

# *Irish Studies at the National University of La Pampa, Argentina: a Review.*

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**Abstract:** *“Literaturas Contemporáneas en Diálogo”* is an ongoing Research Programme<sup>1</sup> (2015-2023) that evolved from previous work carried out in the field of Comparative Literature in English and in Spanish, and as a result of research done in two previous projects related to Irish Literature, namely *“Irlandeses en Argentina: recuperación de fuentes, traducción y crítica”* (2007-2010) and *“Las Américas e Irlanda: Estudios culturales y traducción”* (2011-2014).

**Keywords:** *Irish immigrants; Argentina; translation.*

The Programme includes, at present, four Research Projects:

1. “Literatura irlandesa: estudios socio-críticos y traducción como diálogo intercultural” / “Irish Literature: socio-critical studies and translation as intercultural dialogue”<sup>2</sup> (2015- 2019) aims at studying, from a socio-critical perspective, the literary production of contemporary Irish writers as well as that resulting from the Irish Diaspora, in order to select significant texts and make up a reading corpus. In order to achieve such aim it was necessary to analyze short-stories, novels, poems, critical reviews, and also texts on literary criticism and theory, and make them “interact” with other types of texts from the field of history, sociology and geography to later produce our own critical analyses. The second aim of this research focuses on translation, understood as an act of transference and cultural comparison. Texts selected for translation were analyzed as products of a particular cultural context, produced in a given time and place, and from the particular perspective- that of the translators- who, far from being “invisible” mediators, imprint their own mark to each translation, without forgetting their allegiance to the original. Related to the task of translating contemporary literature, the team is in contact with the writers and has scheduled interviews, so as to engage them in a dialogue which sheds light over the writing process.

2. “La narrativa de habla inglesa: análisis crítico discursivo de textos de autores contemporáneos” / “English narratives: a critical discursive analysis of contemporary writers’ texts”<sup>33</sup> is set within the framework of the Systemic Functional Grammar developed by Halliday (1994, 2004), Martin (1992), Eggins (1994) and Matthiessen (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999). This theory proposes a holistic model of language and its social context, which considers language as a system of options available for the construction of meanings and the attainment of communicative purposes. According to this model, language is a resource which allows the combination of three different kinds of meaning in each act of communication: ideational meanings (the experience of the world and the logical relations between clauses), interpersonal meanings (social relations) and textual meanings (meanings which make a text cohesive). These meanings are represented by means of the lexico-grammatical systems of transitivity, mood and theme, respectively. The clause is, in Halliday’s words, “the grammatical unit in which the semantic constructs of different types are combined and integrated to form a whole” (1989: 66). The contributions provided by Halliday and other representatives of the SFG constitute a powerful tool to develop a type of textual analysis that allows for a better understanding of the structure of the language and the importance of its social role. The main aims of this project are to analyze, from the perspective of the SFG, a selection of literary texts written in English, and to unveil the importance of the lexico-grammatical analysis in the production and negotiation of meanings.

3. “Argentina e Irlanda (1816- 1916- 2016). Estudios socio-culturales y traducción”/ “Argentina and Ireland (1816- 1916- 2016): socio-cultural studies and translation”<sup>34</sup> (2015-2017). This Project was a correlate of a previous development – “The Americas and Ireland: cultural studies and translation” – UNLPam 2011/2014 – and also the result of the debate, academic exchange and conclusions reached at both SILAS IV International Conference and VIII ABEI Symposium held at UNLPam in August 2013, events which gathered most of the research group participants.

It aimed at studying the literary and socio-historical production of Argentine, Irish and Irish-Argentine writers on the verge of Argentina’s bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence and Ireland’s centenary of the Easter Rising- two crucial times in the history of both countries. In order to achieve this goal it was necessary to analyze, from a comparative perspective, literary texts as well as historical and journalistic ones to have access to different views about both independence processes, making the texts “interact” to later produce our critical analyses. The relationships interwoven among the different social actors and the contexts in which the actors interrelated were also part of our analysis.

The second aim of this research focused on translation, understood as an act of cultural comparison and transference. Texts selected for translation were analyzed as products of a particular cultural context, produced in a given time and place, and from the perspective of the translators.

4. “Seamus Deane y Edna O’Brien: Autores de una literatura menor” / “Seamus Deane and Edna O’Brien: authors of a minor literature.”<sup>5</sup> (2018-2019). The most recent criticism on the topic has studied the works of Seamus Deane from the perspective of the narrative of trauma and those of Edna O’Brien’s from the paradigm of post-colonial theory. Since in one of their first great texts, Deleuze and Guattari (1986) suggested that, as Irishmen, both Joyce and Beckett lived within the genial conditions of a minor literature, we propose to provide evidence through this research project that Seamus Deane’s (1997) *Reading in the Dark* and Edna O’Brien’s (2011) *Saints and Sinners* can also be read as works belonging to that kind of literature. We contend that, due to the experimental nature of Deane’s semi-autobiographical novel and the constant lexicogrammatical reference to the Irish issue in O’Brien’s short story collection, both works can be analyzed in terms of the categories advanced by Deleuze and Guattari (1986) in order to read minor literatures: (a) the deterritorialization of language, (b) the collective narrative mechanism, and (c) the articulation between the personal and the political. The latter will be our aim during the descriptive phase of the project. Now, we also consider that an exploration of the articulation between the personal and the political will provide us with grounds to study both Deane and O’Brien in their functions as authors of a minor literature and to trace the linguistic and textual traits that support their narrative roles. In a descriptive phase of the project, we will examine the likely authorial reasons that may have taken them to deterritorialize expression and exploit the revolutionary conditions of a minor literature. Once we have finished this project, we hope to have established a fruitful dialogue between Irish contemporary literature and post-structuralist theory and to have revisited and revalued some aspects of that perspective, sometimes derided in view of the persistent focus on content of much current literary criticism.

In order to develop the above mentioned research projects the research team has based its studies on the following theoretical and methodological frameworks: representational and non-representational theories, post-colonial/neo-colonial studies, cultural and diaspora studies, socio-critical and translation studies and affect theories.

Moreover, the Programme, through its four different Projects, aims at further developing researchers’ professional training and promoting research activities among graduates and undergraduates (e.g. thesis writing). Senior members of the research team often engage in advisory and counseling tasks. The results of the research team activities have been presented in various national and international conferences, symposia, and other academic meetings<sup>6</sup> (papers and posters) and published at national and international journals<sup>7</sup>.

The Program also aims at transferring, on a regular basis, the results of research to students of the English Teacher Training Programme and Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature as well as to society in general. In this way, we intend to promote intercultural dialogue and contribute to the development of further studies on

space, identity, gender and ethnicity in the field of Irish Literature and the Irish Cultural Diaspora.

With regard to dissemination, the following are a sample of the activities carried out:

– “Roger Casement y el Levantamiento de Pascua. Conexiones entre literatura, historia y traducción.” Round Table, Cátedra Libre de Pensamiento y Cultura Irlandesa – Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales. Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina. (2016)

– “Roger Casement en Sudamérica. El Caucho, la Amazonía y el Mundo Atlántico 1884-1916” Photography Exhibition, Irish Embassy in Argentina, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, Argentina (April 2016) and Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina (August 2016).

– “William Butler Yeats Exhibition.” Irish Embassy in Argentina, Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina (September 2015).

Even though, so far, the research team has worked in an inter/multi/trans-disciplinary manner with colleagues from various universities in Argentina (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Universidad del Salvador, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo) and abroad (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil) it is expected and desirable to further extend and promote links with other researchers from other parts of the world who share our area of interest and even with those who could expand it. Collaborative work in the field of Irish Studies through shared advisory work for theses and projects, junior members internships abroad, and short senior members research stays, as well as the constitution of a consortium of universities to promote and consolidate this research area are part of our future objectives.

## Notes

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- 6 V SILAS Conference: University College Cork, Ireland. (2015)  
X Symposium of Irish Studies in South America Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina. (2015)  
IV Congreso de la Internacional del Conocimiento Universidad de Santiago de Chile (2015)  
I Simposio sobre Estudios Irlandeses: los Irlandeses en Latinoamérica, Universidad del Salvador, Argentina (2016)

- I Congreso Internacional Lenguas-Migraciones-Culturas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina. (2016)
- Jornadas de Investigación de la Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina (2016-2017)
- Primer Encuentro Regional Pampeano de Profesores y Estudiantes Universitarios de Inglés Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina (2016)
- SILAS: Sixth Biannual Conference “Island Relations: Ireland, Cuba, and the Latin World”, Cuba (2017)
- III Congreso Internacional Nuevos Horizontes de Iberoamérica. Simposio: Diálogos en el Conosur: Viejas Fronteras y Nuevos Espacios en Literatura y Cultura. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Argentina. (2017)
- 13th Latin American Systemic Functional Linguistics Association Conference (ALSFAL), Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina. (2017)
- 7 Selection of the works produced and to be released in the course of research:
- II Jornadas Internacionales Fronteras, Ciudadanía y Conformación de Espacios en el Cono Sur: una mirada desde las Ciencias Humanas y Sociales* (2015). UniRío (UNRC). 978-987-688-114-2
- “Prologue” in *Caderno de Letras* (2016) ISSN2358-1409, Volumen 27. 11-12 (online). ISSN0102-9576 (hard copy).
- Argentina e Irlanda 1816-1916. Actores, acciones y conmemoraciones. (forthcoming 2018); *Bernard Shaw, Crítico* (forthcoming 2018).