



**Munira H. Mutran . *A Batalha das Estéticas*. São Paulo: Humanitas / FAPESP, 2015. 192 pp.**

Professor Munira Mutran is responsible for establishing Irish Studies as an area of academic interest in Brazil. Over a career spanning half a century her work as a supervisor of postgraduate research has ensured that most of the major universities in Brazil now have at least one Irish specialist amongst the teaching staff of their Modern Languages Department. Her latest publication is therefore likely to be of considerable interest and utility to academics and students distributed throughout Brazil's vast territory.

*A Batalha das Estéticas* takes its title from the metaphorical observation by George Moore in his autobiographical volume, *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888), that the European cultural scenario in the closing years of the nineteenth century consisted of a battle fought between the Realists and the Romantics, which was watched from a distance by the Symbolists awaiting their own opportunity to take the field. Under this heading Munira Mutran has compiled a meticulous selection of texts by three Irish observers of this aesthetic battle, which was waged to a large extent in *fin de siècle* Paris and London: George Moore himself, Oscar Wilde and W. B. Yeats. Aimed at a Brazilian readership which may not necessarily have an adequate command of English, each chapter of the book presents texts by one of the three writers in which he comments on aspects of this conflict, including the rise of Impressionism and Naturalism. Each text is translated into Portuguese by Professor Mutran and Alzira Leite Allegro, and is prefaced by the author's comments situating the extract in its context, both in terms of the work of the writer in question and of the cultural debate itself. The result is therefore a valuable sourcebook as much for students of the writers themselves as for those seeking to know more about the artistic movements upon which they were commenting.

Munira Mutran's book is the third to be published as a product of a collaborative research project, led by Professor Laura Izarra and funded by FAPESP [The São Paulo State Research Support Foundation]. Entitled *Da Irlanda para o Brasil: Textos Críticos* [*From Ireland to Brazil: Critical Texts*], the project ran from 2006 to 2009 and involved researchers from four Brazilian universities. The aim was to make available for a Brazilian audience literary and theatrical criticism produced by Irish writers and critics at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first book in the series was Rosalie Rahal Haddad's collection of Bernard Shaw's theatre criticism, *Shaw, O Crítico* [*Shaw, The Critic*], and the second was my own *A Peça Irlandesa no*

*Palco Londrino* [*The Irish Play on the London Stage*], published in 2009 and 2011, respectively. Professor Mutran's book is a worthy addition to the series and revives the hope that further volumes may still be in the pipeline.

*A Batalha das Estéticas*, as Munira Mutran points out in her Introduction, complements her previous publication, *Álbum de Retratos* [*Portrait Album*] (2002), which focused specifically on the autobiographical writing of Moore, Wilde and Yeats. The later book casts the net wider, also drawing upon criticism, prefaces and essays written by the three writers. The critical writing of each of them was informed both by the heightened sensitivity of their Anglo-Irish viewpoint and also by their interest in the issues of the day arising from their position as creative artists in their own right. One of the particularly interesting features of Professor Mutran's book is that the three chapters of critical texts are followed by a section including samples of the creative writing of the three authors, so that the reader is enabled to see how each of them put theory into practice. This part of the book contains translations of George Moore's short story, 'Home Sickness', extracts from Wilde's *Salomé* and Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, and, finally, as a form of synthesis of all that has gone before, James Joyce's 'Clay', from *Dubliners*.

Although a book composed of extracts from so many different texts by four different authors could very easily have been little more than a patchwork quilt of scraps of literary fabric, Munira Mutran bookends her selection with a very elegantly written Introduction and a Postface, which, combined with the contextualisation of each of the extracts themselves, make this far more than an anthology for readers lacking the opportunity to read the entire texts for themselves. Through the viewpoints of three major writers (four, if one includes Joyce's story in the reckoning) and with the expert guidance of Professor Mutran herself, the reader of this densely packed collection will become a privileged bystander of the battle between the -isms at one of the most exciting and influential moments in the past 150 years of Western cultural history.

*Peter James Harris*