the Baptist's lips, comparing it, for instance, to Samson's feet after he had torn the lion apart – the slaying of the lion is, interestingly, the catalyst of the Nazirite's demise. Many of the parallels Salome draws in this section are omens: the trumpets, Samson, the vermillion, and the bow are all followed by tragedy. Her conclusion, however, is that she must kiss him, "I will kiss thy mouth" becoming a chant she echoes repeatedly until the end of the play (WILDE, 1985, pp.33-34, p.48). Moreover, it is her unveiled desire for the Baptist and her refusal to stop looking at him that leads Narraboth to kill himself.

The only character in the play who is distraught by the Syrian's death is the page. He utters: "He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box full of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he always wore on his hand" (Idem, ibidem, p.34). His short mournful monologue offers perspective into the homoerotic, one-sided nature of their relationship. Richard Bruce Nugent, whose work will be discussed shortly, would take inspiration from the page's lines to create his own iteration of *Salome*.

After Narraboth's death, Herod brings the banquet to the terrace, as a way to be closer to Salome, who had disappeared at the beginning of the play, hiding from his gaze. The tension escalates when, amidst Herodias' protests and Jokanaan's haunting prophecies,

the Tetrarch requests a dance from Salome. The princess initially denies, but, after he promises her a reward, saying "if thou dancest for me, thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give thee, even unto the half of my kingdom" (Idem, ibidem, p.42), she concedes. Herod's obsession with her clouds his judgment, making him suffer one of the most common symptoms of *eros*, blindness, which is metaphorical in this case. The same can be said of Narraboth, who kills himself once his vision is reestablished by glimpsing at the truth regarding his unrequited love. Similarly, Salome, blinded by her desire for Jokanaan, ceases to behave according to social norms and to properly assess the consequences of her own actions, an initial step in her descent into otherness. Salome, Herod and the Syrian show that the vision necessary for *eros* to happen effectively is a limited one, so focused on the object of desire that the world starts to blur.

It is also during the moments that precede the dance that the similarities between Salome and Herod become apparent. They are both active lovers whose gaze is burdensome: Jokanaan flees from Salome in the way that Salome flees from Herodes. It is important to stress that pursuit and flight are topoi in the literary construction of *eros* (CARSON, 1998, p.29), and that usually the masculine lover is the hunter, but that in the dynamic between the princess and the prophet the roles are reversed. Additionally, Salome and Herod both express an acute need of being physically close to their beloved, as evidenced by the previously analyzed monologues and by Herod's offering Herodias' throne to the princess so she can sit next to him. (WILDE, 1985, p.36).

Salome's dance of seven veils is not described by Wilde, but consciously omitted. The reader is invited to witness her preparation,

the palace's slaves bringing her perfumes, a pair of sandals, and the veils, but her movement is abruptly cut off in the rubrics, in a juxtaposition between the act of revealing and concealing. This duality dialogues with the erotic connotations of removing the veils, which evokes the idea of nakedness, but also of distance, elusiveness, and, as previously mentioned, *eros* entails lack. The effect is overpowering, as evidenced by Herod's desperate monologues trying to dissuade her from asking the Baptist's head as her reward and to confess his love. He absurdly tells her that it may be that he "loved her too much" and that he has looked at her too much, her beauty troubling him (Idem, ibidem, p.46).

Hutcheon and Hutcheon posit that the princess "progressively comes to embody on stage a physical lack of fit" (HUTCHEON e HUTCHEON, 1998, p. 13), and the moment she holds the Baptist's head cements that, her otherness makes her monstrous. In "Love of the Wolf", Hélène Cixous argues that "loving is wanting and being able to eat up and yet to stop at a boundary", comparing the moment the wolf does not eat the lamb to a "renunciation" (CIXOUS, 1998, pp.121-22). Salome is the wolf unable to stop at the boundary, her actions so transgressive they create unity. She kisses Jokanaan's mouth, tastes his blood, and says that she will bite his lips. She rejoices in the idea of him belonging to her, of him being devoured, materializing Bataille's notion that "death is linked with the urge to possess. If the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her" (BATAILLE, 1962, p.20). When Salome utters "I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor fruits

can appease my desire." (WILDE, 1985, p. 48), it is religious and cannibalistic – like Christ, Jokanaan has bites taken out of him[2].

Salome's monstrousness can also be associated with Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, defined as that which transgresses the line between human and non-human, disturbing identity. (KRISTEVA, 1982, pp.2-3) To be abject is to occupy a space of transgression and in-betweenness. For instance, Kristeva says that blood "refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation. It thus becomes a fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection, where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all come together" (Idem, ibidem, p.96). The princess embodies this duality as she kisses Jokanaan's dead, bloody lips in ecstasy, and death and the erotic are brought closer together.

When Salome dies, by Herod's orders, she is still in the throes of desire, muttering to herself that she has kissed the prophet (WILDE, 1985, p.49). One could argue, then, that she triumphs over *eros* by both becoming one with her beloved (by killing, devouring) and dying before its appeasement. Her death is a perfect example of Bataillean continuity. However, if taking the point of view of the beloved into consideration, the princess' gaze and, later, passion

[2] It is possible to connect Salome's hunger and thirst to the catholic act of Communion. Bataille scholar Karmen MacKendrick says: "A prayer from the medieval missal, debatably attributed to St. Gregory the Great, asks, 'May Thy wounds be to me food and drink by which I may be nourished, inebriated, and delighted.' The connection of the bleeding wounds to drink is perhaps not terribly exceptional, though it becomes more disturbing the more seriously one thinks about it, but the image of food, despite its clear continuity with the Eucharist, makes the latter's overtones of cannibalism uncomfortably vivid: this Christ has bites taken out of him." (MACKENDRICK, 2009, p.135)

are burdens that rob Jokanaan of choice and power, rendering him a victim of the blindness of the lover's *eros*. Interestingly, the same can be said of Salome: it is Herod's gaze that drives her to the terrace and nearer to the cistern, it is his eagerness to charm Salome that makes the bargain that dooms her possible and it is his disgust by her actions (and end of his erotic obsession) that causes her death. Even if she rejoices in her murderous actions, at the end of the play she is just a voice in the dark, killed, like Medusa, by a shield, and thus forced to suffer the consequences of looking and being looked at. In that way, Jokanaan and Salome mirror each other: they are both the beloved trying to hide from a lover who, ultimately and tragically, causes their death. The one who devours, it seems, is also devoured, in an inescapable, ever-spinning circle.

"Yet my Love for Thee Haunts Me": Richard Bruce Nugent's "Slender Length of Beauty"

Richard Bruce Nugent was part of a group of modernist artists interested in changing the aesthetics and politics of the Harlem Renaissance, a partly premeditated movement that intended to reawaken Black culture in early twentieth-century United States. He co-edited and contributed to the first and only issue of the avant-garde literary magazine *FIRE!!* (1926), with Harlemites Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, Gwendolyn Bennett, and John P. Davis. Nugent's short story "Smoke, Lilies and Jade", which appears in *FIRE!!*, was the first openly homoerotic text written by an African-American published in the United States, and attracted more criticism than any other piece in the magazine.

(GATES JR., 2002, p.14) His financial struggles and lack of interest in a career as a writer led to much of his work not being made available to the general public until the 2000s: in 2002, Thomas Wirth compiled a selection of his writings for the book *Gay Rebel of The Harlem Renaissance*; in 2008, his only novel, *Gentleman Jigger* (1925-1932), was released by Capo Press; and, more recently, in 2023, an edition of his novella *Half High* (1920-1985) was published by Multicanon Media. All of Nugent's surviving work and personal correspondence are, as of 2024, part of the Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

"Slender Length of Beauty" first appears in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance*. It is part of the collection *Bible Stories*. One of five narratives believed to have been written in the late 1920s and early 1930s (GATES JR., 2002, p.45), it continues the obsession with orientalism and Salome that the *New York Times* aptly nicknamed "Salomania" in the 1900s (POUEYMIROU, 2011, p. 201). Inspired by Oscar Wilde and his iteration of the biblical myth, like a significant portion of Nugent's work[3], the short story reimagines the night of Herod's banquet and John the Baptist's death, using doubles to carefully construct a highly erotic tragic tale. In "Slender Length of Beauty"', Salome is having an illicit affair with a beautiful shepherd and former slave named Narcissus, who dreams of finding his long-lost twin, John, considered by him his missing and complementary half. The princess has previously accepted Herod's request to dance

[3] Nugent mentions Wilde's *Salome* in "Smoke, Lilies and Jade", Wilde himself in *Gentleman Jigger*, and creates three collections of illustrations inspired by the play (*Salome Dancing* (1920-1930), the *Salome Series* (1920-1930) and the untitled illustrations that accompany "Slender Length of Beauty").

for him at his birthday banquet and must leave Narcissus to get dressed for the performance. On her way to her chambers, she stops by the cistern where the Tetrarch has imprisoned a prophet named Iokanaan, flirtatiously taunting him in a childish exchange. Salome dances the dance of seven veils, but Herodias is the one to demand Iokanaan's head on a silver platter as a reward. When the princess finally returns to her lover, ashamed of her responsibility in her mother's murderous plot, she finds him uncharacteristically still, but kisses him nonetheless. It becomes clear, then, that Iokanaan is John, Narcissus' twin, and that they are both dead, the symbolic connection between the brothers manifesting itself in physical form. A victim to her own desire, Salome does not notice that her lover is dead, therefore never understanding that she was indirectly responsible for his death.

As previously mentioned, Nugent seems to use the page's short monologue after Narraboth's death in *Salome* as the main source of inspiration for the plot of his short story.

Gravely, he says:

> THE PAGE OF HERODIAS
>
> He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box full of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. In the evening we used to walk by the river, among the almond trees, and he would tell me of the things of his country. He spoke ever very low. The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of a flute player. Also he much loved to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that.
>
> (WILDE, 1985, p.34)

In the short story, Salome's relationship with the shepherd is remarkably similar to the relationship between the two men. The first scene in "Slender" depicts a conversation in which Narcissus tells the princess "the things of his country", recounting his brother's birth, his own birth and his time as a slave in Greece. (NUGENT, 2002, p.132) The sentence "he much loved to gaze at himself in the river" references the myth of Narcissus, who notoriously falls in love with his own reflection, wasting away and eventually becoming a flower by Aphrodite's doing. Nugent's character is named Narcissus by his former master, who thought he resembled the flower in his beauty. (Idem, ibidem, p.132) The final moments of the narrative take place on a hill beyond the palace's garden, and clarify that their meetings were commonly held among nature, far from the court.

Narcissus nicknames the princess Salama, a way of bridging the hierarchical and societal gap that separates them. When she insists she is a princess, "daughter of daughters of queens", he answers with "thou art Salama" and later with simply "thou art woman" (Idem, ibidem, p.130), erasing her title. He creates Salome's double. Salama is a woman in love, the one who lies with him and ardently confesses her love for him, disregarding her royal duties for their time together. She is an impossibility, and sustains the paradox of lack in *eros*. Narcissus wants Salama, but he will never have her, as she is, in fact, Salome. He says, "I love thee with too great a love to ever love another" (Idem, ibidem, p.131), but does not say her real name once throughout the story. It seems, then, that while in Wilde's tragedy Salome's visibility was troublesome and dangerous, here the opposite happens: she is rendered completely invisible. Blindness, albeit connected to desire, is of a different kind.

It is also during the first scene that Salome and Narcissus exchange compliments, their language echoing the play's affinity for similes.

> Narcissus looked at her until she became confused and said, "Thine eyes are beautiful, Narcissus. So soft and gray, with a slender line to paint the circle."
> "And thine are as the blackest dawn, Sa-la-ma, and soft, as with dew." "But while thine eyes are gray, Narcissus, and thy hair is golden like the midday sun – almost silver – thy lashes are black as kohl." "And thine, Sa-la-ma, are as long as thy love and cast a lacy, blue shadow to match the blue lights of thy hair. [...] Thy lips, Sa-la-ma, are like two rubies for color and like unto sun-warmed persimmons to my flesh".
> (NUGENT, 2002, pp.130-31)

In their back-and-forth, they function as mirrors for each other, their erotic relationship dependent on their descriptions. The idea of isolated communication, as in taking turns at talking but not truly listening to each other, present in Wilde's *Salome*, is also present in this passage. It sets the tone for the rest of the story, as theirs is not necessarily a case of mutual love, but of obsession with the other's attraction. When they look at each other, then, all they see is their own desire reflected back. Additionally, the stark contrast offers a parallel between the moon and the sun. As previously stated, Salome is associated with the moon in the play and this seems to be the case here as well, while Narcissus' goldenness connects him to the sun. Before asking him where he comes from, Salome absentmindedly weaves their hair together, creating a material representation of the

day and night metaphor that they come to symbolize and effectively fusing them. However, Narcissus severs the bond by announcing that he is a twin and has never met his brother, John, without whom he believes himself to be incomplete.

> "We are twins, so neither is complete without the other. Perhaps he feels the warmth of love for thee in his heart likewise – for 'tis said, 'that which pierceth the heart of one twin is felt in the heart of the other. And when one heart does cease to beat, the other does likewise'"
> Salome laughed with upward sound.
> "But now thou are coquetting, Narcissus. I find it inconvenient to love a twin. I can imagine strange mishaps should this twin –"
>
> (NUGENT, 2002, p.132)

Narcissus interrupts Salome, telling her "then be thou gone", but she does not understand that he is serious and means to end their relationship due to her lack of sympathy, happily promising him kisses when she gets back from her performance. Unbeknownst to her, she figuratively engages in the topoi of pursuit and flight: as he distances himself from her, she reaches for him, but he escapes. It is also important to note that this is the first time Salome openly expresses a thought that is dissonant from their back-and-forth of complementary descriptions and passionate confessions, and Narcissus' reaction is to immediately cut her off.

On the way to her chambers, she stops by the cistern in which the prophet Iokanaan is imprisoned to childishly taunt him. She throws an earring down the cistern and, when he angrily calls her

"daughter of an adulterer", she laughs and answers, "thine eyes are like a lover's, prophet. And thine lips are near as beautiful. May a princess kiss thee, Iokanaan?" (Idem, ibidem, p.132). He tells her she is not a princess, which she assumes is a jab at the illegitimacy of her mother's marriage to Herod. His supposed insolence delights her and causes her to ask once again to kiss him. (Idem, ibidem, p.133-34) Iokanaan does not reply, the absence of his voice so suggestive it creates a sense of avowal.

In an extension of Wilde's rubric "Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of Salome" (WILDE, 1985, p. 44), Nugent narrates the princess getting ready with the help of slaves. They bathe and perfume her, painting her face and dusting powder over her body. Finally, she drapes herself in the veils: a red one around the waist, a vermillion one around the breasts, two orange ones to hide her arms, a yellow one over her shoulders, a cream one over her face and a white one over her head.

Simultaneously, Herod has asked the soldiers to bring Iokanaan to the banquet. He stands quietly by the Tetrarch's side until one of the Romans asks him to prophesy.

He obeys:

> "The thong shall break, and the bundle of rods scatter, and the hatchet turn open itself, that the Kingdom of God be everywhere.
>
> Next, addressing Herod, he continued, "Thou art iniquitous, but thou lovest me, so mercy shall be eventually thine. Thy house shall perish, and in nine years thou shalt die. Thy brother's wife, with whom thou art an adulterer, shall live in sin and die in pain. Thy

> daughter, thy niece, shall kill the thing she loves, and also shall this Salome –"
>
> (NUGENT, 2002, p.137)

Iokanaan's speech reveals an incongruence. Similarly to Narcissus, he seems to have divided Salome in two different women: the one who visits him and the Tetrarch's niece/daughter. This further consolidates her invisibility, since she is not perceived as a whole person by anyone and is always separated from her royal title. However, even as he falters in his perception, he is the only character to call Salome by her name in the story. So, when she subsequently performs the dance of seven veils and throws the final veil to him, finally seeing his face under the lights and mistaking him for Narcissus, there is a sense that he is also the only one to truly see her metaphorically naked, as her first reaction to her confusion is profound shame, an entirely human emotion that puts her in a position of vulnerability. She flees the banquet hall before picking her reward, telling Herod that her mother will be the one to choose instead. Herodias, as in the original biblical myth, asks for Iokanaan's head.

Salome runs to meet Narcissus and finds him lying on a hill. She thinks he is asleep, trying to wake him with a monologue analogous to Wilde's.

The princess tells the shepherd:

> "I am so hungered for thee, Narcissus, that thy beauty haunts me and I see thee everywhere." She was running soft fingers

> through his silvery hair. [...] Thy face and form are such great beauty they ache in me, and I burst with love for thee. See! 'Tis I, Salome, thy Sa-la-ma, who courts thee as I would have thee court me. [...] Thy lips are so beautiful, Narcissus; it is a pity I cannot kiss them and see them together."
>
> (NUGENT, 2002, p.139)

Salome, blinded by her desire and the possibility of it being reflected back at her, ecstatically kisses him, not noticing he is dead. The revelation that the prophet Iokanaan and Narcissus' twin are the same person never dawns on her, even after the dance, more evidence that, just as the men do not see her, she does not see them. Devourment occurs, but *eros* is not caused by a desire of fusion with the beloved, but of fusion with the image of the lover that the beloved reflects. What Salome looks for in Narcissus is a reflection of herself. As Anne Carson states about *eros*: "[it] moves out from the lover toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before" (CARSON, 1998, p.52). In "Slender Length of Beauty", being the object of desire is a burden caused by the lover's blindness, and both Iokanaan/Narcissus and Salome pay the price for rendering the other invisible and embodying Bataille's idea that erotic transgressiveness implies stripping the beloved of their identity. They never achieve continuity after noticing their incompleteness because of this blindness, and thus the impossibility of *eros* moves the action towards tragedy.

"I Have Kissed Thy Mouth": Final Considerations

Cixous says, "the wolf is the truth of love, its cruelty, its fangs, its claws, our aptitude for ferocity. Love is when you suddenly wake up as a cannibal, and not just any old cannibal, or else wake up destined for devourment" (CIXOUS, 1998, p.122). Oscar Wilde's *Salome* expertly interweaves the intricacies that mediate the relationship between lover and beloved, devourer and devoured, to reveal that, in the end, their roles are not fixed, and that erotic fusion requires great violence. Through religious metaphor and simile, he creates a version of Salome that transcends the limitations of *eros* as the lover, but that still suffers from her powerlessness as the beloved, ultimately being a victim of a blindness caused by looking too much. Richard Bruce Nugent writes his short story "Slender Length of Beauty" in dialogue with Wilde's work, following the wave of early twentieth-century "Salomania", turning a short monologue about grief into a tragedy of doubles where the beloved's identity is erased by the lover in name of a reflection. Salome does not triumph over *eros*, as she does not achieve continuity even as she devours, her blindness a product of rendering the object of her desire a mirror of herself. When comparing both iterations of the myth, it becomes clear that Nugent and Wilde agree that the princess' desire has a brutal, carnivorous connotation that annihilates her beloved. Like Delilah, she cannot help getting her hands dirty with the blood of the one she loves, and that is the tragedy of the wolf.

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Paradigm and Exceptionalism in the Green Atlantic's Racial Event

Victor Augusto Pacheco[1]

Introduction: the Event

On 23 November 2023, an estimated 500 people took to the streets of Dublin. They looted shops, engaged in confrontations with the police, and set fire to cars and public transport lines. These acts were in response to the attack on three children, aged between five and six, and a teacher in the afternoon of the same day. An unidentified man stabbed the victims as they were leaving Gaelscoil Choláiste Mhuire Primary School in the Parnell Square area. Information spread by far-right groups claimed that the person responsible for the attack was an immigrant, intensifying anti-immigrant protests

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that have been growing in Ireland over the past years. The protest articulated the modern racial grammar (SILVA, 2016) by centralizing racial difference as its trigger. In the collective subconscious of Irish far-right groups, the expression "Irish Lives Matter" – an exercise in intertextuality, substitution, appropriation, and erasure – points to something more intrinsic between Blackness and Irishness than one might have supposed.

The interchangeability between the Black experience and the Irish experience, as reflected in the infamous quote, "The Irish are the niggers of Europe ... An' Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland" (DOYLE, 1989, p. 10), resurfaces in moments of crisis. However, this was not the case during the explicit process of racialization of Irish identity that emerged in response to the migratory flow beginning in the 1990s, during the period of economic prosperity known as the Celtic Tiger. The change to the national Constitution through the 2004 referendum, which established citizenship as a right by blood rather than by birth, instituted a direct relationship between territory, race, and national identity, reviving the "symbolics of blood," as Michel Foucault (FOUCAULT, 2017, pp. 159-60) described when analysing the concept of race in eighteenth-century Europe. The logic behind the citizenship referendum, when examined through the lens of Foucault's theories, reflects the racialization of sexuality and its intersection with the concept of blood, driven by fears and anxieties about social degeneration caused by the influx of new bodies into Ireland. These bodies, it was perceived, threatened the country's supposed socio-cultural and racial homogeneity. In this sense, the use of national identity as opposed to a direct racial marker – such as in "White Lives Matter," which explicitly aligns with white supremacist ideology – or the attempt to de-racialize discourse

through universalizing statements like "All Lives Matter," reveals the historical accumulations embedded in the construction of Irishness. Irish identity, as presented, relies simultaneously on Blackness – serving as a reference point to articulate a grammar of suffering – and anti-Blackness, which is disguised as anti-immigration discourse.

The 23 November protest, the Celtic Tiger, and the racialisation of Irishness, whether through the colonisation of 1169 or the 2004 referendum, constitute what Denise Ferreira da Silva (2019) calls a "racial event," which

> ... is necessarily timeless because of the way racial difference reconfigures the colonial by understanding the native and the slave as a scientific (biological) tool that imprints their mental (moral and intellectual) traits outside of history. Traditionally, the critical reaction of racial thought (through a socio-historical approach) to this effect of the racial element has been to present racial issues in terms of connections between the 'olden times' and the 'right now' (or between 'back then' and 'right here'). But that does not work: knowing that Liverpool merchants profited from the slave trade, which enabled the emergence of the modern banking system in seventeenth-century England, does not expose how the racial element links those profits or the black uprisings in Liverpool today; that is, how economic exclusion and the police that perpetuate it are part of the same composition that is Global Capital. For this to be thinkable, we need to be able to imagine what happens without time. (SILVA, 2022, p.496; my translation)

Considering anti-Blackness as "what happens without time" appears to be an inventive leap, one that implies interpreting the Irish

experience as a laboratory for what whiteness could have been in the absence of Blackness. Paraphrasing Hortense Spillers (SPILLERS, 1987, p. 65), humanity needs Blackness; if it did not exist, it would have to be invented. In the following pages, I aim to reflect on how the ambiguous, anomalous, and complex processes of Irish history (KENNY, 2006, p. 3) reveal the dynamics of the paradigmatic role of anti-Blackness and the exceptionalism of the Irish experience. In this sense, the racial event highlights (1) the exceptionalism of the Irish case in the context of whiteness, (2) the deceptive analogies drawn between Black and Irish experiences, and (3) the paradigmatic role of anti-Blackness in the construction of Irish identity and its inscription within the "human family."

Analogies

Distancing historical and cultural analysis from nationalist perspectives, Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic*, proposes "... the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective," providing "... a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (GILROY, 1993, pp. 15-16), as well as cultural and intellectual exchanges. Following Gilroy's framework, Irish studies historians Peter D. O'Neill and David Lloyd (2010) published the book *The Black and Green Atlantic*, the result of a seminar held in 2006, as a way of exploring the analogies between Black and Irish experiences in the Atlantic. For the authors, the term *Black and Green Atlantic* invokes

> ... the trajectory of emigration and assimilation to the nation of arrival, whether in Britain the United States, or Australia. The notion that the Irish experience may have been defined as much by movement itself, and by processes of encounter, competition and solidarity, and the circulation of bodies and ideas. (O'NEILL e LLOYD, 2010, p.xvi)

Although the term is productive, as it "... allows for an analysis of the interconnected spaces of the Atlantic and an evolution of diasporic consciousness," the designation *Black and Green Atlantic* "[reduces] people to their ethnic or racial identities" (GARDEN, 2014, p. 218) in an essentialist way. Furthermore, the green in "Green Atlantic" masks Irish whiteness and reinscribes historical analysis through a nationalist lens, reifying the Irish position within a teleological framework of progress. The analogy proposed by the concept of a *Green Atlantic* is rooted in the diasporic experiences of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, marked by the ambiguity and complexity of the Irish as both victims and agents of colonial projects. During this period, Catholic leaders, defeated soldiers, and the wives and children of dead combatants were taken to Barbados to serve as indentured servants on tobacco or sugarcane plantations (COOGAN, 2000). In the nineteenth century, the expansion of the Irish diaspora to other countries, combined with emerging theories on the division of species, intensified the inferiorisation of the Irish. Anthropological studies and racial classifications systematically sought to exclude the Irish from a European origin, suggesting a possible African descent evidenced in both physical characteristics and the linguistic structures of Gaelic-Irish. This inferiorisation was frequently represented through simianisation and a perceived

proximity to Blackness, as exemplified in a letter from Charles Kingsley to his sister describing his travels in Ireland while in the service of the British Empire:

> But I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault, I believe that there are not only more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours. (KINGSLEY apud DUFFY, 2010, Ch.1)

This representation crossed the Atlantic during the Great Famine and reached the United States, where the Irish were directly compared to formerly enslaved Black people. In both Victorian England and the United States, the Irish posed a problem for racial classification precisely because they exhibited whiteness as an epidermal characteristic but were excluded from whiteness as a form of power. The intersection of race and class in both contexts challenges a binary analysis, as the Irish constituted a significant portion of the labour force. In the United States, for instance, there is a generational distinction between the Irish who immigrated during the seventeenth century and those who arrived during the Great Famine. According to Noel Ignatiev, this difference meant that "... a portion of the Irish diaspora became known as 'the Irish'; a racial (but not ethnic) line invented in Ireland was recreated as an ethnic (but not racial) line in America" (IGNATIEV, 1995, p. 37).

This process of inferiorisation was not limited to nineteenth-century scientific discourse; cultural productions and mainstream media – such as caricatures and travel narratives – were pivotal in cementing a consensus in the popular imagination. Notably, the English magazine *Punch* became famous for its caricatures, which frequently depicted the Irish in a simianised manner.

It is also worth noting that echoes of scientific racism persisted in Ireland into the early twentieth century. The Harvard Irish Studies, conducted between 1934 and 1936 by Professor Earnest Hooton and endorsed by the Irish Free State, exemplifies how racial theories intersected with Irish national formation in the post-independence era. As John Brannigan observes, Hooton's project combined an archaeological expedition with a survey of social, economic, and cultural conditions and, most significantly, a study of the racial characteristics of the Irish population through anthropometric measurements. Brannigan notes that the primary objective of this study was to "... 'prove' that the Irish were resoundingly white, of ancient European lineage, and a healthy, civilised nation. Science, so applied, could conclusively remove the taint of nineteenth-century English colonial slurs on the Irish as negroid or simian" (BRANNIGAN, 2009, p. 86). Furthermore, the study also "indexed the visible means of differentiating Catholics and Protestants racially" (Idem, ibidem, p. 92). However, the research was only published in the 1960s due to the scientific methods being influenced by Nazi experiments.

On the other hand, the Irish presence in Africa and the Americas was marked by its integration into the processes of colonial exploitation and slavery, contributing not only to British imperial

rule but also to the colonial activities of Portugal, Spain, France, Denmark, and Holland (OHLMEYER, 2023, p. 110). According to Nini Rodgers, Ireland did not benefit directly from the slave trade because it was restricted by the Westminster Parliament in 1699. This limitation resulted in a lack of infrastructure for transactions and negotiations involving enslaved people and delayed the country's integration into global capitalism, which only occurred in the 1990s during the Celtic Tiger period (RODGERS, 2007, p. 90). However, this does not mean that Irish traders were not actively involved in the process; they worked as transporters on slave ships, owned plantations, and enslaved people, particularly in the United States. In Cuba, the Irish played an essential role in the whitening of the population and in addressing the crisis of cheap labor following the abolition of the slave trade (BREHONY, 2019).

This brief historical background reveals that the logic of equivalence and analogy present in the *Black and Green Atlantic* project fails to distinguish "social oppression" from "structural suffering" (WILDERSON III, 2010, p. 36). As a result of colonization, the Irish situation falls into the first category, as there was the possibility of articulating a grammar of suffering, which allowed for an "imaginable strategy of reparation" (Idem, ibidem, p. 25) through independence and the restitution of land. Conversely, the suffering of the Black population, shaped by the experience and afterlife of slavery, belongs to the second category, where reparation remains unthinkable. In this sense, I argue that the *Black and Green Atlantic* project exposes the distinction between paradigm and exceptionalism. According to Jasbir Puar, "Exceptionalism paradoxically signals distinction from (to be unlike, dissimilar) as well as excellence (eminence, superiority), suggesting a departure from yet mastery of linear teleologies of

progress" (PUAR, 2017, p. 3). On the one hand, the Irish experience of racialization differs significantly from that of other European countries due to its colonial past. On the other hand, this experience has provided Ireland with a status of eminence, positioning it as an exemplary model for theorizing colonial and racial issues.

This paradox between being different and being superior is also reflected in Ireland's position as both a victim of the British Empire and an agent of colonial domination in other countries. The argument here does not deny the Irish past, its suffering, or the violence caused by British rule; rather, it seeks to highlight that there exists a grammar capable of articulating Irish suffering. Violence in Irish history is exceptional within the history of whiteness, in contrast to violence against Black bodies, which is structural to the very maintenance of the concept of the human. In this regard, anti-Blackness serves as the paradigm for the experience of human interiorization: "humanity is made legible through the irreconcilable distinction between humans and Blackness" (DOUGLASS et al., 2018). Positioned as the end of a continuum and placed in opposition to whiteness, Blackness is constructed as the characteristic from which humans must distance themselves in order to be recognized as such. As previously discussed, Earnest Hooton's study, endorsed by the Irish Free State, was nothing more than an attempt to inscribe and confirm Irishness within the parameters of whiteness and to integrate Ireland into the European family – a clear effort to position Irishness within the framework of the human. Irishness emerges through the over-representation of the human in its idealized form as *Man*, "... understood simultaneously as an achievement and bio-ontology, impli(ng) whiteness and specifically non-Blackness." (JACKSON, 2020, p. 70)

The excessive epidermal presence of humanity highlights the irreconcilable distinction between humans and Blacks, separating the exceptionalism of the Irish case from the paradigm of anti-Blackness. The process of Irish racialization, marked by indentured labour and simianisation, is not comparable to slavery or the abjection of Blackness, which is characterized by animalization and bestiality. Both the notion of a "white slave" and the depiction of a "human chimpanzee" reveal an antithesis and a negatively adjectivized humanity. In other words, although animalized and reduced to servitude, the Irish never ceased to possess the quality of being human. It is through the recognition of their humanity that a resolution to the Irish question was ultimately achieved. This distinction leads me to propose that the persistent analogy with "the lived experience of the Negro," to borrow Frantz Fanon's phrase, forms the foundation for the construction of Irish national identity. Irishness, therefore, emerges as the product of an analogy whose purpose is to reaffirm a position of subalternity by displacing the Black subject through a process of analogy, substitution, appropriation, and erasure.

Freedom

> I have met with the objection that slavery exists in Ireland, and therefore there is no necessity for describing its character as found in another country (hear, hear). My answer is, if slavery exists here, it ought to be put down, and the generous in the land ought to rise and scatter its fragments to the winds (loud cheers). – But there is nothing like American slavery on the soil on which I now stand. Negro-slavery consists not in taking away a man's property, but in

> making property of him, and in destroying his identity- in treating him as the beasts and creeping things. Deus has given the negro a conscience and a will, but his conscience is no monitor to him, for he has no power to exercise his will– his master decides for him not only what he should eat and what he should drink, what he should wear, when and to whom he should speak, how much he should work, how much and by whom he is to be punished- he not only decides all these things, but what is morally right and wrong. The slave must not even choose his wife, must marry and unmarry at the will of his tyrant, for the slave-holder has no compunction in separating man and wife, and thus putting asunder what Deus had joined together. Could the most inferior person in this country be so treated by the highest? If any man exists in Ireland who would so treat another, may the combined execrations of humanity fall upon him, and may he be excluded from the pale of human sympathy! (DOUGLASS, 1845)

A four-month trip to promote the autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and raise funds for abolitionist organizations in the United States turned into a 21-month stay on the island of Ireland. It is worth noting that Frederick Douglass's connection to Ireland was established long before his visit: Ireland appears in the proverb, "It's better to be hanged in England than to die of natural causes in Ireland" (DOUGLASS, 2014, p. 69). Douglass practiced his reading skills with pamphlets on Catholic emancipation written by the Irishman Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and, as Paul Gilroy observes, "... he learnt of freedom in the North from Irish sailors while working as a ship's caulker in Baltimore." (GILROY, 1993, p. 13) In a letter to abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison in 1846,

Douglass wrote that he spent "some of the happiest moments of my life since I came to this country." (DOUGLASS, 2005, p. 335) In the same letter, he expressed the famous phrase, "The slave becomes a man" (Idem, ibidem, p. 336). Considering Douglass's association with Ireland, the relationship between Blackness and Irishness is less about the condition of slavery and more about its intrinsic counterpart –freedom. Blackness is used as an epitome for articulating discourses on freedom and emancipation that do not necessarily aim to liberate or emancipate Black people. According to Wilderson,

> ... first political discourse recognizes freedom as a structuring ontologic and then it works to disavow this recognition by imagining freedom not through political ontology – where it rightfully began – but through political experience (and practice); whereupon it immediately loses its ontological foundations. (WILDERSON, 2010, pp.22-23)

By equating the Black and Irish experiences, it is implied that the narrative of progress through emancipation brought experiential and ontological freedom to both groups. This logic equates the Irish right to emancipation with the abolition of slavery in the Americas and the struggles for independence and decolonization in Africa, as if these were part of the same project, independent of racial factors. The speech delivered in Limerick in 1845 reveals how slavery is treated as synonymous with a state of non-freedom. Colonial exploitation and alienation, which used animalization as a pretext for subjugation, contrast with the processes of accumulation and fungibility – in Douglass's words, "[making man] property and in

destroying his identity" – which did not exist in Ireland. The ruse of analogy reveals a structure of feeling that links the subject's fate to the nation's fate within a humanist and liberal framework of progress, emancipation, and legal recognition. Colonialism figuratively equated the human with the non-slave and determined the intelligibility of the human and its representations. The comparative project between Irishness and Blackness becomes possible only through the erasure of racialization and the exclusion of Blackness, thereby complicating the concept of freedom as a characteristic of the human.

The overlap of national freedom and individual freedom homogenizes specific historical experiences, reducing freedom to a moral dilemma or a national expression extended to citizens. The Irish only attained the symbolic value of whiteness (WILDERSON III, 2010, p. 15) during the Celtic Tiger era, a period of economic prosperity during which Ireland cemented its place in the European "family of man." It is interesting to note that, combining oratory with the impossibility of being direct – since this would conflict with the norms of hospitality – Douglass needed not only to bear witness to his experiences as a slave but also to align his testimony with the narrativization of Ireland as an "enslaved" country. This process is both ambivalent and complementary because: 1. Slavery does not conform to the grammar of suffering articulated in humanist discourses, meaning Douglass's experience does not qualify as part of the human experience; and 2. Having endured suffering beyond this grammar, Douglass is uniquely positioned to testify and affirm that the Irish experience operates within it. In this regard, the figure of the former slave emphasizes the distinction between social oppression and structural suffering, underscoring the paradigmatic role of anti-Blackness in the ontological formation of humanity.

However, what might have happened if Douglass had confirmed that there was slavery in Ireland?

Fiction

Critical of official history, Sebastian Barry constructs narratives and characters that challenge the binary perceptions of nationalist/unionist and Catholic/Protestant identities. His novel *The Temporary Gentleman* is narrated by John "Jack" McNulty, an Irishman who served as a British soldier during the Second World War and later worked for the United Nations during Ghana's independence process. Unlike Barry's earlier novels, *The Temporary Gentleman* was not critically acclaimed,[2] even though it echoes themes from his previous works: the book reflects on individual and national freedom through the lens of historical revisionism, its plot is deeply tied to connections with the British Empire, and it conveys an "evocation of loneliness, waste and loss" (CULLINGFORD, 2004, p. xx). Written as a memoir, the narrative alternates between a progressive postcolonial perspective and a colonial one, attempting to document life in the

[2] To date, there have only been reviews published during the novel's release in 2014. I highlight the reviews by Maria Arana (2014) for *The Washington Post* and the reviews by Kate Kellaway (2014) and Claire Kilroy (2014), both published in *The Guardian*. The lack of critical attention is noteworthy because Barry was nominated for the *Man Booker Prize* with the last two novels published before *The Temporary Gentleman* (*The Secret Scripture*, 2008 and *On Canaan's Side*, 2011) and won the *James Tait Black Memorial Prize* (*The Secret Scripture, 2008)*, the Walter Scott Prize (*On Canaan's Side*, 2011) and the *Costa Book of the Year* (*The Secret Scripture*, 2008). With the publication of *Days Without End* (2016), Barry is the only writer to win the *Walter Scott Prize* twice.

colony. By embodying the complex nature of Irish history, Jack represents events from an ambiguous perspective:

> Now it is 1957 and I am back in Accra, after many comings and goings. The war has been over for twelve years. The Gold Coast has turned into Ghana, the first African country to gain independence. As a former UN observer I watched it all with immense interest and excitement - the enormous politeness of the departing British, the beautiful speeches, the Ciceronian phrases. We are very good at leaving. At the same time, there is still a governor here for the moment, and a skeleton of the old administration. There are currents of darkness in this bright new river and slowly-slowly seems to be the ticket, for fear of old hatreds and old scores fomenting up – indeed as they did in Ireland in the twenties. (BARRY, 2014, p.11)

This passage exemplifies the politics of comparison between the colonial experiences in Ireland and Ghana. The narrator observes the British departure "with immense interest and enthusiasm," though it is described as incomplete, leaving behind "a skeleton of the old administration" as a legacy of Portuguese and British colonial enterprises since the fifteenth century. The narration projects a poetic sensibility toward the post-independence future, which, despite being a "bright new river," also contains "currents of darkness." As Robert Fraser notes, "Since personal and national identities are inevitably intertwined ... grammatical codes necessarily entail politics" (FRASER, 2000, p. 65). In this context, the processes of identification through the pronouns "we," "they," and "my" reveal Jack's indeterminacy regarding his political position within the colonial enterprise, where his identification oscillates between the

roles of colonizer and colonized. The narrative repeatedly reminds the reader that Ireland also achieved freedom and independence, such as in Jack's reflection: "Soon I'll go back to Sligo. It is so strange to be in a freed country, and yet not so strange, since my own home place once was freed. I did not understand freedom. I understand it better now, just a little" (BARRY, 2014, p. 11). This remark underscores how the comparative element between Ireland and Ghana is not grounded in their colonial pasts or the legacies of colonialism but rather in an idea of freedom that operates on both a personal ("I understand [freedom] better now, just a little") and national level. In this regard, the inventive historical representation of the post-independence periods in Ireland and Ghana reinforces analogy as a representational and identity-building project. However, the comparison through freedom/independence becomes a fragile narrative element because it overlooks racial dynamics:

> 'Do you know,' she said once, 'in a hundred years, the Africans might be in charge of us. I hope they'll forgive us.'
> 'What do you mean, Mai?' I said.
> 'Oh,' she said, 'we've got used to having the power of life and death over people. Do you know Billy Ketchum hanged a man here last year? Oh, yes,' she said, 'that sort of thing tends to see-saw back and forth.'
> 'No, Mai, I don't think so. No.'
> 'Trust me, Jack.'
> 'Well, we mightn't be alive to see it.'
> 'Just as well, Jack, you being a district officer and all.'
> Then she had the good grace to laugh.

> 'I'm not blaming you, Jack. I like you. I will definitely step in and stop them when they try to hang you.'
> 'Thank you, Mai.'
>
> (BARRY, 2014, pp.108-9)

The dialogue between Jack and his wife Mai illustrates the novel's racial dynamics. The passage employs the modal verb "might," which shapes Mai's imaginative scenario of a reversal of power, suggesting that, within a hundred years, Africans might avenge the violence inflicted by the British colonial regime. By casually referencing the hanging of a (presumably Black) man, the passage exposes the trivialization and routine repetition of violence as an arbitrary mechanism for controlling life and demarcating racial power. Jack's discomfort with this scenario underscores his racial alignment with whiteness. Based on the narrator's ambiguous positioning, Jack's identity mirrors the novel's formal ambiguity. The postcolonial discourse of *The Temporary Gentleman* hinges on the fragile analogy between Irish colonization and that of African countries, failing to account for the role of anti-Blackness in the ontological construction of whiteness and Irish identity. The undecidability between a postcolonial progressive narrative and a colonial one is particularly evident in Jack's interpersonal interactions with Black/Native characters, such as in the case of Tom Nobody.

> Tom Nobody, I had nearly forgotten him. The first Tom, before Tom Quaye. When he had been told at school to take an English name he had chosen Nobody because he liked the sound of the word. Mai and Tom mutually approved of each other. She was anxious that he

> be well dressed, and she had two white suits made up for him and supplied him with a proper cork hat. As a matter of fact, she didn't contribute to those continuous and desultory conversations about the natives. Mrs Ketchum and Mrs Reynolds would routinely boil over with scorn for the African, and Africa. Billy Ketchum might start to complain about 'the stench in the villages'. Then Mai was silent, and mysterious, with her Sphinx-like smile. (BARRY, 2014, p.113)

With a suggestive surname, Tom Nobody is almost forgotten by the narrator. The recurring themes of ambiguity, anomaly, complexity, and exceptionalism also represent the humanity of the Irish as if they were morally superior to the British colonizer and distinct from the colonized/native/Black. Mai is portrayed as different from Mrs. Ketchum and Mrs. Reynolds, who openly express racist opinions. Her "sphinx smile," which casts doubt on Mai's position within this colonial setting, becomes more significant when considering that her desire to see Tom Nobody well-dressed represents a form of colonization disguised as goodwill. The articulation of colonial mimicry – the "desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (BHABHA, 2004, p. 122; emphasis added) – functions on two levels. While the position of these Black characters exemplifies "almost the same but not white," thus exposing the ambivalence of colonial discourse and disrupting its authority (Idem, ibidem, p. 126), Jack's colonial mimicry highlights the exceptionalism of the Irish case within the colonial configuration through processes of racialization and anti-Blackness. The sovereign "I" of the colonial narrative situates "... the colonised human, the object of anthropological scrutiny, [as] invariably described as 'other,' and just as invariably in the third

person plural." (FRASER, 2000, p. 66) This practice underscores the impossibility of individualizing colonized subjects, allowing for narcissistic self-preservation against the perceived threats of the place and its people. Jack's friendship with the natives, mediated by affective connections, remains intertwined with the colonial exploitation of Black and native peoples' labor and the erasure of slavery. These erasures become effective only because of the affective atmosphere between Jack and the Black characters, as well as Jack's ambiguity as a narrator, who stages the Irish colonial difference.

Earlier in this section, I noted that *The Temporary Gentleman* has not received much critical attention. Here, I suggest that this might be due to the novel's explicit exposure of the transparency of whiteness within the notion of Irishness. Barry's fiction reveals that the historical novel – which operates both with and without time – represents "... connections between the 'olden times' and the 'right now' (or between 'back then' and 'right here')," as Silva conceptualizes in her notion of the "racial event." By confronting Jack's identity with the concept of race, the novel demonstrates that Irishness achieves a level of transparency by representing its ethnic difference in terms of religion and colonialism, rather than from a racial perspective: the ethnic Other is the (British) Protestant, while the racial Other is the Black/Native. Irishness cannot be framed within a "global idea of race" (SILVA, 2007), as doing so would expose Ireland's whiteness, its exceptionalism in the history of the human family, and the paradigmatic role of anti-Blackness. Race becomes visible only when the novel stages interracial encounters and draws analogies "between the European victims of empire and their black brothers" (CULLINGFORD, 2004, p. 33).

Coda

The historiographical debate, which must occur within the framework of time, frequently asserts that the Irish *became* white (IGNATIEV, 1995; LENTIN & MCVEIGH, 2006). The persistence of this theory – that the Irish transitioned to whiteness – fails to consider the possibility that the Irish have always been white. This debate hinges on a paradox: the distancing from the processes of racialization that historically linked Irishness to Blackness, and the present-day refusal to fully embrace what truly elevates them to the status of humanity – the acceptance of whiteness and its implications. Beyond paradox and refusal, there lies a nostalgic longing for an idyllic past – a time before and outside the literacy of modern racial grammar, a pre-symbolic stage when the Irish were simply... green.

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"On the Edge of What We Can't Control or Understand": Writing from and about Liminal Moments and Places in *The International*

Jessica Grant Craveiro

Introduction: Cultural Trauma, the Troubles, and Liminality

The concept of "cultural trauma" was deepened in the work *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), edited by sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander. In Alexander's definition,

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (ALEXANDER, 2004, p.1)

"Trauma" is a term used to describe physical impacts in medicine and events that deeply affect an individual in psychology, like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When applied to social groups, the word is a manner of explaining the profound, continuous, and emotional impacts in familiar and communitarian level of incidents such as conflicts (DAWSON, 2007, pp.57-62). According to Alexander, a "collective trauma" occurs when the collective sense of identity is impacted with discomfort in its interior. When this trauma is represented, it becomes, therefore, "cultural trauma", and the "traumatic process" is the gap between the event and its representation (ALEXANDER, 2004, pp.10-11).

In Northern Ireland, it is possible to affirm that the Troubles, the sectarian conflict that deeply divided its society from the 1960s until the Peace Agreement in 1998 (also known as Belfast or Good Friday Agreement), are an example of cultural trauma. In the perspective that groups were deeply divided, and the sense of community destroyed, consequently rising fear and prejudice among different sides, one can perceive that the Northern Irish identity and consciousness was changed. The several representations of the Troubles, even with opposing points of view, impact the memory of those years and demonstrate the presence and dispute of narratives of a cultural trauma. These representations span from the paintings in Belfast and Derry murals to literature and cinematic works that explore the Troubles as its theme.

In this essay, we will focus on one novel *The International* (1999; 2008) by Glenn Patterson (1961).

Before we examine the book, it is important to return to history. The origins of the Troubles lie in the colonisation of Ireland

by the British crown, mainly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onwards. The Irish, then already Catholic, were removed from their lands, which were then resettled with English and Scottish Protestants. As the monarchy had split with the Pope, officialising the Protestant Anglican Church, the religion these people followed had to do with their alignment with the crown and national origins. In the Northeastern part of the isle of Ireland, the province of Ulster, the number of Protestants shaped society more than in other region, where they would only become part of the elite. (HUGHES, 1994, pp.7-8)

Without property and with the prohibition of the Irish language, Catholicism became a distinctive characteristic of Irishness (HUGHES, 1994, p.2). Due to this fact, it is common to mention that the Troubles were a conflict between Catholics and Protestants, while it is in fact an ethnic and national issue.

During the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) and the discussion about Home Rule (autonomous government in Ireland), ideas of dividing the isle emerged as a solution to keep six counties of Ulster with Protestant majorities under British rule. The Protestants did not support Irish independence, as their national ties were historically connected to the United Kingdom for centuries. The Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) finished the conflict for independence establishing not only the Irish Free State (in the following decades turned into The Republic of Ireland), but also Northern Ireland, which remained as part of the United Kingdom even after a Civil War. (HUGHES, 1994, pp.50-56) This status of Northern Ireland has not changed to this day.

Forty years later, the Catholics that lived in Northern Ireland did not have the same rights or access to voting, jobs, and housing as the Protestants (BRÉADUN, 2001, p.2). This situation encouraged groups to organise associations and marches asking for equal civil rights, inspired by the Afro-American movement in the United States of America.

The context was also changing in other arenas. In politics, Nationalists (Catholics in favour of a united Ireland) took their seats in Parliament to act as opposition. Previously, they had boycotted Stormont, the Northern Irish Parliament, even when elected. In addition to this, the prime ministers of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland met in 1965, causing suspicion among Protestants and giving space to more vocal personalities with extreme views. The new situation and the changes it announced caused fear among Unionists (Protestants in favour of the union with the United Kingdom), who then organised paramilitary groups and began sectarian killings in 1966. (HUGHES, 1994, pp.81-82).

Civil rights marches were also repressed by the police force, composed mainly by Protestants, in 1968 and 1969. (KENNY, 2005, p.61) This led to riots and violent episodes, the dispatchment of the British army and the organisation of Catholic paramilitary groups (BOYLE e HADDEN, 1994, p.x, pp.113-114; HUGHES, 1994, p.83). At first, these groups were meant only for self-defence, but soon their goals came to include the unification of Ireland. Thirty years of sectarian violence entailed, not only with shooting and bombs, but also with the homogenisation and separation of neighbourhoods through the so-called "peace lines". (CALAME e CHARLESWORTH, 2009, p.63, pp.70-73) Walls were raised and people were expelled

from their homes in mixed areas; murals and flags depicted the identity of regions and avoided people from passing through the opposite group residences. Northern Irish people grew apart and their narratives about the opposite side also constructed myths and representations that ruptured their identity, as it normally happens in cases of cultural trauma.

Most historians mention the Troubles as a thirty-year conflict that took place between 1968 and 1998. However, as mentioned before, tensions and killings were already present in 1966. This liminal or transitional moment, when something still is, or already is, yet is not yet, creates the possibility of another point of view or a critical observation, as this essay will analyse in Glenn Patterson's novel *The International*.

The International is a first-person narrative set mainly during one Saturday of 1967 in a Belfast hotel that gives the work its title. The narrator and protagonist looks back to that date from his 1994 memory, soon after watching the cease-fire reading by Gusty Spence, the historical character condemned for Peter Ward's assassination. Ward was an eighteen-year-old barman in the International Hotel – in the novel, Danny, the main character, takes his place after the tragedy. It is a fiction that explores the liminality in its main character's identity, in its main setting, and in its timeframe.

Liminality is a concept from anthropology, used "in the context of rituals conducted in small-scale societies" as rites of passage, such as the change from childhood to adulthood. (SZAKOLCZAI, 2015, p.27) However, social sciences have also used the definition to describe transitory periods and moments of crisis (SZAKOLCZAI, 2015, p.28). Liminality can be, therefore, "a prism through which to

understand transformations in the contemporary world". (HORVATH et al., 2015, p.1)

Belfast-born Glenn Patterson uses liminal moments, identities, and places in his fourth novel *The International*. This allows him, in his point of view (MAGENNIS, 2009; 2010), to comment and critically observe the Troubles through fiction. He builds, through fiction, a representation of the cultural trauma that highlights the changes and divisions inflicted in Northern Irish society.

Liminal Moments in *The International*: on the Edge of Changes

When does a society begin a chain of events that will profoundly transform it, affecting the identity of a community, its collective memory and its history? How can one define the starting point and the finish line of the Troubles?

The liminal moments demonstrate that the start and the end of a conflict are not casual. As Glenn Patterson highlights through his novel's timeframe, the seeds of the Troubles had already been planted by 1968, becoming effectively violent by 1966. Apart from that, there were already hopes for an end by 1994, when both sides declared ceasefire.

This fictional representation of cultural trauma and liminality echoes the period the author was facing when he created the story. When Patterson published *The International* in 1999, the Good Friday Agreement – the Peace Agreement said to have stopped the Troubles – had only recently been signed. After so many years and

several other agreements and ceasefires, change towards peace was uncertain.

First of all, the novel points to years that would be a prologue of the long conflict. Danny slowly reveals to the reader that the perceived tension among the hotel workers has to do with the assassination of their barman colleague the previous year:

> The previous May a letter was sent to the papers declaring war on the IRA [Irish Republican Army, Catholic group inspired in the historic independence fighters that later would divide and create the Provisional IRA, a paramilitary organization] and its splinter groups. It was news to most people that there was enough of an IRA to splinter. The letter was signed Captain William Johnston, Adjutant, First Battalion, Belfast UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force, Protestant paramilitary]. Later one night in June, this handful, sorry, *battalion* had ambushed four Catholic men coming out of a bar on Malvern Street off the Shankill Road, shooting one dead and badly wounding another two. (PATTERSON, 2008, p.65; emphasis by the author)

> Those men gunned down on Malvern Street, by the way. They were all barmen. They worked in the International. Peter Ward was eighteen when he died. I turned eighteen a fortnight after he was buried, a fortnight after I started work in the hotel. (PATTERSON, 2008, p.67)

This context is narrated through reminiscences, while Danny describes the daily routine in hotel's bar. The narrator explains how the tensions started to grow, highlighting a declaration of war usually forgotten in the Troubles' history books. He also elaborates

a connection between his own life and the one that was taken, creating empathy and clarifying how these violent episodes affected the entire society. It was not only those who were attacked or close to the ones who suffered, the whole community changed with the fear and violence of the Troubles. According to Glenn Patterson, in an interview with critic Caroline Magennis:

> The murder of Peter Ward in Malvern Street, in a way, was the first definite signal that you were no longer free to move about Belfast. [...] [He] was just in the wrong place, a Catholic barman drinking after hours. The point at which the novel is set is in the aftermath of this, just before the Civil Rights Association meeting, which is about to take us into the next phase. The murder has happened, something has been signalled, but the narrative hasn't really started, the prologue is there. (MAGENNIS, 2009, p.118)

Therefore, by presenting the reader with a prologue of the Troubles (and the novel), Patterson navigates through this liminal moment just before the conflict becomes a recognised reality. The liminality of this cultural trauma helps one observe how identities were not as divided: Catholics and Protestants worked together and attended the same bar. They drank together. Belfast night life was small, but alive. All these aspects would change. As the narrator says, "the mere passage of years cannot account for the sense of rupture." (PATTERSON, 2008, p.237)

This liminal moment just before deep changes is also observed in the novel through the comparison with another incident that took place in 1967. As Danny starts his narration, he mentions a

shopping gallery on fire on his way to work. While observing the flames, he states that this was an unusual event in Belfast "then". (PATTERSON, 2008, p. 2) Later, he recalls reading a headline in the newspaper that affirmed a woman was killed in one of the four fires that hit Belfast. The narrator questions: "What was it with all these fires?" (PATTERSON, 2008, p. 63) He continues to look through the newspaper and finds the story about the astronauts that died in a fire aboard Apollo 1 the previous day.

Many chapters follow before Danny recalls the headlines and connects them:

> I remembered the mannequin I had seen burning this morning in a window of Brand's department store and at last I felt a dreadful pity for the three would-be astronauts; for all of us, maybe, perched forever on the edge of what we can't control or understand. (PATTERSON, 2008, p. 188)

Just like the astronauts were consumed by fire just before they actually turned into astronauts, leaving the historical breakthrough in flames, the Northern Irish also burned. As Northern Ireland was immersed in a war that stopped its progress and changed its communitarian identity. With no power to control or understand the growth of the fires and conflicts in the following years, astronauts and Northern Irish were stuck, inert in the liminal moment that faced their disasters.

The comparison Danny traces between the Belfast fires and the tragedy from Apollo 1 is only possible because he is revisiting his memories from 1994, from a moment in which he knows what would

come after 1967. He does not need to mention what he means by "for all of us" or "then", any reader familiar with the Troubles understands the references. It is outside the liminal prologue moment that one can look backwards and represent other incidents as phantoms of the future to-be.

Secondly, the novel presents memories from Danny's perspective of the liminal moment of the supposed end of the Troubles. In 1994, first the Nationalists and then the Unionists declared ceasefire, what opened the opportunity of multilateral negotiation towards peace. Even though the attacks resumed in 1996, the movements of 1994 were essential for advancing the pacification process. It is just after this point in history that the character reminisces the liminality of the beginning of the Troubles. By connecting both moments through the unionist reader of the ceasefire, who was condemned as Peter Ward's murderer, the narrator also emphasises the limited manner periods of time are referred to:

> On Thursday 13th October 1994, [...] a group of men representing the Combined Loyalist Military Command announced a ceasefire [...] bringing to an end what people here were in the habit of referring to, even long afterwards, as 'the last twenty-five years of violence. A quarter of a century, it was a neat figure, giving the impression that a sensible, even preordained period of history was coming to a close. (PATTERSON, 2008, p.244)

The International, therefore, questions the representation of the Troubles in a precise number of years, twenty-five or thirty, as it is currently accepted and as it was accepted at the time of its publication. This organised timeframe hides the importance

of the liminal moments, through which one can understand the impacts of the cultural trauma. It also stresses the artificiality of the representation of history.

As the narrator looks back from 1994, this is the period in which the traumatic process takes place, that is, the gap between the event and its representation inside the novel. From 1967 to 1994, with the milestone of the ceasefire, he manages to navigate the traumatic process and create his own representation of the cultural trauma.

By choosing these liminal moments for the novel, both for when the story is set and when the narrator is set, Patterson questions the fixed representation of the Troubles as an event understood to have ended in 1999.

Thirdly, liminality was also present throughout the writing and publication of the novel. As a work written so close to the Peace Agreement, Northern Irish society was still immersed in the feelings of a decades-long conflict. Could the Troubles be really over after 1998? Neal Alexander (2009) locates *The International* in a group of novels "post-Agreement". Birte Heidemann suggests that these works employ "narrative techniques that defy chronological movement and closure." (HEIDEMANN, 2016, location 19.1) They confront the idea brought in the Agreement that the Troubles had definitely ended and Northern Ireland was facing a new beginning, a *tabula rasa*. On the contrary, they use liminal moments and characteristics to question if the conflict and its consequences can really be concluded that quickly. And also to bring into question moments and aspects that were previously too hard to deal with or which fear kept them from becoming a topic of public conversation. Cultural trauma, the

rupture of an entire community and its identities, cannot be solved in the blink of an eye from signing papers.

A Liminal Place: the International Hotel

French anthropologist Marc Augé defined the term "non-place", which, among other places, can be applied to hotels, as places of temporary accommodation and passage. A "non-place" can be observed as a material liminality (SZAKOLCZAI, 2015, p.22), as we will analyse in the next paragraphs.

According to Augé, an "anthropological place" is connected to social life by a group, with characteristics such as being connected to an identity, as being relational and historical. (AUGÉ, 2012, p.51-52) This can be related to the divided neighbourhoods in Belfast, for instance, which raised peace lines and painted murals marking their Protestant or Catholic identities and tracing associations with historical arguments for their presence in the area. In Belfast streets, places are very much "anthropological" in this sense. A "non-place", therefore, lacks these three aspects. (AUGÉ, 2012, p.73) It creates a shared, anonymous and provisory identity; it is a place of solitude; and in it reigns the present time. (AUGÉ, 2012, p.95)

Patterson chooses to set his novel mainly in the non-place of a hotel, a significant choice for Northern Ireland. Hotels, like the Europa Hotel, and bars were frequent targets during the Troubles. (APPEAL, 2011) But as neighbourhoods became strongly identity-related, from the street one lives to the school one studied in, avoiding these anthropological places allows *The International* to present another liminal aspect. In the non-place, identity is emptied,

Catholics and Protestants meet on equal levels. In the hotel, they share their pain, their grief and even their happiness with a football match or a joke:

> And if I tell you that I had seen Nationalist as well as Unionist councillors, sometimes both together, join in his enjoyment of the punchline, you will maybe understand something of the International in those days; or at least of the rarity of someone coming into town talking about jobs and the B.U.M. (PATTERSON, 2008, pp.22-23)

As Augé says, in the anonymity of the non-place, the communion of human destinies is experienced. (AUGÉ, 2012, p.110) All of them will be affected by the cultural trauma of the conflict, and outside the non-place their identities will separate them from each other.

The anonymity of the non-place also can be sensed as freedom, which is represented in *The International* through Danny's sexual experiences.

> Maybe it was the anonymity a hotel offered, maybe it was the luxury, the feeling of indulgence, maybe it was that people away from home drank more than they were used to, or maybe it was a carry over from coaching days when sharing rooms and even beds had been common practice: a sort of fuck-memory but whatever it was you couldn't escape the fact, hotels *aroused*. (PATTERSON, 2008, p.71)

The sexual freedom lived by the main character in the hotel contrasts with the use of homophobia and religious discourse in the Troubles. Campaigns against homosexuality were led by both political and religious figures during the Troubles, even connecting both sides in a similar topic. Decriminalisation of homosexual acts only happened in Northern Ireland years after the rest of the United Kingdom and though an order of the European Commission on Human Rights. (DUGGAN, 2012, pp.51-55)

Danny, as a character that has sexual encounters with both men and women, experiences moments of fear of being discovered by others, or being assaulted on the streets if identified as a homosexual. Patterson uses the fear of homophobia to compare to the fear of sectarian violence, like in a walk through the city centre he does after his shift had ended. He is called "fruit" (PATTERSON, 2008, p.234) and runs in fear. Before leaving the hotel, his colleagues state he should be cautious not due to concerns of homophobic assaults or threats, but in reference to what happened with Peter Ward. These moments of fear, however, happen mainly *outside* the hotel, where his anonymity is lost.

In *The International*, therefore, liminality is also present in the scenario of a non-place. Thus, the hotel becomes a neutral or mixed place where it is possible to comment the trauma or reimagine the Northern Irish identities without the fear and rupture found on the streets of Belfast.

Liminal Identity and its Impact on the Narrative: Danny and his Narration

As an eighteen-year-old character, Danny can be examined in the light of the liminality in his rites of passage into adulthood. Maybe the sexual experiences, finding a first job, discovering the world on his own without the shadow of his family. But besides that, the narrator and protagonist of *The International* is represented with several characteristics of a liminal identity, understood as a set of marginalised and dislocated aspects that contrast with the fixed identities of the sectarian conflict.

In the book "O Poder de Lembrar: Narrativa, Memória e Trauma Cultural em *The International*, de Glenn Patterson" (CRAVEIRO, 2023), I argue that Danny's identity is diffuse, expanding across others, and hybrid (BHABHA, 1998), refusing others – this book also deepens the examination of Danny's identity and its use in the novel, in addition to analysing the narrative. It is an identity that expands traditional binary and fixed identities, with contours unclear, which at the same time overflows and inhabits these contours. According to Bhabha, there is no pure identity and exploring hybridisation and the "in-between" places, which could also be interpreted as liminal places, creates the possibility of avoiding polarisations. (BHABHA, 1998, p.69)

But what turns Danny into a diffuse and hybrid character? Among his liminal characteristics, he is the son of a Catholic and a Protestant – and he does not know the origins of his parents. He navigates through both communities and does not identify with either, being raised up apart from them. This becomes a matter

of debate with his colleague, who interprets him as Protestant, demonstrating Danny's irritation in being represented as one-sided:

> 'What's the deal anyway with you Prods?' said Jamesie. [...]
>
> *Prods*? The word caught me like a sharp stick under the ribs. No one in the International had ever made such a direct mention of religion to me. I cast a sidelong look at Jamesie to see did he realise what he had just said. I took it, from the way he was crossing his eyes, trying to blow a speck of ash from the end of his nose, that he did not consider he had spoken at all out of turn.
>
> 'Jamesie, I'm not a Protestant.'
>
> 'Of course you're not. And I'm not a Catholic,' he said. 'What school did you go to?' [...]
>
> 'I forgot, we're none of us anything,' Jamesie said. 'We're International barmen.'
>
> The notion had never struck me as so heroic, nor so entirely hollow. the International was no protection to its four barmen drinking after hours in the Malvern Arms that Saturday night last June.
>
> (PATTERSON, 2008, pp.197-98; emphasis by the author)

After Danny reiterates his liminal identity, that is not one and that is not the other, his colleague recalls that the fact they work in a non-place turns their identity into a shared one. But this is even deeper when Danny then connects their identity to the tragedy of Peter Ward. Even in a non-place, they cannot escape the consequences of a sectarian conflict shaping who they are.

Another liminal characteristic in Danny is his sexuality. Danny is a queer man that has relations with men and women, not identifying himself as straight, the norm accepted by his society. In Paul Preciado's (2011) definition, Danny is "deviant" from the norm. Identities such as this one are negative identities, they produce identities that resist normalisation. (PRECIADO, 2011, p.15)

Danny, furthermore, does not use common vocabulary such as "gay" or "bisexual". He just exists and pursue his desires, avoiding fixed identities that will normalise or pigeonhole his existence.

According to critic Caroline Magennis, while commenting other works by Glenn Patterson and his own words in interviews, "camp allows Patterson to step outside of the Northern Irish mainstream and commentate. It is an authorial decision with camp/queer as a vantage point." (MAGENNIS, 2018, p.129) Therefore, Patterson sees the choice of his character's identity as a way to comment the Troubles more freely, more distanced from the sectarian fixed identities, which involve even himself as a Protestant writer. He uses these characteristics to observe and destabilise the binary perspectives of his country.

By being deviant from the norm and by suffering so many prejudices, Danny develops the vocabulary to criticise the disgrace of violence: "For a good many years, in fact, Belfast disgraced itself." (PATTERSON, 2008, p. 241) When he was caught in 1966 kissing a boy at a party, he discovered the two standards of his society: condemn homosexuality but live with sectarian violence.

> And it was as the party was reaching its height that the Unpleasantness – as my mother referred to it ever after – occurred.

> I kissed a boy. [...]
>
> I decided not to hold my breath, even my mother appeared less than convinced, but there are things in this world far more unpleasant than two boys kissing and by the beginning of the following week Belfast had lurched a step nearer to its unpleasant future (or perhaps I mean past) and I was sitting in the manager's office of the International Hotel with Second Cousin Clive's testimonial in my inside pocket.
>
> (PATTERSON, 2008, p.31, p.33)

The week after Danny was caught kissing a boy, Peter Ward was killed in his afterhours in a bar with his friends. The latter is stressed by Danny as "unpleasant", the same word his mother used to describe his kiss. His liminal characteristic, as one deviant from the sexual norm, allows him to criticise the violence and the hypocrisy of Northern Irish society.

While cultural trauma deeply wounds collective identity, Patterson imagines Northern Irish identities *in* Danny and *through* Danny's narration. Based on this liminal identity, the narrator deconstructs the images of sectarian identities and features others invisible in the context. The other main characters are not described in the sense of their origin and religion, they are presented as outsiders that break the rules of gender, politics, and profession.

These other characters have their own stories presented in long reminiscences that bring into the narrative their own voice, or a mixed voice narration.

Liminality also influences Danny's narrative voice, which becomes fragmented, mixed with other voices and openly creative. At some moments the limits between Danny's and another coworker or friend's voice are diffused, especially when he recounts stories he heard from his colleagues, purposely turning his narrative into a form of collective memory. At others, as an unreliable narrator, he describes thoughts and facts that he could not have had access to, finally confessing he is taking creative freedoms in retelling the story.

The history of the Troubles, therefore, is revisited by the narrator in a narrative that is, like him, diffused, highlighting the fictionality and patching past narratives together. The liminality in his identity and narrative demonstrates how registering history or memories can be susceptible of changes. The pure truth is not able to be achieved in narrative. The traumatic process also affects the representation of the cultural trauma according to one's feelings and point of view, as it is normal for any reminiscence as well. Moreover, through the multiple layers of different narrative voices, Patterson demonstrates the plurality of memories that exist. This occurs especially when representation of cultural trauma can be verified, as each side and each individual experiences the history differently.

In an interview, Patterson states that:

> I think we have to recognize that memory is not stable. My own memory is terribly, terribly suspect. I think the tyranny of memory is what we've got to write against on the one hand, and we also have to try and respect individual memory on the other hand. We have to allow that there are as many versions of the past as there are individuals who experienced the past. Simply saying that means

> that you can't come up with an absolute version of what that past was... (HICKS, 2008, p.116).

Hence, the novel advocates for the preservation of multiple memories of the Troubles by portraying a reminiscence in a multiple and openly creative version, opposing closed narratives, which propose themselves as unique and true.

Patterson presents a representation of cultural trauma that, instead of resolving the issues or moving forward, uses the liminal places, identities, and narratives to assume the complexities, remember the identities and previous coexistence, and propose a creative and diverse way of preserving memories.

Coping with Trauma through Liminality in Literature

In the context of cultural trauma studies, Piotr Sztompka formulates a traumatic sequence and includes in it what he calls "coping strategies." (SZTOMPKA, 2004, p.155-95) These would be social adaptations of a community in the light of the cultural trauma imposed upon them. They develop cultural models to interpret the cultural trauma and act in the resurgence of new cultures. Some examples are the retreatist reaction of "ghettoisation" (SZTOMPKA, 2004, p.187), like the one that happened in the streets of Belfast and Derry when areas became more homogenised and closer to each other. Another strategy is the innovative one, as when: "people give the systemic change as given, not to be reversed, and make attempts at creative reshaping of their personal situation within the system, in order to alleviate the trauma." (SZTOMPKA, 2004, p.184).

Some examples are voluntary associations and communitarian organisations of collective support. This can also be seen in Northern Ireland's context with groups such as the Two Traditions Group, later incorporated into the Community Relations Council, WAVE (Widows/Widowers Against Violence Empower), and the Peace People. (DAWSON, 2007, pp.44-68)

Could literature also use these coping strategies while representing cultural trauma? In *The International*, Patterson's choice of setting the narrative in a liminal moment recalls the ghettoisation of its society by presenting a period when violence was already present but different groups still coexisted. It also questions the timeline of the Troubles narrative and encourages the preservation of its multiple memory as a way to reshape the stories being told in media and politics in the time of its publication.

Furthermore, the liminal space of the hotel, where identities are mixed and anonymous, guides the reader through this innovative reshaping of the situation for the characters. They become a diverse collective, they find themselves free from fear, and, through Peter Ward's grief, ties are established among staff and clients.

In a society divided by cultural trauma, leaving ruptures and ghettos behind reminds people of what connects them. At the same time it reminds them of what was lost. This also happens in the novel through the deconstruction of fixed and sectarian identities, possible due to the liminal identity of the main character and narrator.

Final Considerations: Brexit and the Current Liminal Moments

Patterson, then, uses literature to represent cultural trauma to ponder about it, looking back at liminal moments that announce changes. This authorial and artistic stance leads contemporary readers to ponder about the future of Northern Ireland, once again at stake.

The process of withdrawing the United Kingdom from the European Union, known as Brexit, began in 2016 with a referendum. This was followed by long negotiations and signed with the Withdrawal Agreement in 2020 (EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2023). The issue of the border of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland – the United Kingdom's only territorial border with the European Union – and its impacts on trade, the flow of people, and customs, putting points of the Good Friday Agreement at risk, became the centre of debate outside and within Northern Ireland, even putting its own government at risk with a long unionist boycott of the assembly since May 2022.

The Northern Irish Protocol was established (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023), but it was not widely accepted even among unionists, who agreed with Brexit. In 2022, nationalists won for the first time the majority of the Northern Irish Parliament (SINN FÉIN, 2022), but, to stress their disagreement with the Protocol, unionists began a boycott, freezing the official politics of the country. In 2023, at last, the United Kingdom signed with the European Union new measures to solve the pending questions about Northern Ireland,

the Windsor Framework. (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023) After much negotiation and a few strikes, the return of Northern Ireland's government happened in February 2024, "after the DUP confirmed it would end its two-year boycott and re-enter the Assembly and Executive." (MCCLEMENTS, 2024)

Throughout this period, when many aspects of Northern Irish society were in question and peace was put at risk by various possibilities and assertions, another liminal moment was taking shape. In a scenario of instability and foreshadowed changes, a contemporary reader can turn to Patterson's novel and find in it fresh evaluations. One can critically observe in these liminal moments traces of the process of representation and significance of these changes, especially when they are traumatogenic. And, with that, question fixed identities and fixed narratives, informing the present situations of what was forgotten (or simplified).

How did the Troubles appear in affirmations about Brexit? How was the resolution of the conflict brought into question when negotiations failed? These are some reflections that literature, along with the liminal situations it portrays, can inspire in the contemporary reader.

Built upon liminal moments, liminal places, and liminal identities, *The International* presents a perspective on the Troubles that indicates how impactive this conflict has been. The fixed identities, the ruptured community, the lives interrupted, and the routines changed. Liminality makes these observations possible because the conflict itself is perceived as outside of the moment, place, or identity, but still close enough to impact its memories. From an outside perspective, even people deeply affected by the

cultural trauma are able to experience the traumatic process and thereby elaborate or question the representations of trauma. This recounting creates an innovative coping strategy and helps in the process of dealing with the conflict and its impacts.

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"I know that I have to be certain things to get by in life": Queerness & Migration in *The Henna Wars*

Esther Gazzola Borges

Over the past few decades, the concept of identity as a fixed state that cannot be changed has been questioned. As a result, more than ever, there has been a new focus on the importance of drawing attention to marginalized identities. Queer and migrant issues are gaining visibility in media, arts, and politics, and, by extension, so too are the matters of queer diaspora and the existence of those who occupy in-between spaces in terms of identity.

In the *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2002), Anne Maria Fortier defines the concept of queer diaspora as "the condition of exile and estrangement experienced by queer subjects, which locates them outside the confines of 'home': the heterosexual family, the nation, the homeland" (FORTIER, 2002, p. 8). This definition suggests that queer subjects, due to their queerness, are placed into a type of diaspora, inherently rejected by the social structures that should represent home. Even if their families, friends, and communities

accept their sexuality and gender identity, society as a whole is still structured around a cis-heterosexual utopia, which defaults to the exclusion of queer identity and its existence. As a consequence, when dealing with those outside their inner circles, queer people often spend their lives in this constant in-between state, most commonly known as 'coming out of the closet.' There is a persistent feeling of being hyperaware of how the queer subject lives and a need to evaluate when it is safe – or even necessary – to disclose their identity. To be queer and survive, it becomes essential to master the art of living in the in-between.

As an object of study, this paper analyses two of the characters from *The Henna Wars* (2020), the debut novel of Irish-Bangladeshi queer Muslim author Adiba Jaigirdar. The story is told from the perspective of 16-year-old Bangladeshi immigrant Nishat Ahsan. Nishat is a queer Bangladeshi Muslim whose family moved to Ireland in search of a better life. The novel opens with her decision to come out to her parents as a lesbian after observing them at a family wedding and noticing the sparkle of dreams for a future that will not come to fruition in her mother's eyes. Nishat concludes that it is better to dispel any expectations of her future marriage to a man as soon as possible. Her reasoning stems from a desire to avoid future disappointment and persecution as a form of self-protection and, to some extent, liberation. Her experience and identity are questioned by her parents as an unwelcome novelty, incompatible not only with what is deemed acceptable but also with what was even conceivable within their cultural standards. They perceive her sexuality as an external cultural influence. Outside her personal sphere, Nishat faces further isolation and bullying at school after being outed as a lesbian. She is subjected to bigotry not only because of her race and

culture but also because of her sexuality, which is initially mocked and later portrayed as predatory – a foreign deviation.

Alongside this, Nishat must endure her white friend constantly excusing her bullies, insisting that the issues stem not from her race but from her individual character. The novel's main plot revolves around a competition for their business class, during which Nishat starts a henna business. She faces competition from her ex-friend and overtly racist bully, Chyna, and Chyna's cousin, Flávia – a Black, Brazilian-Irish new student who is bisexual and still closeted. The girls develop a complicated relationship, characterized by rivalry and antagonism at school – especially regarding cultural appropriation of henna – while simultaneously forming a strong connection. Despite their conflicts, Nishat develops romantic feelings for Flávia, who reciprocates, as they bond over their shared immigrant experience and the struggle to balance two different cultures while fitting into neither.

From various angles, the novel explores the diasporic experiences of sapphic characters in Irish contexts and the feeling of living between two cultures and contrasting ideals. This sense of Otherness, intrinsically tied to the in-betweenness experienced by the characters, can be linked to Homi Bhabha's work. Bhabha argues for the need to "think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 4). This perspective is evident in how the characters position themselves not only in relation to their white Irish peers but also in relation to each other and the cultural and perspective differences within their own communities as they navigate the queer

diaspora experience. Bhabha further explores this concept by noting that these newly found in-between spaces provide "the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 6). In dialogue with this perspective, Shamira Meghani shifts the focus to the intersection of diaspora and the queer experience:

> Migration requires navigating new material and cultural contexts, positioning the known culture of home in new proximal relations. While it can offer opportunities for resisting expectations, particularly with regard to sexuality, migration can also bring greater isolation and ongoing negotiations with identity. (MEGHANI, 2019, p.68-69)

Both Nishat and Flávia face multiple challenges balancing the expectations of their families and Irish society. For the most part, their sexuality appears to be yet another aspect that further isolates them, distancing them from a sense of true belonging. More often than not, discussions about queer people and diaspora focus on those who leave their family homes and homelands to come out of the closet and thus "achieve freedom to be who they are." This narrative frames the act of coming out and self-discovery as a one-act play with a clear path and resolution. Most queer coming-of-age stories, however, are far from linear. When queerness intersects with the experiences of diaspora and the concept of home, the construction of identity and societal placement becomes even more complex and difficult to define. Furthermore, queer individuals within the diaspora occupy

a dual threshold, never fully belonging to one space or another. They may face ostracization both from their culture of origin and from the culture of their adopted community due to their sexuality and their status as migrants. This dual exclusion, however, is precisely what brings the characters in Jaigirdar's novels to form bonds, even during moments when the plot sets them against each other and when antagonism is clearly established in the development of their relationship. The creation of this connection is depicted through multiple scenes of dialogue, as well as Nishat's internal monologue. Even when the characters are upset with each other or not on speaking terms, they seem to understand one another's perspective on cultural isolation and their respective queer experiences.

To be more specific, what we see developed in the book are two characters who face the same struggles from opposite ends of the spectrum, due to their belonging to different communities and racial backgrounds. The way Western society perceives Nishat's sexuality and migration status as a South Asian woman is not the same as how it perceives Flávia's, who is viewed as a Black person from Latin America. However, in both cases, they are marginalized through the same Western lens of objectification.

Nishat's Case: Erasure and Perversion

Drawing on the concepts established by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1991), Meghani states that "the disavowal of homoeroticism in the literary part of post-independence cultures serves conservative national self-imaginings [...] that demand

the nation's continual biological and ideological reproduction" (MEGHANI, 2015, p. 63). In other words, nations – especially those following Western constructs derived from colonialism – are built on masculinist, heteronormative terms that either erase or objectify, for their own purposes, those who do not conform. What is represented in the novel is the Othering and persecution of both characters, though in different ways, as a consequence of their inherent inability to fit into the white heteronormative construct. This specific type of violence is expressed through the projection of Orientalist and fetishized views onto the characters, as well as through the denial of their free will, their possibility of self-expression, and their right to exist outside the standards and racist expectations imposed by a xenophobic, white-centric society.

In his work *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said defines various terms to analyse the specific lenses through which Western societies view the racialized non-Western Other – a cultural construct that establishes the West as the norm. More specifically, Said discusses the gendered perspective that feminizes the Orient, positioning it as inferior to the dominant, knowledgeable, and superior Occident. This belief system allows the Occident to project all undesirable identities onto this constructed Orient, including homoeroticism and other negatively perceived sexualities. In *The Henna Wars*, Orientalism is enacted not only by the Irish society surrounding Nishat but also by her own family, who reproduce conservative rhetoric that demonizes homosexuality and erases female desire. This rhetoric, rooted in colonial influences on South Asian cultures, perpetuates the denial of her sexuality. This denial is not only about her being a lesbian but is also deeply connected to her gender within her religion and its refusal to acknowledge female sexuality.

"You're young, you're confused."

I shake my head, even though she's turned away from me and can't see it.

"I'm not confused." If I was, I would have never put myself through this scrutiny and judgement. This silence.

"Girls like you aren't … aren't …" She trails off like the word lesbian is too much for her to handle. Like her lips can't shape it.

"They are. I am."

"You're Muslim."

I snort. "That's not how it works, Sunny Apu."

"Muslims aren't gay," she whispers, like this is a hard and fast rule. She's still turned away from me, looking out the window like the outside world will have some solution to my lesbian problem. I would laugh if this weren't such a ridiculous claim. Because of course, Muslims can be gay. How can anyone even think otherwise? The two aren't mutually exclusive. I am living, breathing proof.

(JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.91)

Beyond her inner circle, the demonisation Nishat faces at school when rumours about her sexuality spread is tied not only to her sexual orientation but also to her race. Nishat is portrayed as a predator and as dangerous, a perception deeply connected to her racial and migrant background. If she cannot be a lesbian due to the "impossibility" of female desire (and, by extension, female homosexuality), her sexuality is instead conflated with the image of the "evil Oriental pervert" – a racist and Islamophobic trope typically

associated with Arab and Muslim men. Through Orientalism, her sexuality is simultaneously denied, erased, and vilified.

> "Somebody sent an anonymous text to the whole school," Priti says, when we're outside in the deserted entrance hallway. "About … you."
>
> "What did it say?"
>
> She takes a deep breath and ducks her head. For a moment I think she won't answer, but after a minute she sighs and says, "That you're a lesbian. *Somebody sent around a text outing you, saying you're dangerous, that the school shouldn't have you here, that it's against their Catholic ethos, that it's not how an all-girls school should be run*, that – "
>
> "Stop." I feel sick. Bile rises inside me.
>
> […]
>
> I slip inside my stall and behind the table. I can hear people whispering as time passes – too slowly. Girls shuffle by my stall, their gaze averted, as if lesbianism is something they can catch.
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.150; my emphasis)

Further expanding on the ramifications of Orientalism, Said also introduces the term "Exoticism," which he defines as "a fascination with and consumption of the otherness of people, representations, products, and constructed objects of the non-West" (SAID apud MEGHANI, 2015, p. 63). In the novel, the sense of exoticism is conveyed not only through Nishat's white Irish peers (primarily in relation to East Asian culture and its more popularized aesthetics) but also through Flávia. The first major disagreement between the characters arises from Flávia's decision to also start a

henna business. Flávia claims that henna painting is an art form like any other, viewing it as something fun that anyone can do – art that has the right to be practiced and reproduced purely for aesthetic enjoyment. Conversely, Nishat sees henna as one of the few remaining ties to a culture that has repeatedly rejected her. It represents a last thread connecting her to "home," a source of safety and identity that she perceives as being exploited and trivialized into a fun, cute summer trend on Instagram by the very same people who have long antagonized her for her cultural background.

> "What, you're afraid of a little friendly competition?"
>
> "No." It comes out more defensive than I mean it to. "But ... it was my idea. *It's my culture. It's my thing.*"
>
> "It's a type of art – that can't be a person's thing." She furrows her eyebrows together like this conversation is too much for her to fathom.
>
> "It's not just a type of art. It's a part of my culture. Just because you went to one wedding that was South Asian, where you didn't even know anyone, by the way, doesn't mean you just get to do henna now."
>
> "It's art!"
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.150; my emphasis)

Later in the novel, Flávia comes around and apologizes to Nishat for her remarks, explaining her point of view. However, the damage has already been done. While it does not leave a lasting impact on their personal relationship, Flávia's initial comments and beliefs about henna inadvertently empower Chyna to commodify it

for her own profit, with significant support from their other white schoolmates. Even after Flávia distances herself from the business and refuses to participate in any further projects Chyna organizes – including a "Holi party" – the repercussions of her earlier actions linger. What is originally a cultural Indian festival tied to a specific date and deep meaning is transformed into a random weekend outing: an excuse for a group of white Irish teenagers to throw paint at each other, devoid of cultural significance. The Indian aesthetics they exploit are reduced to mere entertainment, stripped of their meaning and used purely for amusement.

> "Chyna is … she's so adamant about winning this thing. She's been getting carried away."
>
> Except this has always been Chyna. She's been "getting carried away" with things her whole life.
>
> "How can she even do henna without you?"
>
> Flávia glances at me hesitantly. "She … has stencils."
>
> "Stencils?" My voice comes out more high-pitched than I intend it to. Nothing should shock me at this point, not even that people in our school would go to a "Holi party" thrown by a white girl who applies henna with stencils. Not after everything.
>
> Still, it does.
>
> "And you didn't tell her that she shouldn't? That the whole thing was offensive?"
>
> Flávia scrunches up her face in concentration for a moment, like she's thinking really hard about something.

> "She told me that if she couldn't throw that party, then I couldn't do henna. That they were the same thing." Flávia takes a deep breath. It's heavy, like the weight of the world is on her shoulders, and she doesn't know how to shake it off. "And she's kind of right, isn't she? I was the person who made her brave enough to think this is okay. I get it now. Why you were angry at me to begin with. I just … I wasn't thinking straight, you know? I went to that wedding and I just …thought because I liked it, I could run with it. I didn't really think about anything else. And … if I'm being honest, I kind of just wanted to have something to talk to you about when school started."
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.213-14; my emphases)

Although the disagreement between the characters spans multiple chapters, many of the core dialogues that contribute to the development of their relationship also occur within this same time frame. Despite the antagonism, by sharing their personal experiences with queer diaspora and relying on one another for understanding, the characters are still able to connect – or at the very least, feel seen by one another – while navigating an Irish society that persistently marginalizes them. At its core, and as an inherent consequence of Orientalist practices, all non-Eurocentric subjects living in the Global North face varying levels of marginalization, specifically targeting them through xenophobia, sexualization, and racialization – which are then often fetishized. These practices, however, affect individuals differently depending on the particularities of their sexuality or racial background, resulting in vastly different experiences. While Nishat faces one side of this spectrum as a lesbian South Asian, experiencing erasure of her sexuality and being viewed as a potential predator,

Flávia, as a Black, Brazilian, and bisexual person, contends with the opposite side of it.

Flávia's Case: Black, Brazilian, and Bisexual

Flávia's personal background differs significantly from Nishat's. Her parents are divorced, and her father's side of the family is entirely white and Irish – this connection being how she is linked to Chyna. Flávia, however, lives with her mother, who raised her alone after the divorce. Her mother has struggled with moving back and forth between Brazil and Ireland, never truly feeling comfortable in either country before eventually settling in Ireland again.

> *"I think it was hard for my mom."* She's looking down at the ground, toeing the dirt with the soles of the regulation black shoes that we all wear as part of our school uniform. "She came here when she was younger, and fell in love with my dad, and she thought that was it. She'd made it. *She says Brazil isn't always an easy place to be in, even though she misses it. After the divorce, I think she just wanted to go somewhere where the fact that her goals had fallen apart didn't stare her in the face.*"
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, 61; my emphasis)

Many of the feelings Flávia expresses toward her mother mirror those Nishat feels toward her own parents – the sense of debt, the need to make their parental sacrifices worthwhile, and the fear of being unable to repay them for the decisions they made to provide a better future with greater opportunities than those they

had while growing up in their own countries. One way this fear of disappointment manifests is through academic performance. As Nishat and Flávia compare their exam results, Flávia confesses to feeling pressured by the expectation to achieve the highest grades possible. When asked about it, she explains that it is not just a matter of pleasing her mother but also of representing her mother – and, by extension, herself – to the rest of her family, particularly her white relatives.

> "My mom isn't exactly … thrilled. […] Just … she has this thing about showing up my dad's side of the family. I guess because … I don't know, *they never really liked her and I think it's a race thing. Like they assume that because my mom is Black and Brazilian, and still has an accent, she isn't smart enough or good enough or whatever. So she always wants me to do better*."
>
> "Than who?"
>
> "Than … well, everyone, really. *But especially better than that side of the family*."
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, 132)

Because she is the only Black person in a white family, the expectations placed on Flávia are higher – not only because there is an underlying, racist stereotype suggesting she might perform poorly, but also due to the societal bias that assumes a young Black Latin American girl will not be as intelligent as her white peers. Flávia is acutely aware that her actions and words are not viewed through the lens of individuality but as a representation of an entire group

of already marginalized people. This places a negative, preconceived expectation on her, even if it is unintentional or implicit. Additionally, there is the matter of Flávia protecting her mother by proxy from further prejudice and backlash related to her race and nationality. It is implied that Flávia's Irish side of the family harbors racist attitudes toward her mother, without seeming to realize that, as a consequence, they are also perpetuating racial biases and beliefs toward Flávia, who shares the same characteristics – being Black and Brazilian. Flávia, however, is keenly aware of the double standards applied to her compared to her white cousins – both by her white family and, to some extent, by her own mother, whose attempts to shield her from further exclusion contribute to these differing expectations.

> "Because Chyna's white and you're Black?" Flávia doesn't seem taken aback by the bluntness of my question. I know if it was Jess, she'd be annoyed that I was "playing the race card" by bringing up race at all. *White people like to pretend that race is only as deep as the color of our skin – maybe because the color of their skin gets them so many benefits. But race is so much more than that. Good things and bad things. And when you're Brown or Black, it shapes you in life. Maybe even more so for Flávia.*
>
> Flávia takes a deep breath and says, *"It's like ... I know that I have to be certain things to get by in life. I have to be smart enough and talk a certain way and adapt to what my dad's family wants.* Chyna thinks that's just who I am. I guess she doesn't really see the other side of me. Maybe because I don't show her the other side of me."
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.133)

This previous quote highlights the core of Flávia's experience navigating both her families and her existence within Irish society. Nishat points out how displeased Jess, her white friend, would be about their discussion of race – as if being racially marked were not a fundamental factor that sets Nishat and Flávia apart from the rest of society and significantly influences how they are treated. As readers, we see Nishat constantly grappling with racist and xenophobic remarks from her peers regarding her family's culture and food. However, despite the conflicts surrounding her sexuality, she can still return home to a space where her skin tone and cultural practices are not scrutinized, attacked, or demeaned. The same cannot be said for Flávia. Even though she lives with her mother, her father's side of the family maintains a considerable presence in her life, forcing her to constantly tread a thin line of perfection to counteract the racial prejudices directed at her. Flávia's existence is not for herself; it is framed as a challenge to expectations, requiring her to exceed the achievements of her white counterparts just to receive basic respect. Her mother, having faced difficulties adapting, continues to be subjected to negative remarks about her skin colour and accent. As a result, Flávia feels the need to shape her behaviour – and any future actions – into a form that ensures she will not face the same treatment. This belief is reinforced by her mother, who instils it out of a desire to protect her. Even when Flávia is with Chyna, someone she is closer to, she does not feel free to be entirely honest or exist without restraints. She feels compelled to wear a mask and play a role, which leaves her constantly on edge and unable to fully express her true self, even with those she trusts most – until she meets Nishat.

Later, Flávia explores the feeling of being cast out by her Irish side of the family and how this profoundly impacts her other relationships – including her relationship with Nishat.

> "Sometimes, I feel like... [...] I don't know. Like *I don't really feel Brazilian sometimes, you know?* Especially around Chyna and her side of my family. *It feels like they want me to be something else altogether, and it's just easier to conform. I want them to like me. To accept me.*" [...]
>
> "It's this why you didn't want to come out?" [...]
>
> "Yes. Part of it."
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.213; my emphases)

Earlier in the novel, before the previously mentioned dialogue, Nishat and Flávia share a kiss and have an open conversation about the impossibility of their relationship ever becoming something real. There are many reasons for this, but at its core, the issue boils down to Nishat not wanting to be in a secret relationship and Flávia not feeling comfortable coming out. For Nishat, it is a matter of living authentically – finally feeling free and taking control of her own life and narrative, especially after enduring the traumatic experiences of coming out to her family and being rejected by them, as well as being forcibly outed to her classmates in an extremely violent and public manner. Flávia's reasoning is equally valid; she does not want to give her Irish family yet another reason to ostracize her.

In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said asserts that, for marginalized communities perceived as the inferior Other within their surrounding society, the Othered subject is faced with

two opposing paths to navigate and survive within the dominant culture. According to Said, "One must join the primordial or a constituted group; or as a Subaltern Other; one must accept inferior status or one must fight to the death" (SAID, 1994, p. 311). Nishat and Flávia initially take steps in opposite directions. Nishat chooses to come out to her family to protect herself from future expectations and to face her schoolmates with her head held high after being outed, as a way to reclaim her agency and demonstrate that there is nothing wrong with her sexuality. Meanwhile, Flávia remains closeted for most of the novel, expressing an initial desire to be accepted by her family (and, to some extent, Irish society in general), regardless of the personal cost to her own life.

While Nishat decides to "fight to the death," Flávia initially chooses to stand down, hoping to be accepted – or at least to avoid further exclusion. Despite their differences, both girls understand and respect each other's decisions, even if it means they cannot pursue a romantic relationship with one another.

> "Well ... you know, it's not exactly easy to be Brazilian here. When people think of Brazil, they think ... *I don't know, futebol, Carnival, partying – whatever. And all the boys think because I'm a Brazilian girl, I'll be up for anything. You don't know the way they look at me, the things they say*. And Chyna doesn't get it. She kind of encourages it. After that party, *I just kept thinking how much worse it would be if it was true that I was bisexual. Brazilian and bisexual? I would never hear the end of it*."
>
> (JAIGIRDAR, 2020, p.216)

This statement further emphasizes the connection between Flávia's and Nishat's experiences navigating these spaces as non-Western, racialized queer individuals, as well as the opposite ends of the spectrum on which they are each placed and perceived by society. Flávia belongs to three groups that are highly hypersexualized, fetishized, and objectified by Western white societies. Historically, Black bodies have been treated as objects by slave traders – Black men as forces for physical labor and Black women as exotic sexual objects and wet nurses. This mindset later spread and became ingrained in white-centric societies, persisting to this day. Black women are still objectified and often perceived as "easier," perpetuating the harmful myth that they are "sexually insatiable," with their bodies being treated as "naturally more erotic" than those of women from other races. Similarly, Brazilian women are often stereotyped or assumed to be sex workers in the Global North and are subjected to the same racist mindset, treated as if they are inherently more promiscuous than women from other nationalities. When it comes to sexuality, the bisexual community faces a comparable issue. Bisexual individuals are frequently seen as more promiscuous, confused, more likely to cheat, and perceived as "easier" than those who fall within the monosexual spectrum. Bisexual women, in particular, face harsher treatment due to the intersection of this prejudice with misogyny. They are often reduced to objects for the sexual fantasies of straight men and treated as tools for fulfilling fantasies like threesomes and other similar scenarios.

At the intersection of all these identities, Flávia is placed in an extremely uncomfortable position. Her initial hesitation about coming out is strongly justified by the fact that she is already harassed by the boys at her school, often encouraged by Chyna, who fails

to grasp the vastly different experiences they face regarding the motivations behind this male attention and how it manifests. Flávia is acutely aware that revealing her sexuality would likely intensify the sexualized treatment she already endures from her male peers and could provoke harassment from female classmates, similar to what Nishat experienced. Additionally, it could lead to further mistreatment from her own Irish family. For her white friends, her body and her choices are not truly her own but are instead seen as objects for their enjoyment or judgment. Her mother's pressure is an effort to shield Flávia from the same forms of prejudice and mistreatment that she herself has endured. Flávia understands this, but it adds to the weight of her situation. In her personal survival guide – a mental list of traits she believes she must adopt to navigate life – she implies a need to conform as closely as possible to societal norms, even if that means living a constrained version of herself to avoid further ostracization.

Final Thoughts

The Orientalist views projected by Irish society deny Nishat her own voice. As a South Asian woman from a Muslim background, her sexuality is both denied and erased by history and society. Her identity as a lesbian is tied to a broader narrative rooted in the misconception that female desire does not exist, rendering female homosexuality nearly unthinkable – especially for a racialized woman who desires only other women. Through this denial, Nishat is desexualized, stripped of her own desire, and silenced by her family when she attempts to address the subject. This dynamic persists until a pivotal

moment in the novel when, after witnessing her mistreatment at school, her parents choose to educate themselves and embrace her with love, seeking to repair the harm caused by their initial rejection. Outside her inner circle, however, Nishat's sexuality is twisted into something perverse, closely tied to the "Evil Oriental" prejudice. It is exposed against her will, leading her peers to view her as a predator and subjecting her to punishment simply for existing. Even before being outed, Nishat had already faced Othering at school due to racist rumours, but her forced outing transforms these jokes – from malicious comments about food and smells – into accusations of something far more dangerous. This shift occurs despite Nishat never having done anything to warrant such treatment, as she barely interacted with other girls at all – except Flávia. Being outed against her will represents yet another act of violence, as it robs her of the autonomy to decide when and how to share this part of herself. It exposes deeply personal aspects of her life in a negative light, subjecting her to judgment and scrutiny from everyone around her.

Similarly, Flávia is also denied agency, but through the projection of a fetishized and hypersexualized version of her identity, tied to her racial background, ethnicity, and sexuality. She is constantly scrutinized by her own family and feels compelled to develop a "survival guide" to navigate daily life, aiming to avoid falling victim to violence or microaggressions. However, this strategy proves ineffective, as she continues to face these challenges throughout the novel. Examples include her mother's well-intentioned but pressuring insistence for her to be "better," the way her Irish family treats her, their harsh remarks about her mother (criticizing traits that Flávia herself shares), and the sexualizing, sleazy comments – often encouraged by Chyna – from the white Irish boys she interacts

with. If Nishat is voiceless, Flávia is confined to a box that strips her of autonomy. Everything about her is filtered through the lens of who she "should" be and how she "should" act to be treated like a white person. These constraints prevent her from existing freely and authentically, outside the bounds of societal expectations and imposed standards.

Despite both characters experiencing marginalization at opposite ends of the spectrum, they are able to bond over their shared experiences of non-belonging. As the story unfolds, both characters navigate their identities in transit, side by side, while developing their individual priorities. Flávia eventually decides to come out – partly inspired by Nishat's bravery and strength (though Nishat never pushes or suggests this to her) but mostly for herself. She first comes out to her mother, whom she trusts the most, and later to Chyna. Flávia's coming out is not an attempt to protect herself, as Nishat's was, nor an effort to correct Chyna's problematic behaviour, as Flávia has largely given up hope of Chyna changing after discovering that she was responsible for the racist rumours about Nishat's family. Instead, it is an act of reclaiming her own identity and allowing herself to navigate society as a person, not a puppet fulfilling her white family's expectations. Although not explicitly stated, there is an implicit shift in Flávia's mindset as she comes to accept that she may never be fully embraced by her Irish family or her school peers. Much like Nishat's beliefs about her own race and sexuality, Flávia concludes that her skin colour and nationality will always alienate her, no matter how well she performs or conforms to societal standards. Given this reality, she decides she might as well live authentically and be who she wants to be, recognizing that such sacrifices are not worth making in a futile effort to fit in. While there are still

certain compromises, she must make to navigate a racist society that struggles to accept Otherness, by the end of the novel, Flávia begins to seek the same freedom that Nishat expressed in the early chapters: the desire to simply *be*, despite the fear of what may come.

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O Labirinto do Intertexto: a Recriação do Espectro de Hamlet nos Ulysses Brasileiros

Pedro Luís Sala Vieira

Introdução

Traduzir uma obra da magnitude de *Ulysses*, de James Joyce, implica em diversos desafios. Joyce explorou em seu romance uma série de inovações que o transformaram num marco da literatura ocidental, como a utilização da técnica do monólogo interior em sua profundidade; o uso de palavras-valise; a mistura de técnicas narrativas; e, claro, a intertextualidade com outras obras em formas de referências, alusões e ecos. Em termos de intertextualidade, embora Homero seja o primeiro autor lembrado por conta da proposta precípua do romance de parodiar sua épica, diversos especialistas em Joyce apontam Shakespeare como o autor mais aludido de sua obra.

Tratar da relação entre Shakespeare e Joyce implica em falar de vários temas que giram em torno da forma como esses dois autores incidem: as diferentes definições de intertextualidade literária; a questão da formação da tradição literária; e a relação entre autores do passado e do presente – vivos e mortos. T. S. Eliot, no conhecido ensaio "Tradição e Talento Individual", traça algumas noções de intertextualidade *avant la lettre*, isto é, antes que este conceito fosse cunhado e aprofundado por outros estudiosos: para Eliot, todo autor deve ter uma consciência histórica, isto é, consciência a respeito de seus precursores e de que os textos literários não existem de forma autônoma: toda obra pertence a uma tradição literária e coexiste de forma sincrônica com obras e autores do presente e do passado.

Harold Bloom, que dedicou um capítulo de seu *Cânone Ocidental* para tratar da relação agônica[1] entre Joyce e Shakespeare, aponta que as referências ao bardo – denominadas pelo estudioso como "obsessivas" – enxameiam tanto *Ulysses* quanto *Finnegans Wake*. (BLOOM, 2013, pp.393-4) Além disso, o crítico norte-americano considera que *Ulysses* como que "se fundou em um amálgama entre *Odisseia* e *Hamlet*" (BLOOM, 2013, p.412), situando a tragédia de Shakespeare no mesmo patamar de relevância da obra homérica. Sem dúvidas, dentre as peças shakespearianas referenciadas no romance, *Hamlet* ocupa um lugar de proeminência não apenas por

[1] Na concepção de Harold Bloom, Joyce e Shakespeare travam uma "luta canônica" pela centralidade na tradição literária em língua inglesa. As duas principais obras de Joyce, *Ulysses* e *Finnegans Wake*, são demonstrações claras da ambivalência joyciana em relação ao caráter precursor do dramaturgo inglês: "Se há um Espírito Santo em Ulisses nesse caso ele é Shakespeare, e se há alguma paternidade que seja uma ficção válida, então Joyce gostaria de se ver a si mesmo como filho de Shakespeare." (BLOOM, 2013, p.406)

surgir em maior proporção, mas também por ecoar de forma mais significativa no diálogo intertextual com as temáticas principais de *Ulysses*, como o tema da paternidade, a relação entre autor e obra, e a questão do adultério.

Conforme assinala John McCourt:

> In *Ulysses*, the force of Hamlet is felt in how Joyce explores the father-son relationship, themes of paternity and usurpation (literary and real), the subject of betrayal, the connections between a writer's biography and his written texts, and the question of belonging for a great "national" writer. (MCCOURT, 2015, p.73)

A partir da correlação entre essas noções temáticas que perfazem essa relação intertextual, este artigo discute a questão da recriação dos ecos, alusões e referências à peça *Hamlet* nas traduções brasileiras do romance *Ulysses*, de James Joyce. O recorte aqui escolhido se limitará à discussão de duas passagens do romance, ambas correlacionadas à questão do espectro na peça shakespeariana, com a finalidade de observar como os tradutores brasileiros recriaram esses elementos em seus respectivos textos de chegada. Os excertos em inglês provêm da edição da Random House, de 1986, conhecida como a *Gabler Edition*. As traduções que formam o corpus são as versões de Antônio Houaiss (Civilização Brasileira, 1966), Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro (Objetiva, 2005) e Caetano Galindo (Penguin/Companhia das Letras, 2012).

O Labirinto do Intertexto

O filósofo italiano Umberto Eco, no ensaio *O Antiporfírio* (1988), define três matrizes de labirinto: clássico/unicursal; barroco/maneirista e reticular/rizomático. O primeiro labirinto possui um caminho único, constituindo o que se denomina como o conhecimento universal; o segundo tipo de labirinto, por sua vez, possui pontos cegos e caminhos que levam a becos sem saída, correspondendo ao sistema binário dicotômico no qual se funda a escolha entre o certo e o errado. O terceiro labirinto, o rizomático, constitui a rede em que vários caminhos partem de origens distintas e se reencontram em variadas intersecções. Este tipo de labirinto resguarda um caráter de totalidade, englobando as categorias anteriores, ao passo em que também se trata de um antilabirinto, um labirinto total e paradoxal ao mesmo tempo, um "labirinto de identidades". A multiplicidade nesta categoria de labirinto é tamanha que induz a negação de sua própria identidade como labirinto. Atrás da concepção do labirinto, temos a ideia de tessitura, o fio tecido e oferecido por Ariadne[2].

O labirinto recriado no texto literário pode ser exemplificado na prosa do escritor argentino Jorge Luis Borges. No conto *Tiön, Uqbar, Orbius Tertius*, por exemplo, Borges monta um complexo labirinto em que se situa o protagonista na busca por uma obra perdida pelo

[2] A concepção de labirinto, no qual se busca neste artigo conectar às definições de tradução literária e intertextualidade, provém do mito grego no qual Teseu deve derrotar o Minotauro enclausurado por Minos, rei de Creta no labirinto erguido por Dédalo. Ariadne, filha de Minos, apaixona-se por Teseu e lhe fornece um novelo de lã que lhe auxilia para que retorne do labirinto após finalmente eliminar a criatura que nela habitava. (BRANDÃO, 1986; GRIMAL, 2013)

tempo que conta a história de um país fictício, ou um projeto de país a ser desenvolvido.

O conto já se inicia com a discussão de um romance de caráter labiríntico:

> "Demorou-nos uma longa polémica sobre a elaboração de um romance na primeira pessoa, cujo narrador omitisse ou desfigurasse os acontecimentos e incorresse em diversas contradições, que permitissem a poucos leitores – a pouquíssimos leitores – o adivinhar uma realidade atroz ou banal." (BORGES, 1995, p.10)

O labirinto borgiano entrega ao leitor o desafio de decifrar a obra, de buscar neste labirinto com vias e caminhos indefinidos os seus significados – labirinto este no qual é possível morrer.

O caráter labiríntico que permeia a interação texto-leitor na prosa borgiana pode se reproduzir na relação entre texto literário e tradutor. O tradutor, ao verter uma obra literária que propõe desafios estéticos substanciais, também se depara com uma espécie de labirinto, tendo em vista que se deve decidir entre diferentes caminhos que pode levar a diferentes conclusões e desfechos imprevisíveis. Dentre os caminhos que se desdobram no percurso labiríntico da tradução, surge a questão da intertextualidade do texto literário. Diante do tradutor, o intertexto consiste como um novo labirinto dentro da multiplicidade rizomática que consiste o processo tradutório. A intertextualidade situa o tradutor no entrelugar da obra a ser traduzida – o caminho principal do labirinto – e a obra referenciada a ser traduzida – o caminho que se desdobra dentro do próprio labirinto.

A intertextualidade não possui uma definição consensual na bibliografia dos estudos literários, sendo possível defini-la de variadas formas. Podemos retornar a Harold Bloom (1997) e sua angústia da influência para discutir a relação entre autores precursores e sucessores. De acordo com a sua teoria, o corpo da tradição literária é alimentado pelo constante embate advindo da relação agônica entre autores do passado e do presente – portanto, entre os vivos e os mortos. Esta concepção dialoga com o a ideia de tradição de Eliot anteriormente mencionada, embora esta propusesse uma relação mais harmônica entre os autores da mesma tradição. Se situarmos ambas as definições dentro de uma noção intermediária, chegamos à conclusão de que a tradição é o resíduo entre o que se escreve, se imita e permanece, consolidando-se no fio da história denominado tradição. Não se trata de negar a originalidade, mas de situar esta originalidade como tributária de algo precedente – o precursor – que incide de forma sincrônica no texto ao invés de diacrônica.

Este ideia dialoga com a noção de intertextualidade de Roland Barthes, que por sua vez se volta ao leitor, o receptor, como responsável por conferir unidade às citações que se inscrevem no texto literário: a intertextualidade neste sentido se volta ao seu destino, e não necessariamente à sua origem. Jonathan Culler, ao tratar da intertextualidade na literatura, fala do corpo intersubjetivo de conhecimento, ou seja, aquele conhecimento que se associa a uma memória cultural e coletiva que possibilita a leitura do intertexto, o acesso às citações e referências demarcadas no texto. Este aspecto da memória é essencial para compreender a intertextualidade, e se torna complexa quando tratamos desta noção na tradução, onde há um contato, um choque entre línguas e culturas diversas, entre contextos históricos diversos, conforme assinalado por Uwe Wirth:

"Translation is a process where different styles of thinking, different ways of speaking, different points of view on the world colide." (WIRTH, 2020, p.186) Cada tradução, portanto, além de estar situada em determinado contexto sociohistórico e se originar de diferentes projetos tradutórios, também reflete uma determinada ideia sobre como se deve traduzir literatura.

Tradução e (Re)Criação

Segundo Walter Benjamin, a tarefa do tradutor consiste em ressoar na língua de chegada o modo de intencionar do texto de partida. Em contraposição à concepção burguesa de linguagem, na qual esta serviria como instrumento precípuo de comunicação, Benjamin ressalta que o tradutor deve renunciar à transmissão do elemento comunicável/referencial do texto-fonte – pois esta tarefa já foi cumprida pelo autor – para dedicar-se a buscar o "modo de visar", isto é, transformar o simbolizante – o limite da linguagem – no simbolizado – o devir da linguagem. O tradutor deve, portanto, preocupar-se com a reconfiguração do "não comunicável" da obra de arte verbal

Haroldo de Campos define esta reconfiguração como transcriação, tratando o "modo de visar" benjaminiano como "modo de significar" ou "modo de intencionar". Campos recorre às formulações de Max Bense para apresentar a sua concepção de tradução como um processo de transcriação.

Erwin Theodor, em sua obra *Tradução: Ofício e Arte*, aponta a recriação como uma terceira via entre a tradução com intenções meramente reprodutivas do conteúdo da mensagem – o que corres-

ponde à visão burguesa de linguagem formulada pelo pensamento benjaminiano – e a versão, que constituiria um "trabalho de transposição, exato e artístico" (THEODOR, 1976, p.88), isto é, uma tradução artística que culminaria numa nova obra, ou "a forma iterativa da obra literária, sua repetição em outro idioma." (Idem, ibidem, p.93) A recriação, na concepção de Theodor, se situa na "região intermediária de obra criadora e de trabalho meramente reprodutivo" (THEODOR, 1976, p.96), equivalendo-se a uma espécie de adaptação ou paráfrase.

Para os fins deste artigo, compreende-se recriação como o equivalente à noção de transcriação formulada por Campos e a definição de versão, ou tradução artística, designada por Theodor.

Paulo Rónai, professor e tradutor que contribuiu decisivamente para a difusão da reflexão a respeito do processo tradutório no Brasil, em sua *Escola de Tradutores*, argumenta que não existe *a* boa tradução de uma obra original. A arte da tradução, na concepção de Rónai, possui caráter fundamentalmente empírico: "a tradução, entre nós, é ainda uma arte puramente empírica, cujos segredos cada tradutor tem que seguir por conta própria (e à custa de muitos leitores)" (RÓNAI, 1995, p.35). O leitor, neste sentido, também é um tradutor. O tradutor como leitor, portanto, deve percorrer os meandros do texto que ele traduz, buscando a reinterpretação do texto em virtude do surgimento de uma nova escrita: a tradução. A tradução é sempre outra. A reprodução literal do texto traduzido é um ideal que não se concretiza.

A Tradução do Intertexto em Ulysses: a Recriação do Espectro de Hamlet

A relação espectral na intertextualidade shakespeariana em James Joyce já fora discutida por outros pesquisadores. Benjamin Boysen (2005), partindo do pressuposto de que o acesso ao conhecimento de nossa própria natureza depende do acesso aos nossos precursores, concebe Shakespeare como um exemplo de precursor para Joyce, exercendo um limite sobre este. Esta relação entre autores do passado e do presente, entre vivos e mortos, constitui um caráter espectral na visão de Boysen. Diante do peso limitante advindo do espectro dos autores do passado, o artista do presente busca suplantar esse limite, utilizando-se da arte para substituir a fonte contingente de sua natureza (os precursores) com algo que seja de sua autoria.

Esta visão de Shakespeare como um espectro na obra de Joyce também ecoa em estudo conduzido por Fritz Senn, Jolanta Warwizicka e Veronika Kovacs. No artigo "Spectral Shakespeare in Ulysses Translations", os pesquisadores – especialistas em Joyce e nos estudos da tradução – observam de que forma as referências shakespearianas ressurgem em traduções de *Ulysses* para o alemão, o francês, o espanhol, o italiano, o polonês e o húngaro. Dentre as conclusões alcançadas, o trio de joycianos considera que as traduções muitas vezes não reverberam as alusões shakespearianas em sua plenitude, seja por conta de limitações linguísticas, seja em virtude da ausência de traduções canônicas da obra shakespeariana na língua/cultura de chegada, o que não necessariamente reduz a relevância da tradução:

> It is a commonplace that translations inevitably fall short, *Ulysses* contains vitally more Shakespeare than its translations can ever devise, not alone in quantity, the number of echoes, but above all in the dynamic reverberations within an intricate network." (SENN ET AL, 2016, p.151)

As características da cultura-alvo, portanto, também influenciam nesta reconstrução do Shakespeare de Joyce em outra língua. Conforme se observa nestes estudos relevantes sobre a relação Joyce/Shakespeare, o bardo possui um caráter espectral na obra do irlandês, sobretudo no que tange a peça *Hamlet*.

Com ênfase no caráter espectral que caracteriza a relação entre os dois autores no âmbito de suas obras literárias, discutiremos aqui duas passagens de *Ulysses* do capítulo "Telêmaco" que aludem ao tema do espectro. Vejamos como tais passagens foram vertidas pelos respectivos tradutores do romance: Antônio Houaiss (Civilização Brasileira, 1966); Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro (Objetiva, 2005) e Caetano Galindo (Penguin/Companhia das Letras, 2012). Cada tradução corresponde a determinado contexto sócio-histórico, além de se distinguirem pelos distintos perfis dos tradutores e seus diferentes projetos tradutórios. Traduzir é fundamental não apenas para aumentar o escopo de leitores em potencial da obra em questão, mas também contribuir para a sua expansão sob o viés da interpretação e da crítica, trazendo luz a outros aspectos. Neste sentido, tradução não constitui apenas recriação mas também crítica: trata-se da apresentação de uma nova perspectiva crítica sobre a obra e o autor.

Nossa primeira parada é no capítulo inicial de *Ulysses*: Telêmaco. Na telemaquia joyciana, formada pelos três primeiros capítulos do

romance, o protagonista é Stephen Dedalus. O cenário é a Martello Tower, uma torre de defesa desativada que serve para sua moradia, compartilhada com Buck Mulligan, estudante de medicina, e Haines, um inglês de Oxford interessado pela história e pela cultura irlandesa. O topo da Martello Tower, nas palavras de Haines, assemelha-se ao castelo de Elsinore. O cenário inicial de *Ulysses* ecoa o cenário predominante de *Hamlet*. O sobrenome de Stephen ecoa o labirinto do Minotauro e a questão da paternidade. Dédalo, de acordo com o mito grego, é o arquiteto do labirinto no qual ele mesmo se perdeu, além de ser sinônimo do próprio labirinto. (GRIMAL, 2013) Além disso, é o nome de um pai – o de Ícaro, que morreu ao voar muito próximo do sol. Stephen Dedalus é Hamlet, nome de um filho atormentado pelo fantasma do pai. Stephen Dedalus é atormentado pelo fantasma da mãe. No topo da Martello Tower, rememora-se de um sonho que teve com o fantasma de sua mãe:

> Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. *On me alone*. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down (JOYCE, 1986, pp.273-276; grifo nosso)

A passagem grifada é uma referência à seguinte fala de Horácio em *Hamlet*: "It beckons you to go away with it, / As if it some impartment did desire / To you alone." (*Ham*., vv.58-60) Nesta cena, o espectro do rei Hamlet surge para Horácio, Hamlet e os sentinelas Bernardo e Marcelo, e solicita que Hamlet o acompanhe. O espectro deseja estar a sós com Hamlet. *To you alone*, portanto,

remete ao momento de contato entre rei e filho. *On me alone* representa a forma como Stephen Dedalus reage perante o espectro da mãe. No caso, ele se refere sobretudo à forma como o espectro da mãe o olha, como se solicitasse algo dele, como estivesse tentando se comunicar com ele de alguma forma. Nas traduções em questão, a recriação consiste em reproduzir no contexto da prosa de Joyce a alusão à cena espectral em ambas as obras. O objetivo não é observar impropriedades linguísticas na tradução do trecho aludido, mas sim a presença ou a omissão de camadas profundas de significado provenientes da intersecção das duas obras. A descrição da figura espectral levada a cabo pelos tradutores é distinta, conforme pode-se verificar na tabela abaixo:

HOUAISS	Seus olhos perscrutadores, fixando-se-me da morte, para sacudir e dobrar a minha alma. Em mim sòmente. (p.12)
PINHEIRO	Seus olhos vidrados, fitando de dentro da morte, para sacudir e subjugar a minha alma. Só em mim. (p.35)
GALINDO	Seus olhos baços, fitando fixos, dentre os mortos, por abalar e dobrar minha alma. Só em mim. (p.107)

Na versão de Houaiss, temos "olhos perscrutadores", ou seja, olhos que penetram, que perguntam algo, aludindo à profundidade dos olhos do espectro. Quanto a "olhos vidrados" em Pinheiro, a imagem evocada é distinta: os olhos remetem à paralisia, a algo petrificado, aludindo à ideia de morte. Os "olhos baços" de Galindo, por sua vez, aludem à palidez, a algo que perdeu o brilho próprio, também consistindo na concepção de morte. Temos, portanto, um

contraste entre a tradução de Houaiss e as duas posteriores nesse sentido. Pinheiro e Galindo retomam o caráter mórbido e espectral de *glazing eyes*, contribuindo para formar o semblante da morte da cena.

Quanto à referência do trecho de *Hamlet*, a decisão de Houaiss para verter *On me alone* nos chama atenção por modificar o foco do objeto para o advérbio: "Em mim sòmente". Do ponto de vista sonoro, a centralidade se desloca para a circunstância na qual o objeto, e não para a unicidade do ser caracterizada pelo contexto: o fantasma de Hamlet tem interesse exclusivo em conversar com o filho, enquanto o alvo do espectro da mãe consiste no próprio filho na projeção inconsciente de seu sonho. A escolha pelo pronome oblíquo tônico por Pinheiro e Galindo conferem centralidade ao ser, ao objeto da ação, a figura do Stephen Dedalus: "Só em mim". Esta distinção do caráter tônico nas traduções desvela uma diferença significativa entre o inglês e o português no uso de pronomes, principalmente quanto à tradução de "alone", que também pode significar "sozinho" em sua versão mais literal. As escolhas de Pinheiro e Galindo atribuem maior enfoque à figura do Stephen Dedalus como alvo da aparição de sua mãe tal qual Hamlet era o alvo de seu pai, ambos evocando um elo de comunicação entre a vida e a morte.

Em *Proteu*, terceiro episódio do romance de Joyce, Stephen caminha por Sandymount Strand depois de encerrar seu expediente na escola em que leciona. Todo o episódio é constituído de um monólogo interior que preenche a sua caminhada a Dublin. Uma de suas variadas reflexões se origina quando ele avista a Martello Tower:

> Take all, keep all. My soul walks with me, form of forms. So in the moon midwatches I pace the path above the rocks, in sable silvered, hearing Elsinore's tempting flood (JOYCE, 1986, pp.279-281)

Esse trecho possui forte alusões a uma figura espectral, evocando referências às almas e à contraposição entre matéria e espírito. O caminhar sobre as rochas, o caminhar que se perfaz durante o próprio caminhar, configura uma ideia táctil, materializando uma imagem concreta que se contrapõe à ideia de espírito que permeia todo esse fragmento.

A expressão *sable silvered*, utilizada por Stephen Dedadus para descrever o solo sobre qual caminha, provém da peça shakespeariana, remetendo à descrição feita por Horácio a Hamlet sobre como aparentava a figura do pai – a única referência à forma do espectro em toda a peça:

> HAMLET
>
> His beard was grizzled, no?
>
> HORATIO
>
> It was as I have seen it in his life, a sable silvered
>
> (*Ham.*, vv.239-242)

Além da referência à aparência do espectro, a passagem resguarda outra alusão shakespeariana que remonta a outro instante do próprio romance: *Elsinore's tempting flood*. Esta referência a Elsinore traça um paralelo com a alusão evocada por Haines, o inglês

que compartilha o mesmo teto com Dedalus e Buck Mulligan nesta torre, no momento em que os três deixam o forte rumo à praia em "Telêmaco". Avistando a torre de seu exterior, Haines comenta a semelhança do lugar com o castelo do príncipe dinamarquês: "I mean to say, Haines explained to Stephen as they followed, this tower and these cliffs here remind me somehow of Elsinore. *That beetles o'er his base into the sea, isn't it?*" (JOYCE, 1986, pp.566-68). A passagem em destaque corresponde às palavras de Horácio no primeiro ato de *Hamlet*, no momento em que alerta o príncipe do perigo de ser atraído pelo fantasma do pai para as profundezas do mar que banha o castelo:

HORATIO

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,

Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff

That beetles o'er his base into the sea,

And there assume other horrible form

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,

And draw you into madness? Think of it-

The very place puts toys in desperation

Without more motive, into every brain

That looks so many fathoms to the sea

And hears it roar beneath.

(*Ham.*, vv.69-78)

Esta passagem da obra suscita discussões por conta das diferentes interpretações ocasionadas pelas diferenças entre as versões do segundo in-quarto, de 1604, e o Primeiro fólio.[3] O segundo *in-quarto* constitui a versão mais extensa da peça, abrangendo um total de 3.674 versos. A versão do *Folio*, por sua vez, omite 222 versos do segundo quarto e acrescenta 83 versos inéditos em relação às publicações anteriores. Dentre as omissões, os quatro versos finais da fala de Horácio referida acima, modificando decisivamente o tipo de alerta feito a Hamlet. Na concepção de Phillip Edwards, responsável pela edição da peça da coleção da New Cambridge Shakespeare, situa como efeito desta omissão uma alteração da percepção que se constrói sobre o poderio do espectro em causar danos à mente de Hamlet:

> This ominous introduction of theme of the tainted mind is much weakened by the continuation of the speech as it appears above, in which Horatio says that the place, not the Ghost, puts the ida of suicide into people's minds. Hamlet doesn't need a cliff to put thoughts of suicide into his head. (EDWARDS, 2003, p.13)

[3] Conforme tratado na subseção sobre Shakespeare no capítulo anterior, diversas peças shakespearianas circularam em formato in-quarto antes de sua publicação definitiva em 1623 – o First Folio. No caso de Hamlet, duas versões concorrem como as principais como parte do cânone: o segundo in-quarto (Q2), registrado na Stationer's Register de Londres em 1604 por James Roberts e Nicholas Ling em julho de 1602, supostamente por iniciativa da companhia teatral para impedir a circulação de versões não autorizadas da obra, e a própria versão reproduzida no Folio. Esta versão, embora apresente problemas em sua publicação, é considerada como base dos manuscritos perdidos do dramaturgo. Trata-se, portanto, de um esboço da cópia (fair copy) submetida pelo dramaturgo à companhia teatral (EDWARDS, 2003)

Diferentes versões de uma obra suscitam diferentes interpretações. De acordo com a leitura do Q2, o foco da fala do Horácio reside na torre. No caso do Folio, reside no fantasma. Ao citar as palavras de Horácio, Haines tem a intenção de exaltar a torre, destacando a sua presença na costa litorânea na qual se encontravam, da mesma forma que o castelo de Elsinore constituía uma presença significativa na costa dinamarquesa, consistindo não apenas como o núcleo do poder no contexto da peça mas também o centro de todos os eventos principais da trama. O simbolismo da natureza aterrorizante do mar possui relevância tanto na peça quanto na obra de Joyce, dialogando com os obstáculos enfrentados por Odisseu perante a fúria de Poseidon.

A torre em que moravam, portanto, repercute na memória de Haines, um inglês de Oxford, como o cenário de uma das obras mais significativas da literatura ocidental. Um contraste, no entanto, vem à tona: enquanto a citação de Haines remete à arquitetura e à estrutura física da torre e de sua presença perante o mar, o texto de Horácio se referia ao cume do penhasco, concentrando o temor quanto às reais intenções do espectro: "[...] the dreadful summit of the cliff / That beetles o'ver his base into the sea." (*Ham*., vv.48-53) A retórica de Horácio, portanto, não realça a grandeza do castelo mas a sua fragilidade diante do aterrorizante cume que sobressai em relação à base da sua construção. A fala de Haines, portanto, naturalmente se direciona aos cumes e as torres e a forma como estas se sobrepujam ao mar, criando uma atmosfera psicológica intensa que justificaria o "toys of desperation" do trecho omitido no *Folio*.

Vejamos os diferentes caminhos percorridos pelas traduções na recriação do intertexto hamletiano:

HOUAISS	Tomem tudo, retenham tudo. Minha alma caminha comigo, forma das formas. Assim aos meios-quartos da lua palmilho o trilho acima das rochas, em areia prateada, ouvindo a maré aliciante de Elsinore. (p.50)
PINHEIRO	Pegue tudo, fique com tudo. Minha alma caminha comigo, forma das formas. Assim sob as meias-vigílias da lua eu ando a passos largos pelo caminho acima das rochas, de areia prateada, ouvindo a torrente tentadora de Elsinore. (p.66)
GALINDO	Pegue tudo, fique com tudo. Minha alma caminha comigo, forma das formas. Assim nos turnos da lua transponho a trilha sobre as pedras, em sable argentado, ouvindo a maré tentadora de Elsinore. (p.151)

No caso de *sable silvered*, tanto Houaiss quanto Pinheiro optam por *areia prateada*, enquanto Galindo verteu para *sable argentado*. O uso de *areia prateada* constitui naturalmente uma descrição do caminho percorrido por Stephen. A camada shakespeariana, no entanto, acrescenta a alusão ao espectro do pai de Hamlet, situando Stephen como um fantasma perambulando uma trilha solitária, avistando de longe uma torre habitada por pessoas que ele despreza. Stephen aqui se reveste do caráter espectral, tomando consciência de sua alma como elemento que rege e orienta seu destino, sendo alma aqui entendida como sinônimo de mente – *My soul walks with me, form of forms*.[4]

[4] Form of forms se refere à metafísica aristotélica que defende a mente – no caso, a alma – como a força motriz do corpo. (GIFFORD E SEIDMAN, 1988, p.32)

No caso de Galindo, a descrição de Horácio é evocada pelo termo *sable*: ao mesmo tempo que sable é sinônimo de "saibro", um tipo de areia grossa encontrada em determinadas regiões litorâneas, também se refere à cor dos brasões negros na heráldica. Na peça shakespeariana, de acordo com Phillip Edwards, *sable silvered* significa "black touched with white" (EDWARDS, 2003, p.105), consistindo numa barba tom que mistura as cores preto e branco, resultando numa barba preta com detalhes prateados.

No caso de *Elsinore's tempting flood*, temos uma referência direta ao primeiro ato da peça no momento em que Hamlet vai ao encontro do espectro do pai. Nas traduções, temos o uso da palavra "maré" nas versões de Houaiss e Galindo, trazendo leveza a uma expressão que possui peso – afinal, a cena se trata de morte, ou da possibilidade da morte. Pinheiro, ao usar *torrente* para verter *flood*, transmite a carga de violência e abundância do termo em inglês. Horácio, no entanto, quis dizer que o fantasma poderia conduzir Hamlet em direção ao mar, e não o mar que conduziria Hamlet. Temos uma diferença interpretativa que se relaciona também com as diferentes versões de Hamlet.

Considerações Finais

Este artigo buscou apresentar, sob o viés da tradução da intertextualidade como um labirinto que se dobra em outro labirinto, a possibilidade da recriação do intertexto em suas variadas formas. No caso da obra *Ulysses* e na sua relação intertextual com Shakespeare, especialmente no caso singular de *Hamlet*, a presença de Shakespeare possui um caráter espectral devido ao seu viés oculto e fragmentado.

Essa forma de se apresentar na obra de Joyce, e a apropriação que Joyce faz da peça de Shakespeare para produzir determinados efeitos de significado em seu romance, se torna ainda mais complexo no processo tradutório.

Ainda há mais a se investigar nos estudos da tradução quanto à (im)possibilidade de recriar o intertexto na língua de chegada. A reflexão de Haroldo de Campos sobre a tradução como recriação – ou transcriação – constitui um modo de discutir este aspecto sem incidir no lugar-comum da equivalência, além de reverter a problemática da ausência de traduções canônicas de Shakespeare em nossa cultura. Traduzir é recriar, é criar um novo texto – e, portanto, um novo intertexto.

A relação entre Joyce e Shakespeare é um campo de investigação que abre muitas possibilidades de reflexão e discussão. Apesar da vasta bibliografia a respeito dessa conexão, o estudo sobre a presença de Shakespeare através das traduções para outras línguas ainda carece de mais bibliografia. A discussão aqui proposta compõe uma pesquisa que trata de *Hamlet* nas traduções brasileiras de *Ulysses*.

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A Primavera dos Sistemas de Mundo: Yeats, Bataille e as Semiotizações do Ocultismo

Alcebiades Diniz Miguel

Aquilo que, em Patmos, foi uma visão, será realidade algum dia:
perceberemos com nitidez o sol negro
como um saco de crina, a lua de sangue, as estrelas caindo como figos,
o sol afastando-se como um pergaminho que se enrola.
(Desgarradura, E. M. Cioran)

Introdução: a Percepção de W. H. Auden

Em 1948, o poeta W. H. Auden publicou um breve ensaio na revista *The Kenyon Review* intitulado "Yeats as an Example". A abertura do ensaio já coloca a questão em termos de antagonismo e crítica para com esse outro poeta, Yeats, cujo nome surge estampado no

título, ainda que não necessariamente por questões poéticas, mas por certas opiniões – ou, para ser mais exato, por certas visões: "Uma desvantagem (...) em exercer qualquer arte é que se torna muito difícil apreciar as obras de outros artistas, vivos ou mortos, simplesmente por si mesmas." (AUDEN, 1948, p. 187). E qual seria o ponto controverso, tendo em vista que Auden logo admite ser Yeats "um precursor cuja importância ninguém poderia negar" (AUDEN, 1948, p. 188)? Isso é esclarecido de forma direta, após um relativamente longo preâmbulo no qual Auden estabelece a importância (e a influência) de Yeats em sua própria poesia e a complexidade em se avaliar as posturas de outros autores como ele mesmo: "Preciso começar com o elemento [da obra de Yeats] que nos parece mais estranho: sua cosmologia, sua preocupação com o ocultismo" (AUDEN, idem, ibidem, grifo nosso). Astutamente, Auden deixa a posição de um poeta que compartilharia das percepções de um colega (ou antes, de um "precursor"), posição sustentada nos três longos parágrafos iniciais de seu texto, que lhe serviram de preâmbulo, para se deslocar até a posição de leitor, pelo uso desse pronome no plural, nos (em inglês *us*), que parece designar uma ampla de comunidade cujo bom senso vê como estranheza a "cosmologia" e a "preocupação com o ocultismo" de Yeats. Para concluir essa linha de pensamento, Auden escolhe a obra mais conhecida e mais concentrada de Yeats abordando questões ocultistas: "embora quase não exista versos na atualidade em que a influência de seu estilo e ritmo não seja detectável, todo um lado de Yeats, o lado resumido em *A Vision*, praticamente não deixou vestígios." (AUDEN, idem, ibidem)

A diatribe de Auden prossegue, revelando em sua crítica o desdém por uma visão que considera pertencente à "classe

média-baixa" (*lower-middle class*) e que seria, portanto, indigno de um poeta do nível de Yeats:

> Como *pôde* Yeats, com sua grande apreciação estética da aristocracia, das casas ancestrais, da tradição cerimoniosa, adotar algo tão essencialmente de classe média baixa – ou, devo dizer, do sul da Califórnia – , tão inelutavelmente associado a casas suburbanas e rostos que são bem pouco atraentes? (AUDEN, 1948, 188-189, grifo do autor)

A perspectiva de Auden possui um evidente elemento de preconceito, mascarado em suas camadas superficiais de ironia; mas, de qualquer forma, representa uma visão das classes mais altas, iluminadas pelo conhecimento racional, diante da irracionalidade cotidiana das massas. Theodor Adorno, em 1951 – ou seja, mais ou menos à mesma época do texto de Auden – , na sexta tese de seu célebre ensaio "Theses Against Occultism", publicado originalmente em seu conjunto de ensaios e aforismos (e ensaios aforísticos) de título *Minima Moralia*, afirmaria: "Ocultismo é a metafísica para estúpidos." (ADORNO, 2002, p. 130). De fato, o aspecto regressivo, irracionalista e reativo do ocultismo parece evidente para qualquer um fora de sua ampla *comunidade linguística*, para qualquer um distante daqueles que aderem e seguem a pletora de formas de pensamento, intuições e concepções advindas do ocultismo; e tais aspectos impulsionam a esfera discursiva do ocultismo para um campo sombrio e autoritário. Contudo, o próprio Adorno reconhece que a superstição em torno do ocultismo "é conhecimento, porque percebe, como uma unidade, as cifras da destruição espalhadas pela

superfície social" (ADORNO, idem, ibidem). O maior problema dessa tendência, na visão de Adorno, era sua positividade final, sua busca por sentido na forma de ilusões. Nem Auden, nem Adorno consideravam o ocultismo desde uma perspectiva contracultural, mas apenas de uma perspectiva associal; talvez, levar em conta a *negatividade* possível desse campo discursivo explique experiências como a de Yeats ou Bataille.

Voltaremos a esses tópicos em breve; é necessário, antes, destacar que essa visão está longe de ser acurada – especialmente se aplicada à época em que Yeats desenvolveu seu interesse pelo oculto, na passagem do século XIX para o XX. Segundo Alex Owen, uma tendência geral se formou, na década de 1890, voltada a formatos de "espiritualidade esotérica", com a "proliferação de grupos espiritualistas e outras identidades que, reunidas, constituíram aquilo que os contemporâneos chamavam de novo 'movimento espiritual do período'" (OWEN, 2004, p.4). Tratava-se, ainda segundo Owen, de uma visão espiritual refinada, que atraía pessoas das classes médias e altas, com interesses eruditos e bastante incomuns para uma época conhecida por seu materialismo, interesses que incluíam filosofias esotéricas dos mais variados tipos, do paganismo grego à mística cristã, das tradições herméticas às religiosidades orientais.

O auge desse movimento, sem dúvida, foram as conferências de William Ralph Inge, realizadas na Universidade de Oxford em 1899, sobre as relações entre misticismo cristão e os mistérios do paganismo grego. Inge era um religioso anglicano e professor de teologia em Cambridge, bastante reconhecido, em termos acadêmicos, na sua época. Chegou a ser decano da catedral de St. Paul em 1911, algo que indica muito bem sua posição dentro da tradicional

e conservadora sociedade britânica. Tais conferências – conhecidas como "Inge's Bamptons" – não apenas marcaram a aproximação das formulações esotéricas presentes no esoterismo de um grupo muito mais amplo e não-iniciado, mas também o auge do reconhecimento e adesão, em termos sociais, ao "novo movimento espiritual" da época na Grã-Bretanha (OWEN, 2004, p.21). E esse é um panorama geral da Europa nesse período histórico: na França, por exemplo, em meados dos anos 1850, os discursos ocultistas pareciam circular nas esferas de discursos e grupos socialistas – alimentando também interesses próximos –, o que significava, para esse ocultismo francês, uma busca por alternativas ao "materialismo" e ao "ateísmo" presentes no socialismo de modo geral. (STRUBE, 2017, p.570)

Como demonstramos rapidamente nos parágrafos anteriores, o ocultismo gera impressões e reações relacionadas tanto às suas limitações quanto a um tipo de paródia do conhecimento e da apreciação estética *reais* (para Auden), ou como uma forma ela mesma de conhecimento e apreciação estética de formato *contracultural*, como no movimento de retomada de modelos espirituais e esotéricos na virada do século XIX para o XX (com reflexos posteriores, já adentrando os anos 1930-40 e a Segunda Guerra Mundial). Os *sistemas* de pensamento desenvolvidos tanto por W. B. Yeats quanto por Georges Bataille, abordados em nosso artigo, foram ambos marcados por elementos de ocultismo, explorando possibilidades discursivas únicas desse estranho campo cultural, como veremos posteriormente. Mas, antes, é preciso determinar e refinar aquilo que entendemos como ocultismo em termos discursivos, e como o sentido surge nesse universo específico.

A Isotopia do Ocultismo

Os discursos produzidos na esfera do assim chamado "ocultismo" possuem uma multiplicidade e uma complexidade que costumam ser ignorados à primeira vista – como está demonstrado pela visão expressa por um poeta como Auden a respeito de Yeats e seu *A Vision*. Em primeiro lugar, trata-se de um campo discursivo muito amplo, atravessado por diferentes formas discursivo-narrativas, todas elas marcadas por desdobramentos estilísticos que incluem matrizes históricas e elementos linguísticos específicos para a obtenção de certo *efeito*. Mencionemos um exemplo: entre os materiais ocultistas publicados pela editora especializada Black Letter Press[1], temos grimórios[2], ensaios (de Yeats, inclusive), astronomia, folclore, poesia, livros de filosofia de Giordano Bruno e

[1] Segundo o *press release* sobre a editora, disponível em seu site, ela foi fundada em Turim, com a publicação de uma nova edição de *Natural Magick* de Giambattista della Porta, para depois se deslocar até as proximidades de Hannover, na Alemanha. Nesse mesmo *press release*, o resumo dos lançamentos da editora é quase um sumário das diferentes formulações literárias e discursivas que atravessam o campo do ocultismo: "Somos especializados na recuperação de livros raros e antigos em um amplo escopo de tópicos, que incluí ciências e história da ciência, poesia, filosofia do ocultismo, arte, literatura singular e pouco usual, além de muitos outros." Ver: https://www.blackletter-press.com/about-blp.

[2] Um grimório é, essencialmente, um florilégio de feitiços e rituais atribuídos, em geral, a fontes ancestrais e/ou clássicas, da antiguidade hebraica, egípcia ou greco-romana. "Gênero" por excelência do ocultismo, os grimórios, surgidos na Baixa Idade Média e no Renascimento, nos permitem uma percepção bastante complexa das sociedades por essa época. Como diz Stephen Orgel, citando Mowat, os grimórios indicam uma materialidade nítida nas práticas de magia na época de Shakespeare, por exemplo, uma magia que não era (apenas) metáfora para alguma outra coisa (ORGEL, 2017, p.80).

publicações próximas de crenças *wicca*. Tudo realizado com grande refinamento editorial, dos originais escolhidos para tradução/edição ao acabamento do livro final.

Nesse sentido, é bastante interessante uma espécie de "tentativa de sistematização" dos discursos e dos saberes para produção/compreensão de tais discursos que surge em determinado momento do romance *O Pêndulo de Foucault* (1988), de Umberto Eco. O trecho está repleto de ácida ironia, sem dúvida, mas reflete uma visão sistematizadora de discursos; tal possibilidade de construção de uma totalidade coerente em termos discursivos não deixa de atrair um estudioso da semiótica e da semiologia, como era o caso de Eco. Como esse discurso costuma ocorrer em uma plataforma específica – o livro, com toda a carga simbólica possível – temos, em *O Pêndulo de Foucault*, essa tentativa de sistematização justamente quando um dos personagens apresenta um projeto para uma série de livros sobre o ocultismo a ser publicada pela editora fictícia que surge no livro. O trecho é longo, mas bastante instrutivo:

> Pois bem, o leitor ideal de uma coleção deste gênero deveria ser um adepto da Rosa-Cruz, e portanto um conhecedor *in magiam, in necromantiam, in astrologiam, in geomantiam, in pyromantiam, in hydromantiam, in chaomantiam, in medicinam adeptam*, para citar o livro de Azoth – aquele que foi ofertado por uma criança misteriosa ao Estauróforo, como se relata no *Raptus Philosophorum*. Mas o conhecimento do adepto deve abarcar outros campos, como a fisiognosia, que diz respeito à física oculta, estática, dinâmica e cinemática, astrologia ou biologia esotérica, e o estudo dos espíritos da natureza, zoologia hermética e astrologia biológica. Ajunte a cosmognosia, que estuda a astrologia mas sob o prisma astronômico,

> cosmológico, fisiológico, ontológico, ou a antropognosia, que estuda a anatomia homológica, as ciências divinatórias, a fisiologia fluídica, a psicurgia, a astrologia social e o hermetismo da história. Depois vêm as matemáticas qualitativas, ou seja como o senhor bem sabe a aritmologia... Mas os conhecimentos preliminares postulariam a cosmografia do invisível, o magnetismo, as auras, os sons, os fluidos, psicometria e clarividência – e em geral o estudo dos outros cinco sentidos hiperfísicos – para não falarmos de astrologia horoscópica, que já é uma degeneração do saber quando não levada a efeito com as devidas precauções – e depois a fisiognômica, leitura do pensamento, artes divinatórias (tarô, interpretação dos sonhos) até os graus superiores como a profecia e o êxtase. (ECO, 2016, pp.274-275).

Diante do rol elencado por Eco, torna-se evidente que, para compreender em que local situar produções originais como *A Vision* de Yeats ou as ações do grupo *Acéphale*, de Bataille, no universo do ocultismo, necessitaremos de uma terminologia adequada para a descrição de um campo de tal complexidade e amplitude. Poderíamos nos voltar para a categorização oferecida pelo conceito de gênero, buscando centrar nosso foco apenas na questão taxonômica e classificatória. Essa abordagem, que parece ter a vantagem de seguir certa "naturalidade" do texto e de corresponder a uma tradição que recua a Platão e Aristóteles (embora tenha se consolidado com o "estudo das formas" a partir de Goethe e do romantismo). Consideramos, contudo, tal abordagem problemática não apenas tendo em vista nosso objeto (obras específicas de Yeats e Bataille, no quadro geral do ocultismo, embora representando outros sentidos filosóficos e poéticos) mas por conta do furor classificatório que teorizações genéricas costumam incluir. De um ponto de

vista epistemológico, é razoável a busca pelas sucessivas "casas", correspondentes aos diferentes gêneros, nos quais encaixar obras muitas vezes pertencentes a diferentes contextos sociais e históricos; mas essa razoabilidade implica em uma simplificação da própria obra classificada, uma vez que sua tipificação não representa – muitas vezes sequer supõem – outras possibilidades de sentido possíveis. Como escreveu Gérard Genette, o trabalho com gêneros desloca-se do campo dedutivo ao indutivo, em que a própria estrutura classificatória "alimenta" a si mesmo em um perpétuo movimento de *Ouroboros*:

> Não existe nível genérico que possa ser decretado mais "teórico", ou que possa ser atingido por um método mais "dedutivo" que os outros: todas as espécies, todos os sub-géneros, géneros ou super-géneros são classes empíricas, estabelecidas por observação do dado histórico, ou, no limite, por extrapolação a partir desse dado, isto é, por um movimento dedutivo sobreposto a um primeiro movimento sempre indutivo e analítico, como bem se vê nos quadros (explícitos ou virtuais) de Aristóteles e de Frye, onde a existência de uma casa vazia (narrativa cómica, intelectual-extrovertida) ajuda a descobrir um género ("parodia", "anatomia") de outro modo votado à imperceptibilidade. (GENETTE, 1987, p. 80-81).

Assim, ao optarmos por não trabalhar com gêneros e suas subdivisões[3], a necessidade de delimitação de um vasto campo

[3] Um dos personagens mais diretamente ligados ao oculto nesse romance que, na verdade, poder-se-ia considerar uma longa reflexão narrativa a respeito das muitas formulações da isotopia ocultista, afirma essa natureza não-genérica desse tipo de discurso: "'Oh', sorriu ainda Agliè, 'não se trata de um gênero. É um saber.'" (ECO, 2016, 303)

discursivo e poético exige que testemos outras soluções. Uma possibilidade que se apresenta é o uso do conceito de *isotopia*, conforme a definição usual da semiótica greimasiana. O périplo desse termo no interior da semiótica é longo, da química à estruturação dos classemas (ou seja, cadeias sintagmáticas), e desse ponto inicial ao desenvolvimento posterior, relacionado à "recorrência de categorias sêmicas", foi um longo caminho (GREIMAS e COURTÉS, 1989, p.245). Da mesma forma, a implementação semiótica da nomenclatura "isotopia" permite um refinamento na análise de elementos complexos em dados discursos que a análise com base no quadro conceitual classificatório, relacionado ao gênero, não permite; assim, partindo das categorias fornecidas pela semântica discursiva, é possível realizar uma oposição entre elementos pertencentes às isotopias figurativas de outras, temáticas:

> Desse ponto de vista, baseando-se na oposição reconhecida – no quadro da semântica discursiva – entre o componente figurativo e componente temático, distinguir-se-ão correlativamente isotopias figurativas, que sustentam as configurações discursivas, e isotopias temáticas, situadas em um nível mais profundo, conforme o percurso gerativo. (GENETTE, 1987, p.246, grifos do autor).

A escolha dessa abordagem isotópica desse amplo campo discursivo do ocultismo, por outro lado, representa uma aproximação com os estudos pioneiros a respeito do discurso do oculto, realizados por Santo Agostinho em sua análise sobre as formas discursivas da magia em sua época. Agostinho foi pioneiro em reconhecer no ocultismo uma congregação em termos linguísticos – uma

comunidade que compartilha e comunga não apenas de valores e ideologia, mas de uma *linguagem* comum: assim, na "teoria agostiniana, signos significam algo para alguém; os alguéns que concordam com esse significado constituem uma comunidade (linguística)." (MARKUS, 1994, p.381). Para Agostinho, essa noção de comunidade era tão coesa, que aderir a tal tipo discurso relacionado ao ocultismo já significa estabelecer "pactos" com seres demoníacos (MARKUS, 1994, p.382). De qualquer forma, ao trabalharmos com a noção de isotopia, pretendemos nos aproximar dessa visão mais complexa, que implica em interações sociais e na recepção de um leitor, no caso dos discursos produzidos na esfera do ocultismo.

Como é possível depreender das observações tanto de W. H. Auden quanto de Umberto Eco, o campo discursivo do ocultismo possui uma composição complexa, em que existe um conflito entre definições usuais de cultura e conhecimento e aquilo que está em reconhecimento, nesses termos, dentro de tal campo discursivo: o ocultismo gera um "conhecimento" dentro de si mesmo, e esse saber recebe uma sanção tanto no interior do campo ocultista quanto em seu exterior, por discursivos avaliativos e irônicos, como os de Auden e de Eco. Ao trabalharmos aquilo que denominaremos "isotopia do ocultismo", será possível perceber de forma mais refinada essa dualidade, assim como outras, relacionadas à estruturação discursiva dos textos ocultistas, nos quais justamente o conhecimento possui uma articulação em que predomina o mistério e a revelação. Nesse sentido, contudo, é necessário um passo metodológico adicional – pois essas complexas dualidades geram conflitos entre a recepção e a difusão dos textos, ou até mesmo entre a autoria, composição e objetivos de tal material discursivo. Todos esses elementos, que se estabelecem em um quadro tensional, produzem efeitos bastante

específicos que necessitam de ferramentas igualmente únicas para análise. Mas antes, precisaremos caracterizar melhor as estruturas da isotopia ocultista; como ultrapassa o escopo deste trabalho um estudo pormenorizado de tal isotopia, nosso foco será em elementos gerais, úteis para a compreensão das estratégias de discurso e narrativa empregadas em *A Vision* e *Acéphale*.

Tradições, Mistérios, Exegese

Em termos discursivos, a isotopia ocultista se estabelece em uma estrutura tríplice, que possui desdobramentos tanto figurativos quanto temáticos. Há, em primeiro lugar, o *mistério*; o ocultismo se assenta em uma espécie muito menos determinada de "saber", que oferece ao seu leitor um potencial de "poder" muito mais obscuro e por isso mesmo muito mais amplo – daí a infinidade de saberes, técnicas e possibilidades oferecidas pelos textos ocultistas, efetivos e obscuros, reais e imaginários, que vão da telepatia à descoberta de conspirações secretas no seio da sociedade organizada. Tanto o aspecto discursivo/temático quanto narrativo/figurativo do ocultismo necessitam, assim, do *mistério* como um impulso necessário para um conhecimento que não pode ser fornecido de outra forma, apenas nos quadros desse mesmo universo de sentido, através da busca de outras obras sempre relacionadas ao mistério inerente ao nosso mundo. Tal *mistério*, ao final, não parece ser passível de resolução, embora assim pareça, algo que permite a expansão discursiva da isotopia discursiva e mesmo o surgimento de tipos específicos de textos que, de fato, poderíamos até mesmo chamar *gêneros*, como o grimório, o ensaio ocultista, o comentário e a visão. Portanto,

existiriam portas de acesso, conhecimentos prévios (como indicado na citação mencionada por Umberto Eco) e até mesmo a formação de uma comunidade de leitores ampla, que se reconhecem pela busca de ampliação do acesso ao mistério essencial, que evidentemente nunca será completamente revelado, o motor desse tipo de isotopia. Assim, o *mistério* impulsiona outro elemento essencial da estrutura tríplice que mencionamos: a *tradição*.

Na isotopia ocultista, *tradição* deve ser entendida como uma forma de continuidade discursiva em uma longa cadeia, que conecta a atualidade com um passado consideravelmente remoto. Por conta da já mencionada multiplicidade e de seu caráter misterioso, o saber proposto pela isotopia ocultista precisa se apoiar necessariamente na busca de tradições do passado, fornecedoras de legitimidade. Talvez a maior fonte dessa *tradição* ocultista seja o *Corpus Hermeticum*, conjunto de textos filosófico-religiosos escritos em grego, de datação incerta, atribuídos a um sábio lendário, Hermes Trismegisto. Em 1471, o filósofo renascentista Marcílio Ficino publicaria sua tradução para o latim do *Corpus*, com o título de *Pimander*. Ficino estabeleceu, de forma contemporânea, certa noção que parece remontar a filósofos neoplatônicos como Proclo: a noção de que haveria uma *tradição* filosófico-religiosa ancestral, transmitida por sábios como Hermes, batizada de *prisca theologia* (teologia ancestral), comprovação para certas noções religiosas que estariam em gestação mesmo em antigas ou culturalmente distantes tradições pagãs. No prefácio de sua tradução, Ficino fez algumas afirmações a respeito de Hermes Trismegisto e de sua sapiência, que exemplificam muito bem a essência de *tradição* dentro da isotopia ocultista:

> Ele foi o primeiro entre os filósofos a passar da física e da matemática à contemplação das coisas divinas. Ele foi o primeiro a debater com a máxima sabedoria da majestade de Deus a natureza dos demônios e mutações das almas. Ele foi então chamado de Primeiro Teólogo. E Orfeu o seguiu, assumindo a segunda posição em teologia antiga. Aglaophemus teve sua iniciação nos mistérios sagrados de Orfeu. Pitágoras sucedeu Aglaophemus na teologia e foi sucedido por Philolaus, que foi professor do divino Platão. Assim surgiu um caminho de teologia antiga composta por seis teólogos em maravilhosa sucessão, começando com Mercurius e sendo concluída com o divino Platão. (FICINO NOVUS apud PLÁCIDO, 2021).

Não é difícil perceber como esses dois elementos, o *mistério* e a *tradição*, se conjugam, na isotopia ocultista, para a construção das concepções de iniciação e da diferença entre iniciado e leigo. Mas uma análise nessa direção ultrapassaria, e muito, o escopo deste artigo. Direcionaremos nossos esforços, portanto, em outra direção; pois há um terceiro elemento na isotopia ocultista que ainda falta tratar, um elemento diretamente relacionado tanto à *produção textual* propriamente dita dessa isotopia quanto aos *processos interpretativos* dos postulados colocados pelos elementos anteriores, *tradição* e *mistério*: a *exegese*. Dentro do fluxo de discursos ocultistas é a *exegese*, o movimento interpretativo, que possibilita o nascimento da autoria, o momento em que o texto produzido deixa de ser descrição ou esforço classificatório e de coleção, para se tornar um *outro* texto, de um autor específico. É necessário, neste ponto, mencionar como a estratégia da coleção é importante na isotopia ocultista – alguns de seus mais notáveis livros, como o já mencionado *Corpus Hermeticum*, são essencialmente coletâneas de

textos diversos, enquanto os grimórios, um gênero muito peculiar dentro de tal isotopia, são simplesmente registros sistemáticos de diferentes rituais e encantamentos. Assim, é no campo da *exegese* que rupturas podem surgir, bem como divergências – pois as disputas em torno da tradição e do mistério é que permitem o deslocamento discursivo do ocultismo da regularidade na produção de discursos semelhantes para a multiplicidade da diferença entre interpretações e formas discursivas, essencial para a expansão de ocultismo para além de suas fronteiras de formações como o discurso das teorias conspiratórias ou da religiosidade específica. As rupturas existentes em produções mais ou menos dentro dessa isotopia, como as duas que nos propomos a analisar, surgem justamente nos limites do elemento que denominamos *exegese*.

Nesse ponto, torna-se bastante claro que a isotopia ocultista se baseia em um conflito entre a estabilidade da *tradição* e a mudança potencial da *exegese*, tendo o *mistério* como um tipo de mediação ou, melhor dizendo, um *definidor*, um elemento aspectual que dota os outros elementos de sua forma discursiva mais definitiva e concreta embora seja, ele mesmo, um elemento de formação nesse discurso. Começamos a perceber como a isotopia ocultista se movimenta e transforma, de maneira bastante intrincada. É o momento de invocarmos uma abordagem metodológica complementar, surgida também do campo da semiótica; trata-se da oposição pervir/sobrevir, construída no interior da semiótica tensiva, proposta por Claude Zilberberg. Trata-se de uma perspectiva bastante interessante para se aplicar a um campo complexo como o do ocultismo, por sua capacidade de registrar nuances complexas a partir de uma noção de "modo de eficiência" discursiva, tendo em vista categorias definidoras como andamento, temporalidade e número (ZILBEBERG, 2011,

pp.271-272). Veremos a aplicação dessa ferramenta às formas discursivas de Yeats e Bataille a seguir.

Os Sistemas de Yeats e Bataille

Em seu tratado *Elementos de Semiótica Tensiva*, Claude Zilberberg destinou o final para um pequeno glossário dos termos mais complexos – e mais empregados – da singular percepção que tal autor teve desse grande projeto de se estabelecer uma "semiótica do sensível", em muitos níveis e formas. No verbete *pervir*, Zilberberg utiliza como exemplo a oposição jogo/trabalho. Para tanto, um exemplo retirado dos diários Baudelaire é empregado:

> O trabalho, força progressiva e cumulativa, que traz dividendos como o capital, tanto nas faculdades como nos resultados.
>
> O jogo, mesmo dirigido pela ciência, força intermitente, será vencido, por mais rentável que seja, pelo trabalho, por menor que seja, desde que contínuo. (ZILBERGERG, 2011, p.271).

No processo de apreciação dos muitos produtos de uma isotopia semiótica – e se existe uma que seja ampla e *produtiva*, essa é a do ocultismo – a tensão entre trabalho e jogo é constante; representando o campo do jogo justamente obras que fogem da padronização para qual pende tanto a forma quanto o conteúdo de tal isotopia. Tal padronização, o *trabalho*, corresponde à repetição dos elementos da tradição, percebida sempre como ancestral, além da tentativa de garantir uma integridade discursiva que garanta, ao

leitor, o conforto e a segurança de suas concepções pré-concebidas. Com *A Vision* e *Acéphale*, estamos justamente no domínio do jogo, nos termos dessa tensão, estabelecida por Zilberberg, entre a continuidade perpétua de discursos semelhantes e reafirmadores e a ruptura pela descoberta ou proposição de outras possibilidades a partir, aparentemente, do mesmo *continuum* discursivo.

Assim, será necessário observar detidamente um momento específico de *A Vision*, para perceber sua complexidade tanto figurativa quanto temática. Assim, o tratado de Yeats (em sua última versão, de 1937[4], que será a base de nosso *corpus* de pesquisa) já apresenta uma dificuldade conceitual na própria organização do livro, que se apresenta ao leitor familiarizado com a isotopia do ocultismo de forma críptica: é difícil encaixar, no amplo leque de gêneros empregados usualmente por tal isotopia, as primeiras partes do livro, por exemplo. A primeira parte, denominada "A Packet for Ezra Pound" (literalmente "Um pacote para Ezra Pound"), começa com um texto fragmentário, sendo que o primeiro fragmento parece simplesmente descrever a cidade de Rapallo, na qual Pound residia desde 1924. Essa primeira parte, aliás, chegou a ser publicada por uma *private press* em 1929, em edição limitada. Segundo Margaret Mills Harper e Catherine E. Paul, responsáveis pela edição mais recente de *A Vision* ("versão B"), embora "'A Packet' seja nitidamente focado no significado das relações literárias de WBY [Yeats] e Pound para ele [Yeats], as revelações a respeito de *A Vision* captaram a atenção dos críticos." (HARPER e PAUL, 2015, p.xxxv).

[4] *A Vision* teve duas edições: a primeira, de 1925, em geral conhecida como "versão A"; e a segunda, de 1937, a "versão B".

E a estranheza prossegue com a segunda parte, "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends", uma singularíssima ficção epistolar em que a própria noção de autoria parece se perder em uma floresta de nomes, denominações e símiles. E a terceira, "The Phases of the Moon", traz um diálogo teatral entre dois personagens do segmento anterior, Aherne e Robartes. A abordagem que adentra de fato aquilo que consideramos isotopia ocultista se encontra na quarta parte, em que há uma segmentação de *A Vision* em "livros". Para as editoras Margaret Mills Harper e Catherine E. Paul, em *A Vision* ("versão A"), de 1925, "tais dispositivos de estruturação em moldura jogam com noções de autoria, além de embaralhar as linhas entre ficção e realidade, sempre com *humor*." (Idem, ibidem, p. xxxvii, grifo nosso). Na quarta parte do livro, adentramos em um terreno discursivo mais próximo do ocultismo; mas, na verdade, trata-se de um segmento bastante complexo por si mesmo, em que elementos de uma reconhecível tradição próxima ao oculto se entrecruzam com outras referências, advindas da filosofia, da literatura e da observação sistemática da realidade. A sabida natureza mediúnica do texto não transparece imediatamente nessas primeiras páginas, algo que, igualmente, afasta *A Vision* desse tipo peculiar de literatura ditada aos médiuns por espíritos.

Nesse momento, talvez valha a pena nos debruçarmos no primeiro fragmento de "Book I: The Great Wheel", para que seja possível a compreensão dos mecanismos peculiares empregador por Yeats (e por sua esposa, Georgie) a partir da isotopia ocultista como a definimos até o momento:

> "Quando a Discórdia", escreve Empédocles, "caiu nas profundezas do vórtice" – o limite extremo, não o centro, aponta Burnet – "a Concórdia atingiu o centro, o ponto em que todos os elementos se unem para que se tornem apenas um, não de uma só vez, mas gradualmente, a partir de diferentes quadrantes, de forma que, conforme surgem, a Discórdia se retira para o limite extremo... na proporção em que se esgota, a Concórdia flui em uma corrente suave, imortal e ilimitada." E novamente: "Em nenhum momento, o ilimitado tempo se verá esvaziado desse par; e eles prevalecem, por sua vez, à medida que o mencionado círculo se fecha, e desaparecem, uma e depois a outra, e ampliam sua intensidade no turno determinado". Foi esta Discórdia ou Guerra que Heráclito chamou de "Deus de todos e Pai de todos, alguns daí perceberam deuses; alguns, outros homens; outros, escravidão; e alguns, liberdade", e recordo que o Amor e a Guerra vieram dos ovos de Leda. (YEATS, 2015, p. 49)

Aqui temos um trecho de considerável complexidade, construído apenas em torno de uma longa citação de Empédocles na tradução em inglês de Burnet, que serve de preparação para as longas digressões quase poéticas do texto em torno de vértices, cones e rotações, em que as citações parecem seguir o próprio fluxo poético do texto e dos *diálogos* de Yeats e Georgie com as entidades com quem discutiam tais temas. De certa forma, existe uma *tradição* constantemente evocada em *A Vision*, bem como um *mistério*, mas esses dois elementos jamais reduzem a longa *exegese* criativa exercida pelo autor e sua esposa, médium e parte fundamental para a construção da cadeia complexa de sentidos evocados pelo livro. Nos termos postulados por Zilberberg, da tensão entre jogo e

trabalho que configura o *pervir* e o *sobrevir*, *A Vision* decididamente se coloca junto ao jogo; em termos de ritmo/tonicidade, o texto reduz a velocidade das repetições, recorrências e reiterações típicas da isotopia ocultista, que sempre busca nas mesmas fontes (ou em material próximo) sua *tradição*. Seja por trabalhar ludicamente com a ideia de autoria e de *pensamento* no plano de uma obra especulativa, seja pela busca de uma tradição estranha à isotopia ocultista, afeita a conspirações e fragmentárias percepções atribuídas a "sábios" e "magos", em uma singular e vertiginosa erudição, o trabalho de Yeats e sua esposa ultrapassam as expectativas de um texto ocultista tradicional, projetando seu leitor a uma dimensão na qual o saber proporcionado pela isotopia ocultista adquire outras formas, outros contornos.

No caso de Bataille e seu projeto *Acéphale*, temos efeitos semelhantes a partir de uma estrutura menos poética, individual, e mais prática, ritualística e teatral. De fato, a experiência na isotopia ocultista de Bataille foi muito mais orientada pela luta política antifascista. Assim, na Paris dos anos 1930, haveria uma pletora de grupos e sociedades das quais Bataille faria parte de uma forma ou de outra, antes de montar dois grupos decisivos, irmanados em uma visão geral, e "experimental", de sociedade secreta, ocultismo e "mito do século XX – o *Collège de Sociologie* e o *Acéphale*. A gênese desses grupos, de extrema complexidade, ultrapassa o escopo deste artigo e foi sumarizada por diversos pesquisadores[5], dentre os quais destacamos Marina Galletti (GALLETTI, 1999, p.16), Alastair Brotchie, que faz uma descrição minuciosa dos estranhíssimos rituais

[5] Também analisamos essas questões de Bataille, com o foco exclusivo nele, em outro momento. Ver MIGUEL, 2022.

de iniciação de *Acéphale*, no qual certo elemento sacro/teatral foi preponderante (BROTCHIE, 2017, p.51-61), e Denis Hollier, em seu livro bastante completo sobre a efervescência dos anos 1937-39 na vida intelectual de Bataille e de seus aliados. O choque causado pela ascensão do nazismo e pela apropriação nazista de Nietzsche, um filósofo crucial para Bataille, foi o estopim para a construção de tais grupos que funcionavam em um singular sistema ao mesmo tempo investigativo e performático: pois o Collège, nas palavras do próprio Bataille, era o "rosto público" de *Acéphale* (GALLETTI e BROTCHIE, 2017, p. 15). Trata-se, portanto, de dois grupos com dinâmicas distintas, que reproduzem a visão comum na isotopia ocultista dos grupos secretos: regras distintas de acesso, ritos específicos de iniciação, uma entidade "de fachada" etc.

Abaixo, reproduzimos um texto de Bataille, cujo título original é "La Conjuration Sacrée", incluído no primeiro número da publicação do grupo, *Acéphale*, para dar uma ideia mais nítida do singular funcionamento desse "grupo secreto", nos limites da isotopia ocultista:

> Por muito tempo a vida humana serviu como cabeça, ou razão, do universo. Na medida em que se transformou em tal cabeça e nessa razão em especial, e na medida em que se tornou necessário ao universo, aceitou sua servidão. Se não for livre, a existência torna-se vazia e castrada, ao passo que, se for livre, tudo permanece como jogo aberto. Enquanto a Terra produzia apenas cataclismos, árvores e pássaros, representava um universo livre; o fascínio pela liberdade foi manchado quando a Terra produziu um ser que insistia na necessidade ser uma lei maior que o universo. O homem, porém, sempre foi livre para não responder a nenhuma necessidade; ele é

> livre para ser qualquer coisa no universo que não seja ele próprio. Da mesma forma, pode dispensar a ideia de que seria ou Deus os impedimentos de que todas as outras coisas sejam absurdas. (BATAILLE et al, 2017, p.125).

Novamente, o aspecto discursivo do texto se afasta do usual na isotopia ocultista; pois os discursos nesse universo possuem uma natureza muito mais reiterativa e operacional do que propriamente reflexiva (não sem apresentar certo grau de percepção poética), como no exemplo acima. O saber, dentro dos discursos ocultistas usuais, é um *saber-fazer* em essência – um processo operativo, com certa ênfase descritiva, em que um processo específico se torna mais ou menos conhecido, embora sem que esse conhecimento seja excessivo a ponto de ultrapassar e tornar inútil o elemento do *mistério*. Em um dos ramos mais conhecidos da isotopia ocultista, representado por um tipo quantitativo de egiptologia, vemos o uso das dimensões das pirâmides para processar os mais diversos dados matemáticos não relacionados, o que garantiria uma percepção de "sabedoria" acima do usual por parte desse povo da Antiguidade, colocando o enunciatário no rastro de conjecturas e observações do enunciador. O precursor desse tipo de egiptologia foi Charles Piazzi Smyth, que afirmava serem as pirâmides de Giza marcos da astrologia e da "metrologia", a ciência da medição. Partindo de tal afirmação, calculou elementos das pirâmides usando o chamado "cúbito sagrado", que teria sido empregado por Noé (embora ele próprio registrasse a dificuldade de usar essa medida, como em SMYTH, 1867, p.529). Tais estudos de Piazzi Smyth impulsionaram toda uma literatura sobre as pirâmides que sobrevive até a atualidade na isotopia ocultista e que se revela

um saber centrado nas camadas superficiais das possibilidades de estudo desses monumentos, tendo em vista a reiteração de mistérios relacionados a uma tradição do passado. Nada disso está presente no texto de Bataille (ou no de Yeats), que valorizam interpretações bastante complexas, a partir de uma tradição bastante distinta e não mais limitada unicamente ao aspecto do oculto.

A noção de grupo secreto de Bataille, com todo seu aspecto de experimentação sociológica e de performance ritualística, antecipa um outro aspecto singular da isotopia ocultista que está em certo projeto ou possibilidade política – muitas vezes utópica – presente em seus discursos. Tal dimensão utópica desse discurso impulsiona uma negatividade em torno da sociedade constituída por esse irracionalismo usual nas formas discursivas dessa isotopia. Associa-se aos movimentos contraculturais e, não raro, explodem em criações poético-narrativas que tratam de horrores repressivos difusos e/ou abertos. Um exemplo recente, nesse sentido, seria o filme argentino *História do Oculto* (*História de lo Oculto*, 2020), dirigido e roteirizado por Cristian Ponce, em que algumas das diversas isotopias ocultistas se cruzam para a construção de uma trama sobre bruxos que controlam a sociedade autoritariamente.

Conclusão: Revisitando a Percepção de W. H. Auden

Retomando as críticas de Auden a Yeats (e mesmo a leitura crítica, muito mais ampla, de Adorno aos discursos relacionados ao ocultismo), percebemos que a base aqui parece ser calcada em um tipo de positivismo perceptivo (e isso é bastante notável no caso de Adorno, justamente um crítico do positivismo), o qual veria com

imediata desconfiança todos os produtos relacionados aos complexos discursivos do ocultismo; tal postura perceptiva não permitiria sequer uma apropriação de certas formulações discursivas com finalidades subversivas, paródicas ou mesmo estéticas, presentes nos complexos discursivos daquele campo específico. Por outro lado, vimos como a imensa pletora de discursos ocultistas, ultrapassando gêneros próprios (e alguns outros, mais amplos) é tão considerável que optamos por uma abordagem que considerasse essa amplitude toda uma isotopia. Nesse sentido, as propostas de Yeats e Bataille, embora relacionados, ainda que de forma tênue, com tal conjunto de discursos, apresentam tantos aspectos únicos que se faz até mesmo complicado que tais textos sejam reconhecidos em tal isotopia, tornando-se obras experimentais, em uma fronteira complexa entre a poesia, a especulação filosófica, o experimento individual e social, e a narrativa.

Pois, de fato, o mistério impulsionador, que parece estar na base tanto da criação de Yeats quanto de Bataille, relaciona-se mesmo à repetição de esquemas que colocam o enunciatário em uma "pista" (por vezes falsa) fornecida pelo enunciador e mais na produção de sentidos complexos por uma percepção amplificada dos elementos e embates presentes no texto. Não o andamento pendular, veloz, em torno de tradições e mistérios, mas um movimento muito mais lento, rotacional, revolucionário, em uma direção que parece ser a interioridade do próprio leitor.

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Colaboradores

Alcebiades Diniz Miguel é professor, tradutor, pesquisador e escritor, tendo por especialidade as narrativas, a criação de histórias e o registro de universos fantásticos em forma de narrativa. Bacharel em linguística pela USP, realizou mestrado, doutorado e pós-doutorado na Unicamp e na USP, tendo, nesse percurso, passado por estágios de pesquisa na Brunel University, na British Library e na Fundação Biblioteca Nacional. Realizou traduções para diversas editoras como Sol Negro, Carambaia, Sebo Clepsidra, Ex Machina, Novo Século e Perspectiva, de autores como Gérard de Nerval, H. G. Wells, Dolfi Trost, Nathanael West, Arthur Machen, Henry James, Robert Aickman e Thomas de Quincey. Algumas de suas pesquisas/traduções, de obras escritas por J. G. Ballard e Xul Solar, permanecem inéditas.

Ana Carolina Vilalta Caetano é mestranda pelo Programa de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês da Universidade de São Paulo. Sua pesquisa, financiada pela Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), analisa a influência da peça *Salomé* (1892) de Oscar Wilde na obra de Richard Bruce Nugent, escritor e artista visual do Renascimento do Harlem. É formada em Letras (Português/Inglês), também pela Universidade de São Paulo. Seu Trabalho de Graduação Individual (TGI) analisou transgressão, modernidade e erotismo em *Salomé*.

Esther Gazzola Borges é doutoranda na Área de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês da Universidade de São Paulo (USP). Sua pesquisa, financiada pela FAPESP, tem como cerne o conceito de *diáspora queer* na literatura contemporânea, mais especificamente na Literatura Irlandesa da autora Adiba Jaigirdar. Realizou estágios de pesquisa na University College Dublin em 2024 e na National University of Maynooth em 2025. Recebeu título de Mestre na Área de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês da USP com a dissertação *The Self in the Other: an Analysis of 'Stir-Fry' by Emma Donoghue*, financiada pela CAPES, e possui Licenciatura em Português-Inglês pela Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). É membro da Associação Brasileira de Estudos Irlandeses (ABEI), da Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses (AEDEI) e da International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL), além de compor parte do comitê executivo de Igualdade, Diversidade e Inclusão dessa mesma associação. Seus interesses de pesquisa abarcam questões de gênero, sexualidade, migração e afeto, além da sobreposição de alteridades e como essas são representadas e compreendidas na literatura contemporânea.

Jessica Grant Craveiro é bacharel em Jornalismo pela Faculdade Cásper Líbero e em Letras – Português e Inglês pela Universidade de São Paulo, onde também defendeu o mestrado em estudos linguísticos e literários em inglês. A dissertação se tornou o ebook *O Poder de Lembrar: Narrativa, Memória e Trauma Cultural em 'The International', de Glenn Patterson*. Sua pesquisa se concentra na literatura norte-irlandesa, com enfoque na questão do conflito denominado Troubles.

Atualmente, trabalha com comunicação institucional, arte e gestão de eventos em uma associação sem fins lucrativos.

Pedro Luís Sala Vieira é professor de Língua Inglesa do quadro efetivo da Fundação Municipal de Educação de Niterói e professor adjunto de Língua Inglesa da Faculdade Souza Marques. É Doutor em Literatura Comparada pela Universidade Federal Fluminense. É membro do grupo de pesquisa Estudos Joyceanos no Brasil e curador do grupo de estudos Here Comes Every Joyce.

Victor Augusto da Cruz Pacheco é doutor e mestre pela Área de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês da Universidade de São Paulo. Em 2022, realizou o período de estágio de pesquisa no exterior (BEPE-FAPESP) na University of Limerick, Irlanda. É bacharel em Letras (Português-Espanhol) pela Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas (FFLCH/USP) e cursou disciplinas na Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, durante o período de intercâmbio acadêmico (2016). Realizou a pesquisa de Iniciação Científica *As representações da Irlanda Revolucionária nos Contos de Sean O'Faolain* (2014), financiada pela Bolsa da Reitoria da Universidade de São Paulo (Bolsa RUSP). É membro da Associação Brasileira de Estudos Irlandeses (ABEI), da International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) e Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses (AEDEI). Atualmente, é assistente editorial da Revista ABEI Journal – The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies e representante brasileiro para a IASIL Bibliography.

William Alexander Nickerson é filho de mãe mineira e pai americano. É tradutor acadêmico, graduando em Bacharelado de Letras e Edição, bolsista de Iniciação Científica na Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais pela FAPEMIG com o projeto *Etnopoética e o Legado da Representação Panegírica na Tradição da Literatura Irlandesa* e ingressante de mestrado na mesma instituição, com o projeto *The Irish Keening Tradition and its Ethnopoetic Legacy*.

Fábio Waki é Bacharel em Estudos Literários e Mestre em Linguística – Estudos Clássicos (Capes) pela Universidade Estadual de Campinas e Doutor em Materialidades da Literatura (FCT) pela Universidade de Coimbra. Foi Pesquisador Visitante na King's College London (Santander), na Universidade de Estocolmo (FCT) e na Universidade da Califórnia Los Angeles (FAPESP). Atualmente é Pesquisador de Pós-Doutorado (FAPESP) filiado à Cátedra de Estudos Irlandeses W.B. Yeats na Universidade de São Paulo. É especialista em literatura clássica e literaturas europeias de língua inglesa, bem como nas relações entre literatura e artes visuais.

Ficha técnica

Formato 14 x 21 cm
Tipologia Scala Pro 10,5/16 e Scala Sans Pro
Papel miolo: pólen soft 80g/m2