

Irish Diasporic Literary Voices in South American Border Narratives

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Abstract: This paper is part of a larger project that maps the Irish literary diaspora space in Argentina and Brazil. It is a reflection upon the recurring constitutive elements in the process of construction of an Irish-Argentine identity represented by the Irish diasporic voices of Juan José Delaney's narratives. The Irish immigration is one of the main concerns of the Irish-Argentine writer. Some of his short stories from Tréboles del Sur (1994) (Southern Shamrocks) and his first novel Moira Sullivan (1999) are analysed here from a transcultural perspective.

The Irish immigration to South America has been studied from few historical perspectives and very little has been done to trace contemporary Irish literary diasporic voices in this geographical location. Avtar Brah, influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa's theorisation of borders and borderlands, advocates in her book *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) that if borders are arbitrary constructions and exist as social relation and subjectivity, they are directly related with questions of identity, ethnicity, class and gender, and thus, with geographic and psychic demarcation of territories. Border writings can elucidate many social and political aspects of border encounters articulating a textual strategy of translation as opposed to representation (Hicks, 1991). Consequently, such narratives give the diasporic writer in particular, as well as any reader, the possibility of practising multi-dimensional perception and experiencing various cross-cultural realities. Juan José Delaney is an Argentine writer descendant of Irish immigrants who arrived in Argentina in the second half of the nineteenth century and settled out on the rich farmlands of Buenos Aires province until they moved to the city to work. Still in his teens he wrote his first collection of short stories, *La Carcajada* (1974), which was highly praised by Jorge Luis Borges who "congratulated the boy" and said "he has the obligation to continue" (*Buenos Aires Herald*, 21 Nov. 1999). Delaney admired Oscar Wilde and Borges and believed he could write like them. With the sense of a need for recovering his family roots, he focuses on diasporic themes and characters that were already introduced in the narratives of William Bulfin, Benito Lynch and Kathleen Nevin in the last decades of the nineteenth and first ones of the twentieth centuries. However, his work is different because he translates the pain, loss and frustration of the Irish immigrants

in a revisionist way intertwining historical documents, letters and diaries in his fictional narratives. Thus, he transcends the theme of geographic dislocations and explores the inner human conflicts that arise not only out of the duality of the self but mainly out of the encounter of two cultures producing an art of his own or "cross-border writing" where reality, diaspora history and fiction are in constant tension.

According to Terence Brown in *Ireland, A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985*, the 1840s saw the beginning of "modern Irish diaspora with its perennial emigration which by the 1920s meant that 43 per cent of Irish-born men and women were living abroad." (1985:19). Though various historical and political reasons provoked the Irish emigration to the continent, the Americas and other distant countries before and after the Great Hunger, the disillusionment of the first two decades of independence encouraged artists and intellectuals to reach the conclusion that "Ireland was no longer an interesting place in which to live." (Kiberd 1996):

War and civil war appeared to have drained all energy and imagination away: there was precious little left with which to reimagine the national condition. (263)

This attitude, strengthened by economic and political problems faced by the Irish state in the post-world war period and the crisis in the countryside, reflected a stagnation which was unacceptable. The traditional utopian thought in search for a better world and better conditions of life "elsewhere" rekindled the continuing exodus of emigration towards countries that would challenge people's imaginary. Some Irish emigrants *imagined* South America as a geographical space where the *reinvention* of their hopes for freedom and better economic and social status, was possible though they would have to face a foreign language and culture.

There were different phases of emigration to the Southern countries. First, in the sixteenth century the Jesuit missions in the North of Argentina, Paraguay and South of Brazil led by Father Thomas Fehily, an Irishman from Limerick who arrived to the River Plate in 1587, strove to make the Christian utopia become real. Secondly, British-Irish arrived in the country as soldiers in unsuccessful military expeditions, such as the English invasions in 1763 to Colonia del Sacramento (Uruguay) and in 1806 and 1807 to Buenos Aires; many of them decided to stay in the country and were later incorporated to General San Martín's Army of Liberation in 1817. Thus, political dissenters and patriots such as Admiral William Brown, who founded the Argentinian Navy, and Generals O'Brien and O'Higgins, who led the campaigns for independence of South American countries, were historically recognized by their deeds in the adopted land. Thirdly, after the exodus provoked by the Great Hunger, the Irish immigration in Argentina has played a decisive role in the configuration and transformation of the country's agricultural structure and the formation of a small bourgeois rural class in Buenos Aires province (Korol & Sábato, 1981). The majority of them came from

Westmeath and Longford and gathered under the spiritual and administrative support of Father Anthony Fahy who arrived in 1844 and became the protector of their traditional values. He helped them to settle, find a job and get married with people of their own community thus retarding their integration to the Argentine society. According to some statistics, there were 20.000 Irish in Argentina by the end of the 19th century (Wolf & Patriarca, 1991). In few years the Irish community became an important group of landowners feeling rewarded from the dispossession they had suffered by the English in their motherland. Though not all the stories were of success, the Irish that settled in the “new lands” of South America and their descendants dreamed of going back to their motherland knowing that it would never happen. So, utopian narratives, also called “awakened dreams” (Anzaldúa, 1987), helped them to reread their past and reconceptualize their future in a diaspora space that allowed them to construct the promising present of the largest Irish community in a non-English speaking country. Finally, according to MacLoughlin Bréard (*The Southern Cross*, 2000) “other” Irish arrived from the United States, Canada and Australia as well as from France, Russia and Austria. The “Irish-Yankees” who in the 1820s “became part of the craftsmen of the city of Buenos Aires” distinguished themselves from the Irish elite who avoided cities and settled in the countryside without mixing with the natives. Delaney portrays the Irish immigrant experiences mainly from the third and fourth phases and deals with the psychological, social and ideological effects of the tensions produced by the diaspora and the local while living in social and political borders.

The words *diaspora*, *border* and *politics of location* are immanent and “mark conceptual connections for historicised analyses of contemporary trans/national movements of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital” (Avtar Brah 1996, 16). The concept of *diaspora space* is distinct from diaspora because it is the intersectional location of three immanent elements – diaspora, frontiers and (dis)location, and it is inhabited “not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as ‘indigenous’.” Brah’s new concept is linked to the idea of ‘difference’ and also establishes a politics of intersectionality where multi-dimensional tensions and (dis)locations occur, including not only the geographical but the psychological dislocations as well. The Argentine *diaspora space* is inhabited by many people of different ethnic origins with a Spanish-Italian majority. However, according to Juan José Delaney (*ABEI Journal*, N°2, 2000), nowadays 350.000 Argentines claim to be of Irish ascendancy and there is a corpus that “can be called Irish-Argentine Literature”, written first in Irish-English and then, gradually, in Spanish. But, how do these descendants define themselves? Do they really adopt a hyphenated identity as Delaney has said? Why? What does “Irishness and/or Argentineness” mean to them? How are they being represented? How do they translate those representations into their own voices? Which tensions are present in the process of *becoming*?

Definitely, the Irish in Argentina did not experience the same *politics of transfiguration* that Irish migrants strove for in nineteenth-century United States where

they used labour unions, the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party to become part of the White Republic (Ignatiev, 1995). They were not either identified as “black Europeans” as they were defined by the English. Paradoxically, in South America they were identified as “English” due to the language they spoke and, at first, they certainly profited from it getting better jobs than the natives. Thus, in his short stories like “The Return” and “The Other Informer”, Delaney shows the ambiguous feelings provoked by the social and economic rising of Irish immigrants who were employed by English companies due to their knowledge of English, while he re-reads and re-writes the historical past looking for recognition of their own roots and the various routes taken by their ancestors in relation to former migratory movements. He also portrays them mainly in relation with their own community and very few stories narrate the interaction with the ‘indigenous’ or other ethnic groups as in “First Love” or “The Founder”. Only in his first novel, *Moira Sullivan*, he establishes connections with the German immigration and describes the Argentine ‘indigenous’ in very brief passages - her husband’s secretary’s hypocrisy, the Argentine army’s influence on the civilian population, a “joker” who explains her the use of the bidet, a dwarf who guides them through the cemetery in Junín and a letter to the president Juan Domingo Perón.

In *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie affirms that the effect of mass migrations has been the creation of “radically new types of human being”:

people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves – because they are so defined by others – by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. (124-125)

This is true to the experience of the first Irish migrants who established new imaginative relationships between the utopian thought that provoked their transatlantic and transhemispheric diaspora movements and the possibilities they found in the *imagined* new country in South America. They were moved by a desire or “politics of fulfilment” (Gilroy, 1993) that is “the notion that a future society will be able to realize the social and political promise that present society has left unaccomplished.” (op. cit. p.133). However, those illusions about the land of exile somewhat vanished once settled due to their suffering of departure from their homeland, to the difficulties in learning a foreign language, and to the fact of finding themselves isolated, dislocated and “unclassified” – as Bourdieu says when referring to the immigrant being an *atopos* (Sayad, 1991). Moreover, the immigrant had to cope with narrative fantasies told by former emigrants who had gone back to their homeland. These narratives disclosed completely different “realities” to the ones they encountered when they arrived at the “new land”. Kathleen Nevin in her autobiographical book *You’ll Never Go Back* (1946) writes:

She gave us an astonishing account of Buenos Aires, a place we had never heard of and never expected to see. (And God forgive Maria, when we did see it, it wasn't at all what she had led us to expect.). (p.10)

Though Sayad affirms that the word "immigration" is always seen as "a problem" from the point of view of the society that receives the foreigners, the Irish immigrants under the Southern Cross were not seen like that, even being protagonists of chain migration. Besides, the Irish were conscious of being emigrants because they kept alive both an emotional attachment to their homeland and a strong awareness of the causes of their departure. However, this attachment to their roots provoked many problematic interrelations between the politics of desire and imagination triggered by the utopian thought and the politics of heritage and nostalgia triggered by the myth of the return. A good example of the ambiguity of feelings provoked by these tensions is Maureen Murphy's title of her book on Irish-American servant girls called *Hope from the Ocean* where it is not only appropriated the idea of the proverb "There is hope from the ocean but not from the grave" which discloses the meaning of the "promised land" (hope for the migrant and for the family at home who would benefit from immigration), but it is also implicit the myth of the return (a desire to go back homeland, proper of the diaspora). Thus, "diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and attachment" (Appadurai & Breckonridge, 1989. p. 484). Immigrants must constantly negotiate within a diaspora space the cultural tensions provoked by a sense of "placelessness"/displacement and of various "remembered" futures (utopian thoughts) while searching for their "imagined" pasts:

In the remote Pottsville (a very dear and small town in Pennsylvania) she had to look for the seeds of her future, what was already past. (*Moirra Sullivan*, p.12)

Thus, the diaspora space discloses a "diaspora consciousness" (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999) in the present. This is a state of mind and a sense of identity generally implicit in transnational communities where a psychological and geographical territorialization of the mind is experienced by a positive identification with a historical heritage. Generally, people who left their country due to different reasons, even political ones, loved it strongly and this feeling is passed down to their descendants. As Rushdie says, the shape of the country is also our shape: "the shape of the way you think and feel and dream" (*The New Yorker*, June 19 & 26, 2000: 94). So, diasporic writers in general create utopian narratives or "awakened dreams" which, according to Anzaldúa, have a shamanic power that turns them into "shape changers", those who look to transform the social imaginary here and now. In the case of Delaney, he gives shape to the various Irelands of the mind of the immigrants and resignifies their past images when translated into new experiences of cultural encounters. Even though he mainly portrays them in

interaction with their own community, his writing elucidates certain aspects of border encounters that become constitutive elements of the process of construction of an Irish-Argentine identity. Using the vitality of bricolage, he *transcreates*¹ many experiences of lives taken from historical sources and different narratives, such as letters and even postcards published in the Irish-Argentine newspaper *The Southern Cross*². This weekly newspaper founded in 1875 used to be the vehicle for communication within the Irish community and it has published articles about their social life in the new country and news from Ireland since the beginning of its existence. Now as a monthly publication, its present motto comprises a relatively balanced diasporic tension: “*Since 1875, expressing our Argentine plenitude from the Irish ancestry.*”

In *Tréboles del Sur* (*Southern Shamrocks*, 1994), a collection of short stories, Delaney draws “delicate vignettes of the tragedy and comedy of Irish-Argentina, its nineteenth-century immigrants and their descendants.” (*Buenos Aires Herald*, November 21, 1999). Recurring themes of loss, migration, grief, acculturation, isolation provoked by the unknown language, oppression, nostalgia of the past and intermarriages, form an intricate narrative web where the narrator creatively reconstructs the processes of the Irish immigrant’s self-fashioning from a collective perspective. Thus, his stories introduce the utopian thoughts of the voiceless Irish people – single men and women – enacting non-synchronous collective memories that represent the different jobs and experiences they had when they arrived. Governess, teachers of English language in rural Argentina, labourers, land planters, cattle-raisers, widow(er)s and priests inhabit his narratives while characters like the dreamer, the informer and the traitor – cultural figures born within the Irish nationalist movement – echo stories with Irish protagonists written by Borges.

In “El Otro Delator” (“The Other Informer”), the narrator introduces Jack Donovan, once an Irish conspirator who fought for his country’s independence and emigrated to Argentina to get married with his beloved who was already there. The romantic view of his revolutionary past ironically counterpoises his present as a salesman executive of an English cold storage plant called Swift, where he has worked for a long time thanks to his knowledge of English. Though this metaphoric subordination to the dominator’s company is not explored by the writer, the reversing roles of traitor/revolutionary judge and fact/fiction are focused when Donovan sees John Ford’s film “El Delator” based on Liam O’Flaherty’s novel *The Informer*. The Irish executive discovers that the actor who played the rebel judging the informer was the traitor himself in real life and whose betrayal nearly caused Donovan’s own death. The protagonist gets to know later that the informer escaped to the United States and expiated his deeds in an ironic turn in celluloid leaving Donovan reflecting upon the contradictory role of a traitor enacting “culpability as well as penitent will.” (82) Delaney closes his narrative comparing the “fragile celluloid scenario” as “another grotesque spot in the sinuous reality.”

“El Otro Delator” is sown with reminiscences of Borges’s informer in “The Shape of the Sword” and “Theme of the Traitor and the Hero”³. The former is a double-

bounded story where “the image of the hero is broken and demystified” when he reveals himself as a traitor and tells “fictional Borges the story of his infamy to be blamed forever.”⁴ The latter interlaces history with fiction (Julius Caesar’s death and Shakespeare’s tragedy *Macbeth*) and questions the consequences of history plagiarizing fiction and turning the whole world into a stage. The narrative is about an Irish conspirator who was discovered as traitor and asked his friends to kill him in circumstances that would redeem him so that his death would become an instrument of emancipation for their national cause. When Borges introduces isolated characters from romantic revolutionary Ireland to the Argentine reader, he focuses the *dual* and *paradoxical nature* of the Irish mind that has “two thoughts at a time” subverting the established modes of linear and sequential thinking. The Irish characters of his short stories are taken from nationalistic contexts where the dyads treason and loyalty, as well as shame and honour, play the central function of the narrative. However, Borges explores these dyads in a metaphysical and metafictional level straining them to reach the crucial Derridean moment of *aporia* where final meanings turn into partial truths.

In “El Otro Delator”, Delaney follows the master’s way but this time he portrays the reverse of both of Borges’s stories: his traitor plays the role of a hero and the narrator transforms the main concept of the second story – life imitates art – into the consequences of art ‘reconstructing’ life. This idea of reality and fiction as constructs is also present in his story “La vida imita al arte” (“Life Imitates Art”), where the Irish-Argentine writer explores the theme of the title with a simple narrative technique of story-within-story and describes the ambiguous feelings of death and life, reality and art. It is about chain migration: an Irish orphan girl is sent to Buenos Aires by her single aunt to live with her uncle’s family. She suffers loss and rejection in Ireland as well as in the new land, works as a teacher for an engineer’s only daughter, falls in love with him and lives similar situations as the protagonist of *Jane Eyre*. Film, reality and fiction are intermixed and Delaney uses the image of symmetry reflected by a mirror in a symbolic and metaphoric way to question who she is and how she is seen by the others.

Immigration is an aesthetic agent in Juan José Delaney’s pen. It is an imaginative resource capable of influencing the writer’s literary choice when he is intertwining the historical past with individual stories about it and the character’s present. He uses different voices to portray the immigrants’ awareness of the process of transformation of the self at the encounter of two cultures and of the various responses to the tensions generated by it. His stories also reflect the doubleness of the Irish mind which goes beyond the analytical dialectical reasoning of “either/or” and shows the Irish constitutive experience of “both/and”. This provokes a plurality that defies and denies the violence implicit in bipolar oppositions and creates a “new consciousness” which, in the case of Delaney’s stories, is not still free from cultural domination and psychological frontiers that constitute the “enemy within”. His characterizations ambiguously correspond more to the diasporic subject rather than to the immigrant. According to James Clifford, “immigrants may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place”

while “peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be ‘cured’ by merging into a new national community” (Clifford 1997: 250). The diasporic subject settles ‘elsewhere’ with the strong desire for a future return though this would never happen while the immigrant constructs a new home in a new land to stay though keeping in mind the myth of return. Delaney’s characters isolate themselves. They have their own community and do not struggle for different ways to be “Argentine” – ways to stay and be different, to be Argentine and “something else complexly related to shared histories of cultural survival” (op. cit.). They are aware of some inner transformation but their identities seem to be crystallized in the past nation identity while living in a different geographical space with no explicit desire to return to their motherland.

Moreover, the issue of utopianism present in his work seems to go beyond the psychological and linguistic isolation faced by his characters and sometimes, it somewhat proposes Gilroy’s politics of solidarity which brings the Irish community together to achieve the recognition they aspire within the new society. Clifford defends this concept saying “the term diaspora is a signifier not simply of transnationality and movement but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement.” (252) However, Delaney’s characters are not concerned in defining the local and when this happens, as in “El Fundador” (“*The Founder*”), they fail in the attempt. For example, this story introduces an Irish immigrant who arrives in the country with a “novel project” inspired in Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Though he spent three hard years trying to “change reality from literature” he did not succeed. He had to re-conceptualize the hopes of his awakened “Irish dreams” when he realized the impossibility of fulfilment inherent in his project. His utopian world created a new conceptual space that the natives rejected as being socialist and he had to “imagine different ways of conceptualizing the past, present and future” of his former utopian thought in order to be accepted (Sargisson 1996). Finally, he created a new project which came true when he got married with a schoolteacher who supported him in his worst moments, even when he lost his job and was taken to prison. Thus, the character of the story, instead of “founding an exemplar city he founded a home worthy of that ideal society” (44).

Delaney’s first novel *Moira Sullivan* is about a silent film Irish-American script-writer who moved to Argentina with her second husband, an Irish-American executive of a multinational company. Living in a home for old people in Buenos Aires, she recalls her past in a desperate impulse of understanding her own “self”. The writer uses several narrative techniques and chooses various discourses to reconstruct Moira Sullivan’s life in flashbacks through her film-scripts, her first husband’s diary, her own letters to her parents and her friend Allison, and her own memories. Isolation and silence mark Moira’s life. The first half of the novel is about her relationship with her first husband, Konrad Storm, a German musician living in New York whose untimely death interrupted all their plans. What language could not express, his music and her film scripts illuminated their mutual understanding. They loved each other and the effects of immigration and

the immigrant's soul are deconstructed through the *new art* - the cinema - which is "the refuge of immigrants, solitaires, sceptics, beings without language and deserters of temples and religious places in general." (39) Changing the point of view of the narrative from Moira's to Konrad's the narrator tells their life as if it were a full-length movie where communication is always interrupted and silence is privileged.

Delaney's main narrative technique is intra-textuality. In a postmodern fragmentary style, he incorporates some of his own stories from *Tréboles del Sur* (*Southern Shamrocks*). For example, Moira's letters to her friend Allison echo "Destinies"; the moving story told by the gaucho Abraham Mullins (son of a Jewish mother and Irish father) is the rewriting of "First Love"; reminiscences of "Madge on Fridays" appear when the dwarf at the cemetery of Junín retold them the story while they were looking for Irish tombs; and the narrative of her second husband's death caused by a horse accident recalls "The Return". Sometimes he chooses overused metaphors such as "those objects were like remains of a wreckage" (29) which he immediately improves adding "broken things, incomplete, divorced from each other"; or like Moira "left herself to be carried by the waves of life" (55); or when Moira "opted to observe the daily tragicomedy. Those from life were nearly all first-class actors" (110); or "I started being a marionette of unknown forces, a sailing boat at the mercy of the wind and the waves" (116). However, there are masterly passages of great creativity and aesthetic value throughout the whole novel like the very opening of it, the way he articulates the excerpts of the film scripts and the character's own thoughts while the story itself is being told in fragmentary postmodern brush-stroke narratives. Delaney successfully ties them up producing a final aesthetic effect where plurality predominates over the unifying force present in the process of the construction of an illusory single identity. Another passage that shows Delaney's excellence is the entry of Konrad's diary of 27th December 1925 where he synthesizes the anxiety of an immigrant. The German asks "What things can music communicate? Music reveals deep anxieties of the self." (69) Then he writes the musical notes of the first five bars of his own composition and asks "who would discover that they enclose the core aspects of his life? Nobody. Perhaps Moira." (69) He explains how that specific musical rhythm represents the proper dynamism of life and how each chord expresses his will of accommodating to new experiences; dissonance prevails in his sad childhood and then, there is a return to peace through the reverse of the initial chord as if it were an attempt to confound life and death, beginning and end. Also Moira's imaginary talks with her dead husband on the imaginary phone show Delaney's experimental technique of using broken language to construct a literary image which metonymically represents her broken feelings and the process of resignification of her own life through the ritualistic action of calling the dead.

It is in the second half of the book that the question of identity and immigration is strongly addressed, linking Moira's experience in the Argentine diaspora space with Konrad's in New York, both suffering the contact with an unknown language and culture

respectively. It is only at this point that Moira asks herself what such experience means. Argentina is introduced as a utopian world – fascinating place with “Natives. Indians. Savages. Adventures. Challenges. The possibility of growing ...” (102). The latter is the common denominator element present in all diasporic narratives of oppressed people: they would be able grasp an opportunity and change their future with hard work and sacrifice as some of Moira’s second husband’s relatives did in Buenos Aires. Cornelius Geraghty was a brilliant Irish-American executive sent by his company to Buenos Aires. Moira followed him but “she chose to marginalize herself from the Spanish magic”. She wanted to be “only a tourist, a strange and amazed tourist” in Argentina as if she were a tourist of the world (104). Instead of learning Spanish she decided to learn German to understand more about Konrad’s philosophic questionings and their life together in New York.

It is through the letters to her friend Allison that the narrator gives voice to Moira to register her first impressions of the country and its people. The encounter of both cultures is evidently counterpoised in binary oppositions: Argentina’s non-identification (due to the plural origin of the natives) versus Irish identification (only one root); English ancestral cynicism versus Argentine natives’ secret admiration of them; English versus Irish though some Irish wear the mask of the English to progress in their jobs; the imagined utopian “land of gold” versus the immensity of the pampas (109). The Irish immigrant’s ancestral need to possess land moves Cornelius to the countryside to visit his relatives and find his own death. The question of identity is again re-enacted by an Irish couple living in the camp and running an Irish pub or tavern and by the Irish living in Buenos Aires who are all united through the weekly *The Southern Cross*, though they still do not know who they are. The mixed language is the worst result. However, it is with Moira’s broken thoughts in the last imaginary communication with Konrad on the phone that the immigrant’s identity is defined while its meaning is simultaneously blurred by the religious connotation of the immigrant soul at the moment of death: “feeling of dispossession ... idea that we come to suffer ... that we are not legitimate inhabitants of this world ... yes, of course, words lose ... harmonies defeat... hello! Hello! ... I believe that we’ll see each other very soon ... hello! Hello?” (144) She realizes that tango is the music of the immigrant in Argentina because words are not necessary to communicate its deep meaning; music is above all. This insight discloses that tango resembles Konrad’s ragtime and reveals her the transcendence of his musical compositions in their past moments of silent communion. Assuming various masks, Moira could discern that an identity is not fixed or unique, it explodes in its plurality. Despite her isolation she has been transformed by reality, by Konrad’s, Cornelius’s and her own geographical and psychological dislocations.

However, the migrant suspects reality because “having experienced several ways of being, s/he understands their illusory nature.” (Rushdie). Moira wants to translate that reality through an identity essence but she fails. To see things clearly she has to cross the frontiers of temporality and space; she has to deterritorialize her mind. Delaney

translates this act through the use of various discourses that overlap along his narrative but it rather helps him to construct an identity for his art of writing. Gloria Anzaldúa affirms that the identity of a story is constructed through word, image and feelings: “an image which is the bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge.” Delaney’s attempt to reconstruct an Irish-Argentine identity looking backwards to the Irish roots places him in the first stage of the process of identification: the Irish interact among themselves to preserve their cultural heritage in the diaspora space because they implicitly see the natives’ inferiority. However, he also looks forward to construct a plural identity, not of the nineteenth-century Irish immigrant he is representing but, of his own narratives which encapsulate past time trying to translate “who”, “what” and “the needs and hopes” of his own Irish-Argentine community of the present. In doing so, his narratives become utopian attempts to reinvent an Irish-Argentine literature recovering the power of the Irish ancestry. I think that his aim will only be attained if he goes further beyond the intricate borders of a fixed identity attached to origins and focuses his future writings on the tensions provoked by the interaction between cultural heritage and locality. This would bring him to interrogate the various processes of translation at the encounter of two cultures and the psychological, social and political consequences in the process of transfiguration towards a hyphenated identity or cultural hybridity.



Irish “estancieros”. A photograph by Martin Parola. In: *The Southern Cross*, 2000, p. 13.

Notes

- 1 "transcreates" is a term used by Brazilian poet and translator Haroldo de Campos to affirm that a translator does not translate but transcreate a text, thus opening a wide net of implications in the process of translation.
- 2 *The Southern Cross* was founded in 1875 for the Irish community after *The Standard* (1861) which was the first Anglo-Irish newspaper for the British living in Buenos Aires. *The Southern Cross*, first published weekly, is still being published monthly.
- 3 For an analysis of these stories see Izarra, Laura. "The Irish Under the Southern Cross" in: *Crop 1*, São Paulo: Editora Humanitas, 1994; pp. 50-55.
- 4 *Ibid.* p. 53.

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