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Abei Journal 17.indd 4 03/07/2016 15:51:42

Contents

Introduction 7

Celebrating W.B. Yeats

At the Hawk's Well. A Theoretical and Practical Study about the Music in the Play 11
Maestro Marcello Amalfi

W. B. Yeats and Gordon Craig: Collaborations and Rehearsals Towards the Theatre of the Future 19
Luiz Fernando Ramos

W. Blake & W.B. Yeats. The Tunnel of Time 31
Munira H. Mutran

Yeats and Pound and their Brazilian Translations.................................. 37
Andréa Martins Lameirão Mateus

Yeats Revisited by Kathleen Raine ....
Miguel Angel Montezanti

Interviews

Interview with David Rudkin.. 51
Mariana Bolfarine

Interview with Patrick Sutton and Brian Maguire 57
Fábio de Souza Andrade and Luiz Fernando Ramos

Drama

"What remains of all that misery?" Time, Habit and Memory in Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*.. 67
Fernando Aparecido Poiana

Fiction
A Life of Their Own: The Quest Motif in Contemporary Irish Women's Short Stories 81
Ann Wan-lih Chang

Voices from South America
From Tradition to Innovation: The Short Stories of Osman Lins 95
Sandra Nitrini

Book Reviews
Moi, Ruben, B. Boyce and C.I. Arjmstrong (eds.). *The Crossings of Art in Ireland* 119
Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira

D'hoker, Elke and S. Eggermont (eds.) *The Irish Short Story* 123
Patricia de Aquino Prudente

Cruset, María Eugenia. *Nacionalismo y diásporas. Los casos vasco e irlandés en Argentina* 127
Óscar Álvarez-Gila

Wilkinson, Susan (ed.) *Recollections of an Irish Born Doctor in Nineteenth-Century Argentina* 135
David Barnwell

Munira H. Mutran. *A Batalha das Estéticas* 139
Peter James Harris

Maria Teresa Kopschitz de Barros and Maria Thereza Peixoto Kopschitz (eds.) *Passos de Maria Helena Kopschitz* 141
Carlos Daghlian

Colm Tóibín. *On Elizabeth Bishop* 143
Maria Clara Bonetti Paro

Contributors 147

Introduction

The 2015 issue of the "ABEI Journal" celebrates the 150th anniversary of the birth of William Butler Yeats on 13 June 1865. Recognised as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century, he also earned renown as a playwright, essayist and politician, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. Here in Brazil his name is enshrined in the Chair of Irish Studies named in his honour at the University of São Paulo. In our first piece, Marcello Amalfi writes about the process of composing music for the production of *At the Hawk's Well* which was staged in São Paulo at the Cultura Inglesa Theatre as part of the "Reading with the Ears" programme organised by Munira Mutran and Antonieta Celani. It is followed by texts examining links between Yeats's work and that of Gordon Craig, William Blake and Ezra Pound, written by Luiz Fernando Ramos, Munira H. Mutran and Andréa Martins Lameirão Mateus, respectively. The section concludes with Miguel Ángel Montezanti's review of Kathleen Raine's revisitation of Yeats's work.

We are also delighted to be able to publish two important interviews in the current issue. In the first of them, Mariana Bolfarine interviews David Rudkin about his 1973 radio play, *Cries from Casement as his Bones are Brought to Dublin,* anticipating the centenary celebrations of the Easter Rising. Beckett specialists Fábio de Souza Andrade and Luiz Fernando Ramos also interviewed theatre director Patrick Sutton and painter and actor Brian Maguire at the University of São Paulo during the Brazilian tour of their production of *Waiting for Godot.*

Samuel Beckett is also the focus of Fernando Aparecido Poiana's article on *Krapp's Last Tape* in our **Drama** section, while, in **Fiction**, Ann Wan-lih Chang examines contemporary Irish women's short stories.

In **Voices from Brazil,** Sandra Margarida Nitrini introduces us to the short stories of Osman Lins (1924-78), born in Pernambuco, in the northeast of Brazil, who is perhaps best known as an innovative novelist.

Finally, our **Reviews** section includes criticism by

Teatro de Santa Isabel, in front of Praça da República, Recife (Pernambuco). It was inaugurated in 1850. In J.E. Gerodetti & C. Cornejo. *Lembranças do Brasil. As Capitais Brasileiras nos Cartões-Postais e Álbuns de Lembranças*. São Paulo, Solaris Edições Culturais, 2004.

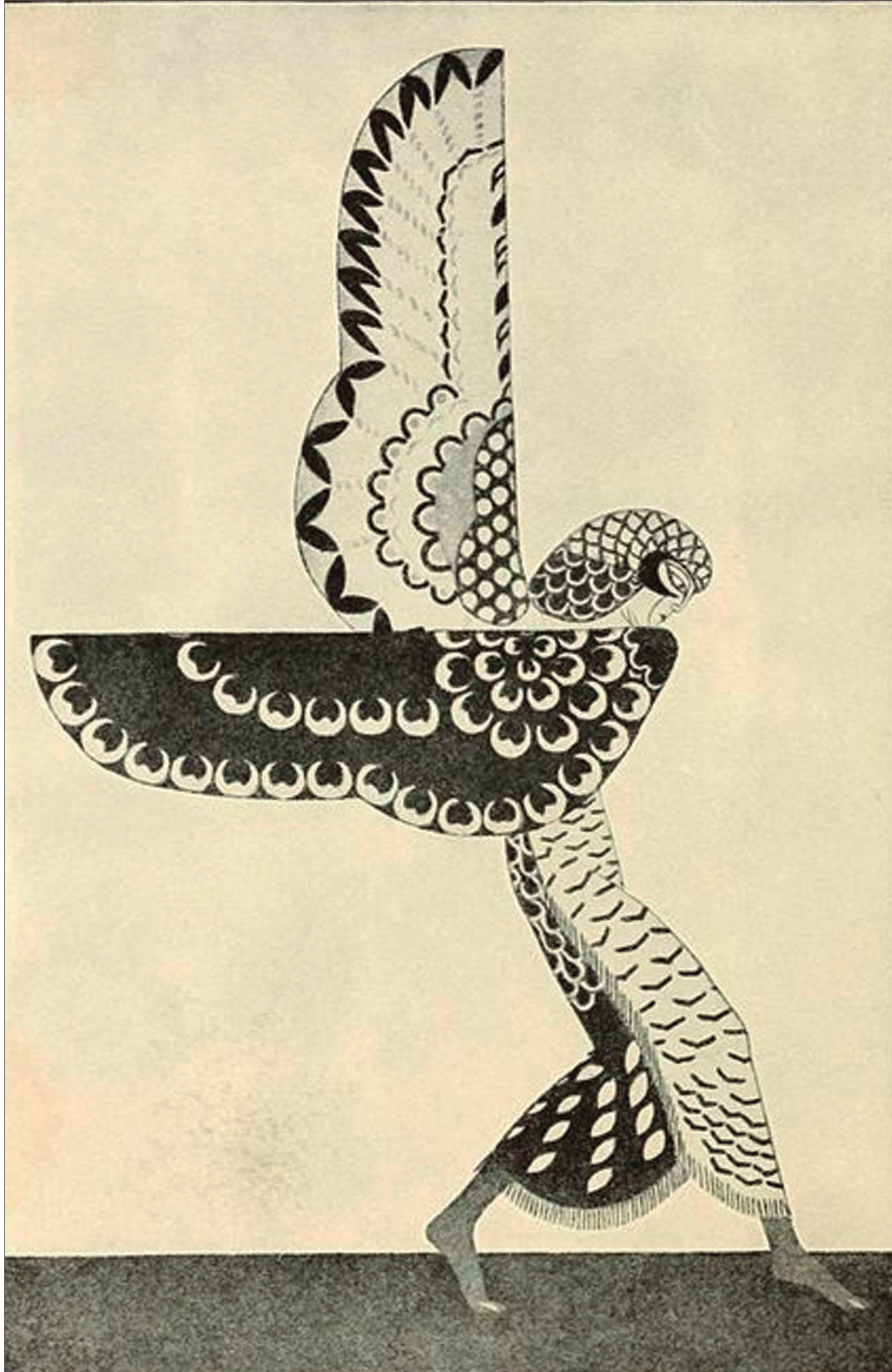
Óscar Álvarez-Gila, David Barnwell, Carlos Daghlian, Peter James Harris, Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira, Maria Clara Bonetti Paro, and Patricia de Aquino Prudente.

The Editors

Abei Journal 17.indd 8 03/07/2016 15:51:42

Celebrating W.B. Yeats

Abei Journal 17.indd 9 03/07/2016 15:51:42



The Guardian of the Well in ‘At the Hawk’s Well’ (frontispiece).
Illustration by Edmund Dulac for “Four Plays for Dancers” (1921)

At the Hawk's Well
A Theoretical and Practical Study about the Music in the Play

Maestro Marcello Amalfi

Abstract: *William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is a pillar of the so-called Irish Literary Revival. His work has influenced authors such as T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), among many others. He is best known for his poetry than for his dramaturgical texts, and above all, for having been awarded a literature Nobel Prize in 1923. Nonetheless, his work for the theatre has a great value, and it is now being rediscovered by artists from all around the world.The aim of this article is to visit part of that production, in order to write about and record the original music for the opening of* At the Hawk's Well *(1916). To achieve this goal, a theoretical research has been held covering texts and studies about the author, the play and its stage production; it was followed by a practical investigation that includes a search for rhythms, sounds, timbres and characteristic instruments, as well as the appropriate way to execute and record them in studio.*

Co-founder of the Abbey Theatre (1899), Yeats was, according to Augustine Martin (1935-1995), an author who dedicated himself to the costumes, the scenery, the music, the casting and all other elements of his productions. At first, he had his work turned to the tradition, to the medieval era, to the myths and Irish sagas. Nevertheless, at one point he realized that Ireland was very isolated and came to the conclusion that he needed to get closer to Europe, to get to know the French, the Spanish, the Greek, and especially the Russian drama. An idea that inspired him to translate Sophocles and stage it in Dublin.

In the early twentieth century, Yeats became interested in a stage without much scenery, which he calls the empty space, a term later adopted by Peter Brook (born in 1925). He was delighted when he met Edward Gordon Craig's work (1872-1966), and applied his ideas about scenery in a reenactment of the play *The Hour Glass* in 1911.

After this period, in 1913, Yeats met the great American poet and close friend of Eliot, Ezra Pound (1885-1972), who was his secretary at Stone Cottage, Sussex. During that period, Pound introduced Yeats to Noh through the writings of Ernest Fenollosa

(1853-1908). From this encounter, Yeats produced *Four Plays for Dancers*; *At the Hawk's Well* is the most representative of the four.

At the Hawk's Well is set in a secluded place in Ireland during its heroic age, where there is a well from which magical water bubbles and brings immortality to humans who drink it. Far away, the mythical hero Cuchulain hears about the well; wishing to become immortal, he travels through the seas to find it. The play starts when Cuchulain finally reaches the well, whose Guardian is a *Hawk-like Woman* of dry and stony eyes. He meets an old man who unsuccessfully attempts to make him go away. However, Cuchulain tries to convince him that they can drink from the magical water together. The old man says that over the last fifty years, the Guardian of the Well just looked at him - not moving, not saying a word. Every time the water bubbled, she scared him away. He then fell asleep and the water of the well was gone wen he woke up. At the end of the play, when the magical water is bubbling again and the old man is sleeping, the young hero approaches the well, but the Guardian of the Well makes a seductive dance, leading him to supernatural beings with whom he needs to fight.

Although Yeats hadn't attended any presentation of Noh by the time he was writing *At the Hawk's Well,* it reveals many similarities with that form of theatrical realization, mainly to a play named *Yoro,* specially due to the presence of elements like the fountain of youth, the leaves, the old and the young man. Making use of Japanese resources, Yeats discusses universal themes, such as the fall of the leaves metaphorically representing time, which is the destroyer of everything. Another universal theme, which also appears in other plays with Cuchulain, is the quest to achieve immortality facing great dangers; in other words, "being a hero" as Galahad, Lancelot, King Arthur, Hercules. A different way to achieve immortality that would move Yeats and was highly valued by William Shakespeare and so many other great writers who came after him, is the "immortality through art".

The musicality of the play, and its references to noh

In *At the Hawk's Well*, Yeats is looking for a new way to write drama. He attributes to music a very important role, using it from an artistic perspective of rapprochement and dialogue with Noh, where music is a mainstay of the staging construction. Although the Irish author did not intend to create a Japanese presentation, when we examine it, in parallel, the music in his play and in the traditional Eastern practice, we find a number of reference points which, when connected, draw very well his perspective.

One of these reference points is the Irish author's option for adopting a small group of performers on stage: "Three Musicians, the Guardian of the Well; an old man and a young man" (Yeats 136), quite similar to the traditional Noh spectacle, that always involves a small choir, musicians, and at least one *Shite* and one *Waki*, which belong to four main categories[1] of this practice, namely: *Shite* (仕手, シテ), the protagonist; *Waki* (脇, ワキ), the counterpoint of shite; *Kyogen* (狂言), the artists who perform the

Abei Journal 17.indd 12 03/07/2016 15:51:43

Aikyōgen (間 狂言), which are interludes of Noh plays. They also perform between two plays of the same program; *Hayashi* (囃 子) ou *Hayashi-kata* (囃 子 方) are the musicians.

Another reference to Noh in *At the Hawk's Well* is the musical ensemble: three voices, a drum, a gong and a Zither. This group has a timbre identity that, despite the presence of the Zither, can be easily connected to the striking sound of the traditional Noh's musical ensemble, called *Hayashi*, which, in addition to the sound of voices, uses the transverse flute (笛 fue)[2], the lap drum (大鼓 ōtsuzumi) or Okawa (大 皮), the shoulder drum (小鼓 kotsuzum), and a barrel-shaped drum (太 鼓 taiko).

The positioning of the musical ensemble established by the author in *At the Hawk's Well* is similar to the *Hayashi's* in Noh, as they sit along the back of the stage, facing the audience and fully visible. *Hayashi's* members are exclusively musicians, and their positioning follows standards, according to the nature of each instrument: the musician leftmost (from the point of view of the audience) plays with two sticks the *Taiko* drum set on a shelf; on his right, there are the *Õtsuzumi* drum and the *Kotsuzumi* drum; and finally, the instrument at the right end is the *Nōkan flute.* The instructions Yeats gives in the stage directions make this connection clear:

> The stage is any bare space before a wall against which stands a patterned screen. A drum and a gong and a zither have been laid close to screen before the play begins. If necessary, they can be carried in, after the audience is seated, by the First Musician, who also can attend to the lights if there is any special lighting. (Yeats 136)

Another reference to the Japanese culture is the musicians characterization. When describing it, Yeats says «their faces are made-up to resemble masks», pointing directly to this key element. Although in the practice of Noh musicians do not wear any masks, the members of *Jiutai* traditionally do. They wear a formal black kimono, the *Montsuki*, adorned with five crests to indicate the school to which they belong, accompanied by a *Hakama* (piece of clothing similar to a skirt) or a *Kami-shimo*, a combination of *Hakama* and a jacket with exaggerated shoulders.

The way music should be played in the Irish play also reveals a reference point to Noh, as shown in Richard Taylor's text:

> The intervention of the Musicians at the moment of the Guardian's possession by the goddess is also a remarkable instance of assimilation. As in Noh, the dynamic addition of massed voices is enormously effective in raising the level of tension, and Yeats also uses the device to narrate the dance and offer commentary which would not be appropriate to any of the characters. In addition, Yeats has given his Musicians a far more dramatic role, associating them closely whit the supernatural order from the very beginning. *At the Haw's Well* opens with richly textured lyric verse delivered by the seemingly omniscient and mysterious chorus, who set the scene and accomplish the introduction of the audience into the imaginary reality of the action, and their song is further emphasized by

Abei Journal 17.indd 13 03/07/2016 15:51:43

> the ritual unfolding and folding of a cloth. Instead of a gradual withdrawal from actuality, as in Noh, we are introduced immediately to another level of reality, which is underlined by the counterpoint of their freer and ornamented lyricism with the more austere and objective formality of the long parameters used by the characters themselves. The sudden intervention of the chorus as the Guardian of the Well dances is particularly effective as it reintroduces their more freely musical and heightened speech with all its connotations of supernatural world, and closely follows the practice of Noh where the chorus functions mainly as an extension of characterization or as an external commentator, substituting for the single actor at the climax of his emotional experience. (Taylor 153)

The transposition of noh elements into the play

During the process of composing the original music for At the Hawk's Well, we tried to stay closer to the perspective we believe Yeats had when writing the text for the play. To do so, we followed, as far as possible, his creative procedures. That led us to use as references nothing but theoretical material, such as academic texts, pictures and drawings, interviews and stage directions.

A number of preliminary studies have shown that the author had never intended to imitate the eastern theatre, which is the exact line of thinking we adopted. In our understanding, when he attached the writing process of the play to a theoretical research based on Ezra Pound's translations of Ernest Fenollosa's text, in fact, he operated what we identify as the *Transposition*[3] of Noh elements into his work.

It is important to explain that the *Transposition* process keeps a strong relationship with its musical source, although being assigned to a procedure in theatre practice. *Transposition* could be explained, in a more general way, as the set of adjustments one must implement to bring an specific idea into a different context from where it originally belongs. When creating a novel, it could mean to bring into text the idea of «passage of time» using words, sentences, written metaphors. In musical practice, it could mean to manage acoustic events over musical scales, rhythmic patterns, etc. However, when applied to theatre practice, *Transposition* acquires a broader spectrum, not just in terms of who will be the operator of adjustments, but also which elements will be adjusted; thus it can include theater non-acoustic elements, such as, the scenery, lightning, symbolic gestures, plot development, inter-characters relationship, etc.

Regarding this broader *Transposition* procedure adopted in the writing of the music for *At The Hawk's Well*, it has to be taken into consideration that W. B. Yeats himself became one reference of ours, and figures as an element to be managed in the creative process, enriching the research, especially in the points where his drama differs from Noh plays.

Abei Journal 17.indd 14 03/07/2016 15:51:43

The opening of *At the Hawk's Well* presents many characteristics of the Yeatsian powerful writing:

I call to the eye of the mind
A well long choked up and dry
And boughs long stripped by the wind,
And I call to the mind's eye
Pallor of an ivory face,
Its lofty dissolute air,
A man climbing up to a place
The salt sea wind has swept bare

Combined with the set of given instructions for its enactment, not only do they create reference points, but also, a solid contact area between the author's work and the Noh's theatre practice since the very beginning of the play, establishing a duality that will continue until the end of the presentation:

> Noh structure is an exact counterpart of the musical composition. The formal announcement of the subject, situation, or circumstance by the deuteragonist is followed by a statement of his name, social condition, and present intention. The travel-song which ends the introductory section normally describes the journey his is undertaking and introduces much seasonal imagery with its heavy burden of emotional overtones in Japanese culture. (Taylor 141)

This observation clarifies that the appearance of contact areas are, in fact, results of transpositions operated by Yeats. In the specific case of the opening, the contact areas are not limited to the introductory features shared by both Yeats's play and Noh, but also in the common format of their presentation, alternating the singing and speech. Hence, Noh's sung parts, the *Uthai*, who mingled with spoken parts, the *Kataru*, are elements that ended up taking part in our musical composition through Yeats's notes in the text. The same happened to concepts like "*Ma*" (notably its configuration of the silent moments, widely applied by us), and the *Jo-ha-kyū.*

Another element of interest to the musical creative process was the "personal look", mainly because from the very beginning we understood that it wouldn't be just about working on Noh references received through Yeats (who had received them from Ezra Pound), but also, to combine them with the results of a large research directly into the Japanese source, which should be held in parallel to the studies of the Yeatsian universe. We came into the conclusion that the reflections emerged during this process would forge the best choice of options for writing and recording the original music for *At the Hawk's Well* opening.

In the end of the process, the characteristic voice emission of Noh presented in our musical composition is not isolated, but placed side-by-side with the western way, the so-called *Bel Canto,* or *Classical singing*. It happened mostly because, according to our view, this sort of miscegenation caused by variations in the voices emissions

Abei Journal 17.indd 15 03/07/2016 15:51:43

(speech, half-singing, singing) is a strong feature of the play. Moreover, it is responsible for revealing Yeats's personal look on the Noh elements and practice (*Uthai*, *Kataru)*. Consequently, we chose to adopt the same focus on the voice element and its later artistic processing in our own process of musical composition, for the sake of providing "our personal look" specially originated from " Yeats' personal look on Noh».

The musical writing process

This choice gave initial direction to the musical writing, not making it any easier though. We found a number of new and fascinating information:

> Each lyrical unit has a more or less fixed literary form, subjectmatter, and rhetorical ornamentation, and associated with each is a general voice style, ranging from pure speech, a figured or heightened recitation, through melodic patterns based on varied rhythms, which are usually chanted by the main and secondary characters, tho those of fixed and emphatic rhythm which are generally employed by the chorus. The pitch range of the different styles may vary from "high" to " very low", depending on the effect desired and also shift from the "weak" tonal scale (which employs the full octave range of four main tones and numerous semi-tones) to the "string" tonal scale (which depends for effect on accent, dynamic stress, tone color, and a special and a special technique of accomplishing upward movement by intense straining of the vocal chords rather than melodic inflection). In the "Strong" system pitch intervals are inexact and unstable, and only two man tones are distinguished. Lyrical and emotional passages are normally sung in the "weak" style, while descriptive and powerful sections are intoned in the "Strong" mode. (Taylor 139)

By that time, we were already convinced that combining those two different voice emission possibilities could lead to very interesting results from both the theoretical and expressive point of view. Since the voice in Noh is strongly linked to specific scales and musical systems, we chose to start by creating all melodic structures applying the traditional *Yo* scale, which does not contains halftones intervals:

In practical terms, combining the *Yo* scale with two distinct ways of vocal emission generated a sound that ranges from "alternation" to "simultaneity" of very different aesthetics, the western and the eastern, resulting in a particular new approach.

Abei Journal 17.indd 16 03/07/2016 15:51:43

Intending to follow Yeats's instructions for the musician's movements during the play, the musical composition was built on a unit comprising "musical timing" and "scenic timing", considering them as one indivisible action, allowing the performers to fulfill both musical and scenic tasks.

The group of instruments originally addressed for the play had also been adapted to our needs and possibilities. The shoulder drum *Kotsuzum* (小鼓) and the stick drum Taiko (太 鼓) were replaced by a high pitch bongo, and a small plastic pot; the Zither was replaced by a twelve-string guitar; The Yamatogoto (大 和 琴), a historical instrument that originally has six to seven strings, and is believed to have been created in Japan, was replaced by a prepared steel strings guitar. Its preparation consisted by the placement of small wooden pieces on the instrument's neck (similar to the Japanese Koto), and an alternative fixed opened tuning in the Yo scale, which also required the replacement of some original strings.

The musical composition's first movement, andante, begins with a A Cappella session that allows the three musicians to follow Yeats's instructions for staging the opening of the play, while overlapping Noh and classical singing: they walk into the theatre room, unfold the cloth, and walk to the instruments set in the back of the stage. In the following session, the three of them are singing in classical way, and the drums and guitar are included.

Abei Journal 17.indd 17 03/07/2016 15:51:44

The second movement, *adagio*, begins with two calls, one in classical singing, and another in Noh singing. They are followed by a session where a soundscape is set by a delicate melody in an oriental mood executed by a flute, that works as a scenery for the Guardian of the Well to reveal herself, and for the line of the first musician. An important feature of this movement is that its duration is entirely based on the action developed on stage, not in musical bars or seconds.

The third movement, *andante*, has a new calling, followed by a medieval-like song designed to create the mood for the introduction of the old man. After the singing of the verses, the song remains with two musicians performing its melody in *bocca chiusa*, while the first musician keeps speaking.

The fourth and final movement of the musical composition, *andante*, takes up the first idea of overlapping classical and Noh singing, reinforced now by a dense mass of sound produced by the guitar and the drums.

Notes

1 There are also other categories of artists in the Noh play:
Shitetsure (仕 手 連 れ, シ テ レ ツ). The *shite's* mate. Sometimes, *Shitetsure* is abbreviated to *Tsure* (連 れ, ツ レ), although this term refers to both the *Shitetsure* and the *Wakitsure*.
Koken (後 見) The hands of the stage, usually one to three people.
Jiutai (地 謡) The choir, usually six to eight people.
Waki (脇, ワ キ) performs the function that is the counterpart of *shite*.
Wakitsure (脇 連 れ, ワ キ ヅ レ) or *Waki-tsure* is the *Waki's* mate.

2 The flute used in Noh is particularly named *Fue* or *Nohkan* (能 管).

3 This procedure can be found in works like the one held for over thirty-eight-years by musician Jean-Jacques Lemêtre in the French company Théâtre Du Soleil. Although the procedure itself has been part of theatre practice worldwide for long time, it was first identified, studied and named by us in the book entitled *A Macro-Harmonia da Música do Teatro [The Macro-Harmony of Theatre Music*]. São Paulo: Giostri, 2015.

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Abei Journal 17.indd 18 03/07/2016 15:51:44

W. B. Yeats and Gordon Craig: Collaborations and Rehearsals Towards the Theatre of the Future[1]

Luiz Fernando Ramos

Abstract: *The artistic partnership between the Irish poet W. B. Yeats and the English set designer and theatre theoretician Gordon Craig, short though it was and limited to only a few collaborations, was important for anticipating some of the principal developments in modern theatre and reverberates until today on the contemporary scene. Although it occurred between 1910 and 1913, and was particularly intense in 1911, when some productions were staged at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin with texts by Yeats and a strong influence from Craig, the partnership was born long before, out of the real friendship between the two artists, and continued long afterwards beyond those joint projects. My objective here is to tell a little of this story, highlighting how Yeats's absorption of Craig's ideas had a decisive influence on the development of his play-writing, with the so-called plays for dancers, and, further, how these may be perceived as rehearsals, or laboratory experiments, for the revolution in dramatic practice that was to take place in the theatre of Samuel Beckett. This re-examination of Craig's project, known as Scene, patented in four countries in 1910 and warmly embraced by Yeats, will also make it possible to present connections with recent manifestations of the contemporary theatre, conceived as the expanded scene, in a frank dialogue with the visual arts. Thus I shall argue that Yeats and Craig, each with their own interests, was a rehearsal, at the beginning of the twentieth century, of practices and proposals which anticipate contemporary theatricality, as seen in the first decades of the twenty-first century.*

Keywords: *W. B. Yeats; Gordon Craig; modern theatre; plays for dancers.*

The relationship between the poet and dramatist W. B. Yeats and the actor, set designer and producer Gordon Craig, which existed in the early years of the twentieth century and intensified at the beginning of the second decade of that century, has already been the focus of many studies, principally by researchers interested in Yeats's theatre. According to one of the most influential of them, James Flannery, in one of the canonical studies about the relationship between the two artists and the theatrical experiments on which they collaborated, "the letters from Craig to Yeats about the installation and

Abei Journal 17.indd 19 03/07/2016 15:51:44

practical use of his screens at the Abbey Theatre must be one of the most fascinating studies in twentieth-century theatre history".[2] Thus it was that, as a researcher interested in the work and projects of Gordon Craig, in 2013 I came across this correspondence in the Craig papers in the National Library of France, in Paris, which also includes some letters from Yeats to Craig, to which Flannery had had no access at the time he made the above statement, and I shared his fascination as I identified a certain tension between the views of theatre practice held by the two men. More than this, the correspondence seemed to me to be the tip of an iceberg, particularly with regard to one of the most important and least studied projects of Craig, patented by him in 1910 under the title *Scene*, being relevant to texts and drawings produced between 1907 and 1922 and, above all, to a collection of small model screens created by Craig for the project and lent to Yeats in 1910, for use in the revival of *The Hour Glass* in 1911 and other Abbey Theatre productions in Dublin in the years that followed.

However, before giving details about the use that Yeats made of Craig's invention and pointing to the decisive importance that this had in in the evolution of his theatre, it is important to give a brief introduction to the *Scene* project, to which end we should concentrate on the trajectory of Craig himself, especially on the moment, in 1900, when, two years after having abandoned a promising career as an actor, he produced his first show, Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*, staged in the drawing room of the Hampstead conservatoire, in London.

W. B. Yeats saw Gordon Craig's production for the first time in 1911. It was the second production of the same opera by Purcell, now in a double bill, including another opera by the same composer, *The Masque of Love*, in fact a section of his opera *Dioclesian*. The show was staged at the Coronet Theatre, in Notting Hill Gate. Yeats wrote several times about the deep impression that the show made upon him. He was so impressed, that he watched from the wings, together with Craig's sister, Edith, Craig's production that same year of Lawrence Housman's nativity play, *Bethlehem*. On that occasion Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory:

> I have learned a great deal about staging of plays from 'the nativity', indeed I have learned more than Craig likes. His sister has helped me, bringing me to where I could see the way the lights were worked. He was indignant – there was quite an amusing scene. I have seen all the costumes too… (Dorn 15).

Edith Craig tried to enable Yeats and Craig to work together, but it was only eight years later that the desired partnership finally came about, even though, in 1903, Yeats had made some timid experiments in the use of some of Craig's ideas concerning the use of curtains as a backdrop and of lights upon them, even if he had not used him as a producer, as proposed by the Abbey Theatre for a new scene. But the collaboration became more intense as from 1908, when Craig was already involved in his staging of *Hamlet* for the Moscow Art Theatre, which would open three years later, and was developing in his Arena Goldoni, in Florence, the first designs for the screens and their

Abei Journal 17.indd 20 03/07/2016 15:51:44

respective models. It was thus a situation in which both artists shared a mutual interest in the investigation into the screens; Yeats, in search of scenic renewal for his theatre saw a new hope in them, while Craig, their inventor, was offering them to someone whom he admired and who, he was sure, would be able to help him find his own success.

At the end of this collaboration, and after various productions in the Abbey Theatre, which directly or indirectly made use of the screens and of their *modus operandi*, Yeats, one might say, was greatly benefited by the partnership. As far as Craig was concerned, even though he had received neither the financial reward that he had hoped for, nor the artistic recognition that he had craved, it was nonetheless the most successful of the uses to which his patent was put.

In fact, the three years from 1910 to 1913 when Yeats and Craig were working closely together, exchanging letters and ideas, were sufficient for Yeats to learn the structural principle underlying the operation of the screens, using it effectively in his productions and borrowing from it as much as possible, as was demonstrated by his continuing use of it in the years that followed. Even without paying anything to Craig, he employed that valuable lesson above all in his projects for dance plays, developed soon afterwards, together with Ezra Pound, based on the edition of Japanese plays organised by Ernest Fenollosa (Dorn 33). Although many commentators have perceived this evolution into the Noh as Yeats freeing himself from Gordon Craig's scenic apparatus, it is important to point out that the *Scene* project meant, beyond the use of the screens, a new concept of set design, in which the stage, stripped of realistic, representative scenography became a "blank page" for a scene of poetic statement, perfectly compatible with the principles of the Noh.

For his part, Craig was initially charmed by Yeats's curiosity and the compliments he paid concerning his invention, and was later extremely generous and sent the Irish poet a model of the screens and a notebook with the plans on squared paper for him to practice and learn, and he also designed masks and costumes for some Abbey Theatre productions. Finally, he became sufficiently careful to prohibit Yeats from touring outside Ireland with the productions in which the screens had been utilised without paying performing rights.

It should be emphasised that the whole episode reflects, in a specific and concrete manner, the general level reception that the twentieth-century theatre extended to Craig's *Scene* project. Theatre practitioners, without having to follow the precise specifications of Craig's patents, but at the same time recognising the strength of that conception of a new standard of set construction, felt free to follow the trail that *Scene* – that flexible setting for an infinite variety of scenes – had blazed without paying any charge whatsoever.

In the case of Yeats, since there was friendship and mutual artistic respect, there was also explicit recognition of the source of the ideas. There are several texts and letters, or even published articles, in which Yeats recognises his debt to Craig. More than this, there are some drawings made by Yeats in his notebook during the period when he was experimenting with Craig's model for the production of *The Hour Glass*, in January 1911, which show how deeply he was indebted to those ideas and procedures.[3]

Abei Journal 17.indd 21 03/07/2016 15:51:44

Karen Dorn, who has also written about the theatrical collaboration between Craig and W. B. Yeats and detailed the profound influence of the Englishman on the Irish poet, above all in the staging of *The Hour Glass* in 1911, cites the ironic explanation of the Abbey Theatre architect, Joseph Holloway, about what he saw when he found Yeats manipulating Craig's screens in 1910:

> The entire setting struck me as like peas, only on a big scale, of the blocks I as a child built houses of.. As Yeats never played with blocks in his youth, Gordon Craig's childish ideas give him keen pleasure now. (Dorn 102)

Yeats seems to have been very grateful for the pleasure he obtained playing with Craig's screens. As he wrote in his preface to *Plays for an Irish Theatre*:

> All summer I have been playing with a little model, where there is a scene capable of endless transformation, of the expression of every mood that does not require a photographic reality. Mr Craig - who has invented all this – has permitted me to set up upon the stage of the Abbey another scene that corresponds to this in a scale of a foot for an inch, and henceforth I shall be able, by means so simple that one laughs, to lay the events of my plays amid a grandeur like that of Babylon. (Yeats 1911, xiii)

In the most detailed account he gave of the screens in 1910, in order to support the patenting process and argue in favour of their practicality, Craig emphasised the playfulness of his invention:

> The art of using this scene to the best advantage is a delicate one but acquired with practice. The aim of the Arranger is to place his screens in such a position that by moving the minimum number of leaves he may produce the desired amount of variety. (Craig 1910, 35). [...] I would advise anyone to avoid if possible the feeling that there is something very difficult about the manipulation of it. I would suggest to them that there is something in this scene akin to a box of child's bricks. In a way it is something to be played with, and if played with in the right spirit it will yield very good results. (43)

It so happens that, in the end, that great idea with which he hoped to become rich, spread out and was suavely assimilated during the decades that followed. This was to be the principal impact of Craig's pioneering innovation, that, through the so-called screens, he opened up a new range of possibilities for theatrical space, whether for a totally abstract scene or for a more conventional and dramatic one. As opposed to the widely propagated minimisation of the *Scene* project, I would emphasise that Craig effectively realised it in a very concrete manner, despite the veils behind which he himself hid his achievement, probably because of his own internal division between his ideal, metaphysical self and the practical ingenuity with which he worked with his theatrical raw material.

Abei Journal 17.indd 22 03/07/2016 15:51:44

However, let us return to Yeats and examine his trajectory from his first meeting with Craig through the years that followed, by means of some fragments of his correspondence, up until the cycle of four plays, known as the "plays for dancers", in which he emulated the structure of the Noh. Up to a certain point, those specific productions, which I shall examine in more detail, may be seen as a consequence of his experience with Craig and an anticipation of Beckettian theatre, principally from the 1960s.

I wish to highlight two specific letters which are examples of a certain tension between the two projects:

> Both Lady Gregory and I think you are quite right about putting off the *Hour Glass* till we have a mass of your work done with the screens. It was because we felt this that we played *Deliverer* with it, and for various reasons we don't want to bring *Deliverer* to London just now. We put *Hour Glass* on because we didn't like to seem not to value the privilege you had granted us. [...] I am also anxious to produce myself an old three-act comedy of Lady Gregory's which I admire very much with the screens, or my *Countess Cathleen*. I my pitch on this if I have to re-write much of it for the musical performance in London, but at any rate before our next visit to London I will have to manage with your screens. In fact there is a good deal of work to select from for the screens, for we have one Goldoni and possibly two. Some months ago we got the stage Carpenter to make certain doors covered with gold leaf to see how they would look set into the screens for certain kinds of comedy. Thank you very much for your plan for the *King's Threshold*. I shall set it upon the stage and look at it but I'm sure it is right. I shall be here till May 1. Then Stratford and London.
> Yours W. B. Yeats
> (Letter from Yeats, in Paris, to Craig, 22 April 1911, in BNF archive.)

> [...] In your other letter you tell me you got your stage Carpenter to make some gold doors go into my screens. Good God, is it possible I omitted to leave an exit and entrance way in my patent. If I did so I must certainly put it right out Mister Yeats. Your Carpenter mustn't. He mustn't add or take away anything whatever [...] but if any fault is found in said screens I will always be glad to rectify it. By the way has the Court Theatre a flat stage? [...] and have you written to Miss Terry (Helen) about England and the screens? Let me know you will. We mustn't have any complications about the use of the invention. I anticipate a manager in London using it before long, and of course frontiers have to be respected over such a thing as this. Still if you want sufficiently to take the thing to London arrangements had better be made at once... but at present no one has the right to use it but my mother. You will remember I wrote you about this point a very long time ago.
> (Letter from Craig, in Allessio, to Yeats, 1 May 1911, in BNF archive.)

If it were possible to summarise the internal contradictions lived by Craig from his youth onwards, and which were to accompany him into his old age as far as the

Abei Journal 17.indd 23 03/07/2016 15:51:44

theatre was concerned, I would say that that they reside in the simultaneous cohabiting of two models of theatricality. One was the theatre dating from the time of his birth, of the Victorian theatre, the Lyceum and of his great acting model, his half stepfather Henry Irving. He abandoned this style of theatre in 1898, at the age of twenty-six, when he gave up his acting career, devoting himself initially to graphic art and, from 1900 onwards, with his staging of *Dido and Eneas*, to scenic art in general. In this new stage he was to develop a new theory for the theatre which would culminate in his *Scene* project, marked by the absolute autonomy of the dramatic scene and the dramatic fiction, something close to what Mallarmé had understood to be a new theatricality, without drama. This was the theory, because in practice Craig continued to maintain a tense dialogue with dramatic poetry. For example, one of the points about which historians are divided concerns the two distinct projects under the name *Scene*: the first, presented in the first engravings of 1907, which projected a completely abstract scene, and a posterior, more pragmatic version, which was patented in four languages and which has come to be seen in the historiography of the artist as a degradation of the first, precisely because it admitted a conciliation with the dramatic, which was why it came to be known as being focused on "poetic drama". Without analysing the merit of the question here, I argue that there was only one single *Scene* project, which was developed over fifteen years and which, despite its practical utilisation, as I have already pointed out, represented a conceptual revolution in the modern theatre which can still be felt today. In any case, as I wish to emphasise, the project also sought to bring about an economic revolution, aiming to attract the interest of producers because of what it would mean in savings on production costs. To reconcile great artistic ambitions, which were almost spiritual, with this pragmatic, materialist quality, Craig conceded in the text of the patent application a certain compromise between this abstract scenography, sustained exclusively by the screens, and the more figurative dramatic tradition. This is made clear in the following letter:

> Finally, in connection with this scene I have made several additions by means of which doors, windows, cornices and staircases, trees, hills, clouds, stars, sun, moon, and all can be placed before the audience and that without calling in a single extra man to assist the usual staff and also without the use of paint or built-on scenery. (Craig 1910, 44)

This extract is particularly interesting because it points to this tension between the abstract and the figurative or between a poetic scene and a dramatic one from the perspective of Yeats himself. For his part, the tension between the dramatic and the scenic takes on other features inherent in the literary dimension itself and in the poet's constant internal debate between his lyrical poetry and his dramatic poetry. It is clear that, throughout his theatrical career, while these two supports of literary creation existed in parallel, exerting a mutual influence on each other and, at the same time, in permanent contrast with each other, Yeats also worked with the opposition between dramaturgy

on paper and dramaturgy on the stage. His meeting with Craig was the culmination of a process begun in the nineteenth century with his unrealised notions of a poetic scene, followed by his first experiments with new way of conceiving of a production and lighting it, borrowed from Craig, to the shows realised with the scenic techniques from the set-designer, which would then catapult him into scenic authorship, now in the minimalist model inspired by the Noh but conceptually still indebted to Craig. These arrangements enable us to identify in Yeats's militant engagement with set design one of the reasons why, a pioneer amongst his contemporary dramatists, he was concerned up until his last work, to rewrite his plays around productions, either staged or yet to be staged, thus anticipating Samuel Beckett to a certain extent, as Katherine Worth points out. This writing in-process, which has now become customary, is one of the concrete indications that the tension between the lyrical and dramatic dimensions encountered in this dialogue with stage practice was a *locus* enabling it to be clearly identified. But it is interesting to go a little deeper, to draw a contrast between this tension in Yeats's writing and what happened in the case of the French poet Stephane Mallarmé, translated into English by Arthur Symons, an incontestable influence on Yeats. In the case of Yeats the tension exists between pure lyricism and dramatic poetry and, even so, in a distancing from this which one might describe as pure drama, which in fact led some literary critics to minimise the importance of his playwriting, while leading others, like Bernard O'Donoghue, to perceive it as being ahead of its time. In the case of Mallarmé, this tension between the lyrical and the dramatic does not exist because, both in his poetry and in his radically anti-dramatic "dramaturgy", Mallarmé was always opposed to whatsoever compromise with fictionality or dramatic functionality, but never ceased to be interested in what we might describe as the performative aspects of theatricality (puppet theatre, circus, dance), and even to a certain extent created the model for, or announced, an era of generalised performativity, beyond the dramatic, in which the theatre reencountered or recovered its purely material character.

Thus one might say that Yeats, as a result of his circumstances, and through the sheer necessity of drawing up a dramatic project in his first contact with the theatre, spent his life distancing himself from it but, at the same time, never abandoning the presence of the two dimensions in tense coexistence, unlike Mallarmé, in whose work there was a separation and a radical distinction.

In the case of Craig, a confessed disciple of Mallarmé, but who, as has already been stated, was also familiar with the kind of tension that Yeats was experiencing, torn between the demands of functional drama and his lyrical aspirations, it was possible to break with the dramatic more radically, even if he never ceased to orbit around it (the perfect example of this indissoluble link being *Drama for Fools*, Craig's unfinished series of plays for puppet theatre), which enabled him to draw closer to Yeats, or at least to comprehend the conflicts the poet underwent in his theatrical experience.

I wish to reflect now on the tensions underlying the shock between Craig's scenic poetics, which for him implied the hegemony of the scene as musical architecture over Yeats's dramatic poetics, which sought a lyrical enunciation and, while not failing to

Abei Journal 17.indd 25 03/07/2016 15:51:45

concede a central place to drama, nonetheless invaded the scenic space and was inscribed in the stage directions - just as Beckett would do five decades later, as in *Play*, for example, in 1963. This writing of the theatrical poet, which insisted on the lyrical in language but juxtaposed it to physical presence and volumetric movement, became apparent above all in the leaning towards the Noh. Let us focus directly on the *Four Plays for Dancers*: *At the Hawk's Well*, staged in 1916, *The Only Jealousy of Emer* and *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919), and *Calvary* (1920). What defines them, above all, more than the themes, or the dialogue, both somewhat similar or reminiscent of those of the plays of the two preceding decades (lyrical, cryptic speeches referring back to Celtic mythology), are their stage directions and the spatiality and temporality established by the scenic indications, which go beyond a characterisation of the fictional environment, and are much closer in their development to an objective, material definition of the scene itself.

The initial stage directions of *At the Hawk's Well* read:

> *The stage is any bare space before a wall against which stands a patterned screen. A drum and a gong and a zither have been laid close to the screen before the play begins* […]
> *The First Musician carries with him a folded back cloth and goes to the centre of the stage towards the front and stands motionless, the folded cloth hanging from between his hands. The two other Musicians enter and, after standing a moment at either side of the stage, go toward him slowly unfolding the cloth, singing as they do so* […]
> *As they unfold the cloth, they go backward a little so that the stretched cloth and the wall make a triangle with the first Musician at the apex supporting the centre of the cloth. On the back cloth is a gold pattern suggesting a hawk. The Second and Third Musicians now slowly fold up the cloth again, pacing with a rhythmic movement of the arms towards the First Musician and singing.*
> *(Song for the folding and unfolding of the cloth)*[4]

Yeats is here explicitly emulating the ritual procedures of the classical Noh theatre, but he is also employing Craig's notion of an empty space to be filled with neutral forms in order to constitute an abstract materiality. In this case the crucial element is the folded cloth, whose unfolding and utilisation to hide the action at times was to become the unvarying constant of the four plays. In this economy of resources, and of support – any intimate space whatsoever could be used for a performance with the "audience" in a semi-circle – Yeats was taking a step that none of his contemporary dramatists dared to take, held captive as they were by a scenography which, if not realistic, was at least anchored in contextualising referentiality. Between the almost religious practice of the Noh, always evocative of the ghosts of dead characters and propitious of dialogue with this metaphysical dimension, and the combinatory game of the screens, with abstract volumes constituting ludic spatial syntaxes, Yeats's four plays dreamed of a new theatre. But they were capable of creating this almost autonomously, depending on very little beyond three musicians and a few actors. Thus, if we accept what has been

Abei Journal 17.indd 26 03/07/2016 15:51:45

argued, that Yeats's theatre is always situated at a tense point between the lyrical and the dramatic, the dramatic poetry of the previous plays being the specific *locus* of this tension, perhaps one might say that with these plays and with his assumption of the role of scenic author, or, better, stager, his *poiesis* or production came to constitute scenic material. Or, since this came about principally as a result of the partnership with Craig, as the poet of a scene and no longer of a speech, one might suggest that now, in this authorial scene this tension became apparent in the show itself, in the way in which its concreteness predominated and roughly accommodated his poetic discourse.

In order to reach a conclusion which contemplates what is proposed in the title with regard to the future, or, in other words, contemporary art, it is necessary to recapitulate the elements of Yeats's theatricality which may be considered to be anticipatory, or which serve as legacies that can be recognised in theatrical practice over the past fifty years. In summary, these elements are the idea of writing in process, the constant revising and rewriting in the light of the scenic evidence and, also, the text contemplating scenic materiality via stage directions which are more defining, rather than being merely supportive. Both these characteristic features of Yeats's theatre were to reappear in possibly the twentieth century's most radical author, Samuel Beckett, in the sense that a rupture with the dramatic pattern on the basis of which one could still speak of drama, effectively became the perspective of an anti-drama or post-drama.

Jonathan Kalb contrasts Beckett's televisual poetics with those of another great producer of the contemporary theatre:

> The works startle for the same reason Robert Wilson's stage productions do: because the author/director makes every framed moment answer to impeccable standards of precision like those we expect in painting […] Beckett differs from Wilson, though, in the same way Caravaggio did from most of his sixteenth-century contemporaries: the window, or camera lens, turns inward on particular psychologies rather than outward on epic panoramas. Beckett's interiority provides all the spectacle necessary to hold audience interest, especially when he accentuates in his directing through specificity, repetition and enlarging. Unlike Wilson, and like Caravaggio, he has both remarkable insight into the psychology of his characters and a visual artist's skill at communicating that understanding in graphic terms. (Kalb 116)

With regard to this proximity between Beckett and Yeats I would like to mention the pioneering work of Takahashi Yasunari. In articles like 'The Ghost Trio: Beckett, Yeats, and Noh' (*Cambridge Review* 107/2295, 1986, 172-6), he relates one of Beckett's television plays to Yeats and the Noh. In fact, since the 1970s, Yasunari has been drawing attention to the significance of the Noh in Yeats's theatre, principally in his eagerness to overcome realism and move beyond symbolism. A particularly interesting point raised by Yasunari, with regard to the alternative represented by the Noh for the poet's

Abei Journal 17.indd 27 03/07/2016 15:51:45

unsatisfied desires, is the explicit presence in those dramas of something that lies at the very root of their structure, the figure of the ghost. If Yeats's earlier plays already dealt with situations of the dramatic meeting of the living and the dead, his plays for dancers consist of ghosts and dialogues situated between the dimensions of life and death, a theme that is also present in Beckett's television plays and in his final short pieces.[5]

Xerxes Metha comments on the growing obscurity that marks this final phase of Beckett's work, which he describes as "ghost-plays", because the root of their strength is in their spectral quality. In order to acquire this quality these last works require a rigorous control of their lighting. In them, darkness is not only part of their syntactical fabric, but is also the most important element in rendering the image effective. (Metha 171-2).

It is here that a final and curious point of comparison between Yeats and Beckett arises. While in the former, as also in the Noh, there are ghosts which are narrated and spoken. Beckett presents them materialised in the thickness of darkness, as concrete entities on stage. They are not figures, they do not represent a particular referent, but they are present, they are black holes which attract and dissolve all the light and all the sight that would see them. They are neither flesh-and-blood ghosts, nor are they evanescent. They are invisible.

Notes

1 Translated from the Portuguese original by Peter James Harris.

2 Flannery, James W., "W. B. Yeats, Gordon Craig and the Visual Arts of the Theatre", in *Yeats and the Theatre*, O'Driscoll, Robert and Reynolds, Lorna (eds.), London: Macmillan Press, 1975. 100.

3 Karen Dorn reveals how, working with Craig's screens, Yeats completely changed the first staging of *The Hour Glass*, from 1905, in the 1911 production, and even the dramatic version of the text, in the second staging with the screens, in 1912 (Dorn 23-33).

4 Yeats, W. B., *The Yeats Reader: A portable compendium of poetry, drama and prose*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 219.

5 Takahashi had earlier authored two other provocative works that trace the relation between the Noh and Beckett, 'The Theatre of Mind: Samuel Beckett and the Noh' (*Encounter* [April 1982]: 66-73) and 'Qu'est-ce qui arrive? Some Structural Comparisons of Beckett's Plays and Noh' (in *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*, edited by Morris Beja, S. E. Gontarski, and Pierre Astier (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1983).

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Abei Journal 17.indd 28 03/07/2016 15:51:45

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Abei Journal 17.indd 29 03/07/2016 15:51:45

Abei Journal 17.indd 30 03/07/2016 15:51:45

W. Blake & W.B. Yeats in The Tunnel of Time

Munira H. Mutran*

Abstract: *This article traces a comparative view of the sacred and symbolic dimension in two congenial poets: William Blake and William Butler Yeats. Blake is a precursor of Romanticism in English poetry and Yeats has called himself "the last of the Romantics" at the start of his career. As a profound admirer of Blake's work, Yeats has dedicated years in the reading and interpretation of his Prophetic Books. The impact of such interest is one of the focus here, as well as their views on mimetic and symbolic art. Yeats shows us in his essays on Blake that he struggled to make a distinction between these two forms of representing reality.*

Keywords: *Poetry; symbolism; representation in art; imagination.*

Blake wrote that the ability to communicate with Heaven is given to us through Poetry, Painting and Music. For him, the three are inseparable and the way they relate is an integral part of all he has accomplished. Much has been written on Blake's literary career but not much on the poet-artist. Most critics, such as Harold Bloom, believe that the engraved poems are independent of their illustrations. They do not take into account, for instance, the fact that Blake has called his *Songs of Innocence* (1789) "illuminated printings", the first of a series to be produced by means of a method invented by him. Actually, we can read in a flyer advertising the 1809 exhibition of his artistic productions:

> If a method of Printing which combines the Painter and the Poet is a phenomenon worthy of public attention, provided that it exceeds in elegance all former methods, the Author is sure of his reward. (Symons 1907, 50)

One of the exceptions to the critical tendency to distinguish the poet from the engraver or the draughtsman was Arthur Symons who, besides discussing biographical and literary aspects in his book *William Blake* (1907), concentrates on how poetry and engravings interact in his work. For Symons, Blake's genius is due to his surprising imagination, or vision, which many contemporaries (and even the nineteenth-century criticism) consider as a kind of madness. Before W. Wordsworth's and S. T. Coleridge's

Abei Journal 17.indd 31 03/07/2016 15:51:45

preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Blake had pronounced the word that, according to Symons, would be most used in the turn of the century – "imagination". Blake would say that nature does not contain the supernatural, so it dissolves. Imagination is Eternity. With such convictions, he rebelled against the artistic tendencies that were prevalent in the first half of the eighteenth century, believing that the year in which he was born, 1857, marked the beginning of a new order against detested Reason, "the Indefinite *Spectre*, who is the *Rational Power*" whose main representatives, Bacon, Newton, Locke, Voltaire, and Rousseau mocked Inspiration and Vision:

> Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;
> Mock on, Mock on, 'tis all in vain.
> You throw the sand against the wind,
> And the wind blows it back again.
>
> And every sand becomes a Gem
> Reflected in the beams divine;
> Blown back, they blind the mocking Eye,
> But still in Israel's paths they shine.
>
> The atoms of Democritus
> And Newton's particles of Light
> Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,
> Where Israel's tents shine so bright.
> (Blake 1957, 83)

Blake demonstrated, thus, that he despised a faithful copy of life, since observation, one of the daughters of memory, would destroy and kill imagination. The difference between observation and vision in the arts can be explained in the question and answer included in his "Descriptive Catalogue":

> Shall Painting … be confined to the sordid drudgery of facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances, and not be, as poetry and music are, elevated into its proper sphere of invention and visionary conception? No, it shall not be so! Painting, as well as Poetry and Music, exists and exults in immortal thoughts. (*apud* Symons 1907, 183)

One century after the publication of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, calling himself "the last of the Romantics", William Butler Yeats, at 25, marks his place in the "processional order" of visionary and mystic poets, such as Blake. He states that in this context the word is synonym of tradition and, as the last Romantic, he was to inherit the richness of this legacy and to transform it. Having inherited from his father the enthusiasm for the English poet, he read Blake's work when he was fifteen or sixteen years old, feeling a great affinity with him, because their temperaments, dominated

Abei Journal 17.indd 32 03/07/2016 15:51:45

by imagination and "vision", were very similar. To evaluate the essential role of the author of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in Yeats's formative years, it is enough to remember that during four years he dedicated himself to the interpretation of the mystical philosophy of the *Prophetic Books*. His meeting, during the spring of 1889, with Edwin Ellis, who also deeply admired the English poet, led them to the project of organizing *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic and Critic* in three volumes. It started with discussions on the philosophy of Boehme and Swedenborg in an attempt to understand *The Book of Tell*, first of the prophetic books, copied by Yeats at the Bodleian Library; they worked over still unknown manuscripts and elaborated a list of mystical terms used by the author. The copy of the documents was also made at the British Museum and in Red Hill, where the descendants of John Linnell, a friend of the poet, lived. It must have been fascinating to be able to read and copy manuscripts by Blake! Did Yeats and Ellis evaluate the importance of what they were doing? While they wrote, the old Linnell was there, sitting, apparently to sharpen their pencils, but probably, according to Yeats, so that the papers wouldn't be stolen. Yeats talked about the experience in his letters. To miss Tynan, in an 1889 letter, he justified the choice of the Prophetic Books:

> You will be surprised to hear what I am at besides he new play; a commentary on the mystical writing of Blake. A friend is helping me or perhaps I should say I am helping him, as he knows Blake much better than I do, or anyone else perhaps. It should draw notice – be a sort of red flag above the waters of oblivion – for there is no clue printed anywhere to the mysterious "Prophetic Books". (Yeats 1953.106)

The publication became reality in January, 1893. It is an essential achievement for the understanding and fruition of the great visionary artist. It helped Yeats, as he himself confessed, to crystalize ideas that were also his own. He, as Blake, aimed at creating a poetry with strict relations with art, in the Pre-Raphaelite's way. The alliance of literature and painting was one of the most marked characteristics of the movement initiated in London in the first half of the nineteenth century. Yeats traced an inverted route from painting to literature, composing, for instance, a play inspired by one of John B. Yeats's paintings. The critic Richard Ellmann notes that *Wanderings of Oisin* with its Pre-Raphaelite's style and symbolist method has scenes that "suggest a Rossetti or Burne Jones painting" (1979. 52).

In many of his critical essays, Yeats reflects on questions central to the artistic creation. Two of them show the young Irish poet pondering on the work of the poet-artist: *William Blake and the Imagination* (1897) and *William Blake and His illustrations of the Divine Comedy* (1897), both included in *Ideas of Good and Evil*, a title that is an explicit allusion to one of the favourite topics of the author of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

In his first essay, Yeats defines the English poet as one of those authors who writes for the future since, not having a model in the world he lived in, he became confusing

and obscure for his contemporaries. As during his own time imaginative works had the function of amusing people, while sermons would shape souls, Blake announced art as religion. If imagination is the first reflection of divinity, the imaginative arts are, therefore, the greatest divine revelations; the sympathy for all living things, virtuous or sinning, that those arts describe, is forgiveness of sin preached by Christ. For Blake, according to Yeats, "the reason, and by the reason he meant deductions from the observations of the senses, binds us to mortality because it binds us to the senses, and divides us from each other by showing us our clashing interests; but imagination divides us from mortality by the immortality of beauty, and binds us to each other by opening the secret doors of all hearts." (Blake 1989.112). The importance of the author of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, according to the essayist, lies in the fact that he was a symbolist claiming for a mythology such as the Celtic or Gaelic or Scandinavian, where he could extract symbols from. Since his world did not possess one, he was obliged to invent it.

William Blake and His illustrations of the Divine Comedy is divided in three parts: the ideas, the philosophical systems and the several illustrations of Dante's work. Again, Yeats emphasizes the role of Blake as the first writer in modern times to preach the indissoluble marriage of all great works of art with the symbol or the symbolic imagination which he preferred to call "vision". If the symbol is "indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame" (*op. cit.* 22), allegory is one of the probable representations of something, or familiar principle, and belongs to fantasy and not to imagination: the symbol is the revelation, allegory is fancy. For Blake, Painting, Poetry and Music are the powers, still not snatched away by time and space, making possible a communication with heaven. This doctrine suggests that the world of imagination is the world of eternity and it is, therefore, important to separate the world of fantasy, created in moments without inspiration, of memory or fancy, from the moment of vision.

Yeats asks if Blake would be a realist of the imagination; or a symbolic realist, as the Pre-Raphaelites. He reminds us that Blake's struggle was to make a distinction between these two forms of representing reality. In this complex essay, Yeats lingers on what Blake thought of Poetry and Painting: "As poetry admits not a letter that is insignificant, so painting admits not a grain of sand or a blade of grass insignificant, much less an insignificant blot or blur" (1989.27). In Yeats's words, Blake's illustrations of the *Book of Job* and of the *Divine Comedy* are "the crowning work of his life" (*op. cit.* 30). The Irish poet has no doubts that some of the illustrations of the Dante's book that occupied Blake for the last ten years of his life, have come to perfection and he arrives to the conclusion that though sometimes "the technique of Blake was imperfect, incomplete, … where his imagination is perfect and complete, his technique has a like perfection, a like completeness" (1989.31).

In the struggle between the mimetic and the symbolic schools, there is no doubt about the winner, if we consider what Yeats has written in many of his critical essays. Nevertheless, as it was well observed by Symons, with the invention of the "illuminated

Abei Journal 17.indd 34 03/07/2016 15:51:45

printings", Blake "was the first and remains the only, poet who has in the complete sense made his own books with his own hands; the words, the illustrations, the engraving, the printing, the colouring, the very inks and colours, and the stitching of the sheets into boards" (Symons 51).

When Blake illustrates the *Divine Comedy* (1307-1313), something already done by Botticelli between the years 1480 and 1495, he knew the art and vision of Dante and interpreted them graphically in the period between 1820 and 1827; at the end of the nineteenth century, Yeats reflects about these illustrations of Dante's work through the vision of Blake and his own, in interesting resonances, in a kind of time tunnel by which the art of many centuries has flowed.

Notes

* This is an updated version of the text which was first published in D.O. Leitura/Abril 2002. Universidade de São Paulo. 27-33. Translated from the Portuguese by Andréa Martins Lameirão Mateus.

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A Memorable Fancy
William Blake

I was in a Printing house in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation.

In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a cave's mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave.

In the second chamber was a Viper folding round the rock & the cave, and others adorning it with gold silver and precious stones.

In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air: he caused the inside of the cave to be infinite, around were numbers of Eagle like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs.

In the fourth chamber were Lions of flaming fire raging around & melting the metals into living fluids.

In the fifth chamber were Unnam'd forms, which cast the metals into the expanse. There they were reciev'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries.

Abei Journal 17.indd 35 03/07/2016 15:51:45

Abei Journal 17.indd 36 03/07/2016 15:51:45

Yeats, Pound and their Brazilian Translations

Andréa Martins Lameirão Mateus

and William who dreamed of nobility
Ezra Pound

Abstract: *From the second half of the last century on, we have seen a certain number of translations of English language poetry into Brazilian Portuguese. Some of these are landmarks in the field of poetic translations in Brazil. The aim of this article is to present a preliminary investigation and comparison of the effect that translation choices had in the reception of two authors, namely, William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound. Another point in the investigation is the longevity of these translations in the catalogues of their publishers. Availability, scope, quality and intention play a role in the way Yeats and Pound were translated and how they were read in Brazil.*

Keywords: *Translation; poetic translation; English language poetry; reception.*

Pound and Yeats

When considering the literary connections between the poets William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound, one episode is probably the most remembered, if not the most mentioned: the time, between 1913 and 1916, they spent working together at the Stone Cottage. This was a collaborative time that would never again be repeated, for each would follow very distinct poetic routes even if they would remain in contact, and affectionate to each other. From the perspective of this encounter, and the way both poets are read in comparison (and in regard of each poet's supposed "modernity" after this period), this work will investigate the Brazilian reception of their poems through a comparative analysis of their translation history in Brazil. The focus will be translations published in book form, especially books and anthologies devoted exclusively to each poet.

The Stone Cottage years were decisive for both of them: Yeats was about to reinvent himself as a poet and Pound was – in spite of his early ardour to capture the

Abei Journal 17.indd 37 03/07/2016 15:51:45

essence of his admired senior – about to dismiss Yeats's influence and set his own path as one of the founders of Modernist poetry in English.

It was between this moment and that winter in 1913 at the Stone Cottage that Pound set the standards of Imagism. He was, as far as Modernism history is concerned, at the centre of the first great English movement in the direction of Modernism, and he then accompanied the *greatest living poet,* for they were working as a team, reading each other's works, and mutually contributing to their own personal transformations as artists.

Having met in 1909, it is impressive to observe how they maintained a mutual admiration and a curiosity about each other throughout their lives, including when they had very harsh criticism on each other's work – and even that was not enough to set them completely apart. "I have been praised by the greatest living poet", is now a famous quote and was written by Pound to William Carlos Williams in their correspondence (Pound 1971, p.7). Also famous is the remark by Yeats in the same year on how "this queer creature, Ezra Pound" was a great authority on the troubadours and knew the right sort of music for poetry (Yeats 1955, 543).

Their collaboration continued for some years after their time at Stone Cottage, but became less and less frequent in the 1920s. Pound writes to W.C. Williams in 1920 that at this time "Rémy and Henry are gone and Yeats faded, and no literary publication whatever extant in England, save what "we" print (…)" (Pound 1971, 158). In his typical harsh and dismissive style, Pound wants to point out to Williams his independence from the English scene, which includes Yeats. In 1920 Yeats was lecturing, working on plays and had just published the important *Wild Swans at Coole* (1917); he would also write the poem "The Second Coming" in 1920, so one would find it hard to see how Yeats could be "faded".

Another famous episode shows Pound, in 1934, calling the draft of the play *The King of the Great Clock Tower* "putrid", an incident that "seems to have dispirited rather than angered Yeats." (Ross 2009, 347). The incident happened at an ascending moment in Pound's career. He was now deeply immersed in the writing of *The Cantos*, and had just published *The ABC of Reading* by Faber & Faber. Though the Pounds received the Yeatses at Rapallo, he was clearly not any longer in tune with the poetic project of his senior.

Two other notable episodes in the 1930s were the publication of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* and the revised edition of *A Vision* in 1937. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) is an anthology of poets "chosen by Yeats" from Walter Pater (1839-1894) to George Baker (1913-1991). Yeats devotes six pages to Pound's poetry, but inform us that he is "inadequately represented because too expensive" (Yeats 1936, xlii) Yeats presents Pound, in the introduction, saying that he is in the middle of an "immense poem", in which

> There is no transmission through time, we pass without comment from ancient Greece to modern England, to modern England to medieval China; the symphony,

Abei Journal 17.indd 38 03/07/2016 15:51:45

> the pattern, is timeless, flux eternal and therefore without movement. Like other readers I discover at present merely exquisite or grotesque fragments. He hopes to give the impression that all is living, that there are no edges, no convexities, nothing to check the flow; but can such a poem have a mathematical structure? Can impressions that are in part visual, in part metrical, be related like the notes of a symphony; has the author being carried beyond reason by a theoretical conception? (Yeats 1936, xxiv)

Yeats's cautions with the possibility of a poetic project such as *The Cantos* to succeed could be taken as anti-modern, but actually what we see in this anthology is the talent of a great poet in assembling just the perfect taste of Pound productions. Starting with Pound's daring translation from the Greek in "The Return" quoted in the "Introduction", Yeats then assembles together "The River's Merchant's Wife: a Letter", a translation from the Chinese included in *Cathay*, an excerpt from "Homage to Sextus Propertius" and "Canto XVII". The "inadequate" representation is actually an ideogram of Pound's poetics: Greeks and Romans and Chinese – West and East and the eternal flux of *The Cantos*. The understanding of "The Modern" in his anthology may not be the expected radical Modernism of the avant-garde but it shows his understanding of what it meant to be writing in English (and being Modern) at the period: it does not mean only to be avant-garde, it includes more parts of the spectrum.

Another sign of a "different modernity" is Yeats's *A Vision.* Readers of the 1937 edition of the book are presented with an addendum, in the form of introduction, not seen in the 1925 original, called "A Packet for Ezra Pound". They might wonder what Ezra Pound is doing in an already mysterious volume, a peculiar blend of occultism, pre-Socratic philosophy, and mediunically received poetic images, forming a complex system that would work as a skeleton key for the art of all ages. In this piece Yeats discloses the nature of his appreciation of Pound's art at that point: "Ezra Pound, whose art is the opposite of mine, whose criticism commends what I most condemn, a man with whom I should quarrel more than with anyone else" (Yeats 2015, 3). And yet his tone towards Pound is affectionate, the older poet looking at the man who was feeding the cats in Rapallo, the Italian village where Pound was living.

Yeats and Pound are deeply connected also to the point of affecting each other's critic reception at times. Studies that keep the perspective of the creation of "Modernism in English" tend to see Pound as pivotal to the changes in the poetry of Yeats. Another tendency, in somewhat more recent criticism, aims to review previous claims and minimize the weight of Pound's "modernizing powers" over Yeats. One example, written in 1988 – the same decade of Yeats's first main translations in Brazil – is James Longenbach's *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats and Modernism*. Its author contends that at closer look, Pound was receiving a lot from Yeats, more than he was usually credited for. Pound was certainly proud of the attention given to him by Yeats, who is clearly reinventing his poetic self, though he does not make a direct connection between their personal artistic exchange and "the new Yeats". In 1915, for a book that remained unpublished, Pound wrote:

Abei Journal 17.indd 39 03/07/2016 15:51:45

> There is little use discussing the early Yeats, everyone has heard all that can be said on the subject. The new Yeats is still under discussion. Adorers of the Celtic Twilight are disturbed by his gain of hardness. Some of the later work is not so good as the Wind Among the Reeds, some of it better, or at least possessed of new qualities. Synge had appeared. There is a new strength in the later Yeats on which he & Synge may have agreed between them. Poems like "The Magi" & "The Scholars," and "No Second Troy" have in them a variety that the earlier work had not. (Longenbach 1988, 19)

For Longenbach, if this opinion had come to light at the time it was written, it might have changed the notion of the younger poet invested in the project of "modernizing" Yeats. Richard Ellmann, in his influential biography *The Man and the Masks* (1979), presents a Pound that is "convinced that Yeats was the best poet writing in English but that his manner was out of date" and "a very mixed personality" in his relationship with the nineteenth century. Full of energy, and ready to "eliminate abstractions", Pound takes liberties with his revision of Yeats's poems, and suggests improvements for the text of the play "At the Hawk's Well", but in the end "the tone, too, is definitely that of Yeats and no one else" (Ellmann 1979, 214-215). So, in this sense, Pound's hand is seen, as in the case of his revision of Eliot's "The Waste Land", as an artistic collaboration rather than an influence.

Pound and Yeats in Brazil

It is not our purpose here to take sides either with the idea that Pound has "influenced" Yeats to the point of carrying him along to the twentieth century or to prove how it was actually Pound who has taken much from Yeats. All those anecdotes feed interpretative myths that place (or not) Yeats in an idea of "Modernity" along with Pound and Eliot. Our aim is to see if these ideas (and how) have arrived in Brazil and affected the reception of these poets here, especially in relation to the work of translators, their selections and their introductions written for anthologies of poems. How was this relationship read in Brazil and how – the focus of this article's investigations – have they influenced the way they have been translated?

One point should be made about Brazilian translations of both poets: none of them are examples of what is called "literal translations". The poems mentioned below, either in monolingual or bilingual editions, have received, with different levels of success, a poetic translation. This is characteristic of much of the poetry translation practice in Brazil, and might even help to explain the scarcity of poetry translations available.

Both Yeats and Pound have been translated by several different translators. Some of them have been published in anthologies or are spread in magazines and blogs. We are going to focus here mostly in translations published as books. Translations of both poets started to appear in book form in the 1960s. The first one is *Cantares* (Pound,

Abei Journal 17.indd 40 03/07/2016 15:51:45

1960), a selection from *The Cantos* by Décio Pignatari (1927-2012), Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003), and Augusto de Campos (1931). These poets were the founders and most important theorists of the avant-garde Brazilian movement known as Concrete Poetry, They tried to change a long Brazilian tradition of sentimental poetry that was formally loose, with Romantic tendencies, into a sharp-edged, language-oriented structural poetry, and elected Pound as their main forerunner.

Three years after *Cantares*, in 1963, the poet Paulo Mendes Campos (1922-1991) translates plays by Yeats for a collection of Nobel Prize Winners, and the book comes with an introduction by Frank Kermode.

In the 1970s, Pound's prose gets two important editions: 1970's *ABC da Literatura* [*ABC of Reading*] by Augusto de Campos and José Paulo Paes, and, also by Paes, with Heloysa de Lima Dantas, a selection of Pound essays *A Arte da Poesia: Ensaios Escolhidos,* is published in 1976. Paes (1926-1998) was a poet, translator and literary critic.

The next decade saw the publication of both poets' poetry, in more consistent editions. *Poesia* (1985) brings the 17 Cantos from *Cantares*, mentioned above, plus some of Pound's shorter poetry. *Os Cantos* [*The Cantos*] is a complete translation of the poem by José Lino Grünewald, first published in 1986. Péricles Eugênio da Silva Ramos (1919-1992), poet, translator and literary critic, translates a chronological sequence of poems by Yeats, with an introduction and notes to the poems in 1987.

Another selection, this time by translator and literary critic Paulo Vizioli (1934), is published in 1998, in the same molds: chronological sequence, an introduction and notes to the poems.

Not much is seen in book form by either poet during the next decade, though we have a proliferation of translated poems scattered in blogs and poetry magazines. In book form, Pound's *Lustra*, translated by the poet Dirceu Villa (1975), was published in a luxurious clothbound hardcover edition, with introduction and notes, in 2011, now out of print.

"Beauty is difficult", said Aubrey Beardsley to Yeats, quoted by Pound (twice) in the *Pisan Cantos*. It is difficult to translate great poetry, and both Yeats and Pound wrote poetry *for the ear*, with intense musicality and complexity, a trait that can be hard on translators. Yeats has the added difficulty of a verse that is at the same time metric and rhymed, a poetic craft not cultivated by many. As mentioned above, it is not as common as in other countries to see, in Brazil, editions of literal bilingual translations.

The efforts of translating Pound's poetry in Brazil can be said to have been a bit older and more consistent: larger in scope and also more present in the book market. Two books by Pound (*The Cantos* and *ABC of Reading*) are still being reprinted, whereas the two main selections mentioned above of Yeats's poetry have been out of print for more than a decade. The main reason for the continuous presence of Pound's editions can be said to be the devoted attention from the Concrete poets and followers, who place Pound as a central figure in their *paideuma* (a word borrowed from the anthropologist Leo

Abei Journal 17.indd 41 03/07/2016 15:51:46

Frobenius by Pound and used by the brothers Campos slightly differently than Pound intended it). As mentioned above, he is seen by the group as a precursor of contemporary poetry, especially for his ideogrammic method, adapted to the purposes of their own art. Haroldo de Campos writes: "the ideogrammic method, as the organizing principle of the *cantos*, is so important to contemporary poetry as the serial principle is for the structure of contemporary music. The ideogram eliminates the curtains of smoke of syllogism: it gives us direct access to the object." Later, in the same text: "the ideogram has a future of its own, it does not end at the "higher" building of the *cantos*. it is a language adequate for the contemporary mind. it permits communication in its fastest grade[1]" (Campos, *in* Pound 1985, 144).

Augusto and Haroldo de Campos translated, with great success, a myriad of poets. Augusto de Campos, for instance, has translated both Pound and Yeats. His renditions are among the best ones, but the number of poems translated is very limited, and intentionally so: less poems to get the best results.

Being labelled "Modern" can be bad for translation – if the poet's free verse is understood as actually *free*, and not a complex rhythmic construction by the translator, when the tendency is to overlook the prosodic complexity of some poems. *The Cantos* has been translated in its entirety, in a work of considerable dedication. This translation, by J. L. Grünewald, has got new editions and prefaces, and remains on print. It is not a craftsmanship work as the translations found in de Campos's *Cantares:* its greatest merit is the effort put to have it completed, but not much can be seen that tries to imitate Pound's rhythms and musicality. The very first Canto is translated privileging an idea of concision to the point of adding to the number of verses and making them smaller than the original. Grünewald did not attempt to maintain any of the pauses signalized by commas nor to recreate a notion of rhythm sequence in the target language. Reading Pound as an "ideogrammic" writer, he has interpreted a necessity for making the verses shorter in Portuguese:

<table>
<tr>
<td>And then went down to the ship,
Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly seas, and
We set up mast and sail on that swart ship,
Bore sheep aboard her, and our bodies also
Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward
Bore us out onward with bellying canvas,
Circe's this craft, the trim-coifed goddess.</td>
<td>E pois com a nau no mar,
Assestamos a quilha contra as vagas
E frente ao mar divino içamos vela
No mastro sobre aquela nave escura,
Levamos as ovelhas a bordo e
Nossos corpos também no pranto aflito,
E ventos vindos pela popa nos
Impeliam adiante, velas cheias,
Por artifício de Circe,
A deusa benecomata.</td>
</tr>
</table>

In the version of the same stanza made by the other three Concrete poets (the brothers Campos and Pignatari) we read:

Abei Journal 17.indd 42 03/07/2016 15:51:46

And then went down to the ship, Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly seas, and We set up mast and sail on that swart ship, Bore sheep aboard her, and our bodies also Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward Bore us out onward with bellying canvas, Circe's this craft, the trim-coifed goddess.	E descemos então para o navio, e Quilha contra as ondas, rumo ao mar divino, içamos Mastro e vela sobre a nave negra, Ovelhas a bordo e também nossos corpos Pesados de pranto e os ventos da popa Nos lançaram ao largo, as velas infladas, Por arte de Circe, a de bela coifa.

Maintaining the same number of verses and keeping the pauses where appropriate, the approximation is much closer, and it also follows Pound in the alliterative style, yet the rhythm of Pound's verses is not mimicked. They have transported the final "and" of the second verse to the first, a resource of compensation used in poetic translations, that skilfully gives the first verse a more daring connotation, with the pending "and" at the end the very first verse of a long poem. It shows a characteristic of some of the brother Campos translations: in part, they follow very traditionally the steps of their originals, but in other moments their interpretative reading shows in the final product. In any case, the result is a very fine piece of translation, but not as innovative as other experiments made by, for instance, Haroldo de Campos in his *transcriações* [trans-creations] of Japanese and Hebrew texts. Inspired by Poundian translations such as the Chinese poems in *Cathay*, the idea of a *transcriação* is to reinvent, in the target language, the operative aesthetic characteristic of the original text. But the Concrete poets' version of Pound himself is no such thing, even if they are, together with Dirceu Villa's more recent rendition of *Lustra* (Villa 2011), the best attempts so far at Pound in Portuguese. Another translation that adds to our investigation is Augusto de Campos's version of "And Thus in Nineveh" [E assim em Nínive]. In this case, the understanding of Pound as a Modernist has made his translator to experiment with a version of the poem where there is no reference to the marks of older language usages chosen by Pound. The final result is a poem that though a brilliant translation that sounds like a poem originally written in Portuguese, does not reduce or omit anything said by Pound, it does not reproduce that particular option for an old-fashioned style:

"Aye! I am a poet and upon my tomb Shall maidens scatter rose leaves And men myrtles, ere the night Slays day with her dark sword. " "Lo! this thing is not mine Nor thine to hinder, For the custom is full old, And here in Nineveh have I beheld Many a singer pass and take his place In those dim halls where no man troubleth His sleep or song.	"Sim, sou um poeta e sobre a minha tumba Donzelas hão de espalhar pétalas de rosas E os homens, mirto, antes que a noite Degole o dia com a espada escura. "Vê! Não cabe a mim Nem a ti objetar, Pois o costume é antigo E aqui em Nínive já observei Mais de um cantor passar e ir habitar O horto sombrio onde ninguém perturba Seu sono ou canto.

Abei Journal 17.indd 43 03/07/2016 15:51:46

And many a one hath sung his songs More craftily, more subtle-souled than I; And many a one now doth surpass My wave-worn beauty with his wind of flowers, Yet am I poet, and upon my tomb Shall all men scatter rose leaves Ere the night slay light With her blue sword. "It is not, Raana, that my song rings highest Or more sweet in tone than any, but that I Am here a Poet, that doth drink of life As lesser men drink wine."	E mais de um cantou suas canções Com mais arte e mais alma do que eu; E mais de um agora sobrepassa Com seu laurel de flores Minha beleza combalida pelas ondas, Mas eu sou um poeta e sobre a minha tumba Todos os homens hão de espalhar pétalas de rosas Antes que a noite mate a luz Com sua espada azul. "Não é, Raana, que eu soe mais alto Ou mais doce que os outros. É que eu Sou um Poeta, e bebo vida Como os homens menores bebem vinho." (Pound 1985, 52)

One piece of critical commentary generated by this poem is symptomatic of the reception received by Pound in Brazil and how it influences the way other poets are read. Antonio Cícero, in his blog "Acontecimentos", writes a commentary of this translation in a post called "Ezra Pound transcriado por Augusto de Campos" [Ezra Pound trans-created by Augusto de Campos][2] . For Cicero. For Cicero, "the poem is more beautiful in Portuguese" because the then absent linguistic marks of another age, intended by Pound, are labelled Edwardian, *Swinburnian*, and Victorian in a pejorative way: the adjectives for Pound's poem are synonymous of outdated poetry, whereas the modernised language of the translation is "perfect". The example is only one among others, following a tendency to equate modernistic traits to "good" poetry.

In comparison, Yeats was not co-opted by any group of important Brazilian poets as a "precursor," and that might explain why his books have disappeared in the already depleted poetry book market in Brazil. Considering that none of his poetry books has been translated in its integrity, his two main translators (Ramos and Vizioli) have tried to create anthologies with a notion of chronological sequence, and both have tried to distribute their selections evenly throughout Yeats's career. Augusto de Campos, on the other hand, who has translated only a handful of poems as mentioned, have selected mostly later poems (all after 1910). Nelson Ascher (poet and translator) has published seven translations of poems by Yeats in his anthology *Poesia Alheia* (Ascher 1998) All of the translated poems, in this case were written between 1910 and 1929. The consensus being that the best of Yeats was produced after he was a middle aged man and had made his transition from his early poetry to the modern style of the twentieth century.

If reading a poet as an exponent of Modernism can mean understanding his *vers libre* as freer than it actually is, or being mistaken for loose prose that resembles verse in the page, the notion of Yeats as a transitional poet (from Victorian to Modern) can

Abei Journal 17.indd 44 03/07/2016 15:51:46

have the opposite effect: a translation that sounds more antiquated than the original. The direct first verse in "Sailing for Byzantium" (1927) – "That is no country for old men" was set to a very convoluted inversion by Péricles Eugênio da Silva Ramos, completely unmaking its simple, direct statement style. The meter of choice for this poem was the dodecasyllable (twelve syllables, instead of the original ten) and the rhyme scheme was altered (with a predominance of nasal rhymes in ão e ões):

<table>
<tr>
<td>That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
— Those dying generations — at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.</td>
<td>Terra aquela não é que sirva para ancião
Os moços a abraçar-se, as aves a cantar
Nas árvores – que perecíveis gerações! –
Mares cheios de atuns, cachoeiras de salmões,
Peixe, ave ou carne ao longo louvam do verão
O que é procriado, nasce e vem a se findar,
Com aquela música sensual qualquer esquece
As obras do intelecto que não envelhece.

(Yeats 1987, 102-103)</td>
</tr>
</table>

The longish verse line, the uncommon vocabulary and the excessive inversions sound too affected in Portuguese, adding to the feeling of an antiquated poem, instead of the lively images that are vibrant, direct and musical in the original. "The Poetic Work", a section of the introduction to his anthology, brings Ramos quoting the critic Rice Henn stating that Yeats would have remained a minor poet had he stopped writing before being 40 years old, or his best work was written between the ages 50 and 75. Ramos avoids any mention of Yeats's connection to Pound or to any other poet or movement, but says that it has been much noticed that after "a certain point" Yeats has changed his poetry, as he attested it in "A Coat" (1910). He also quotes Richard Ellmann as a contrasting view to Henn's, but nothing is said about the nature of the "changes" being connected to a feeling of Yeats as "more modern" (Yeats 1987, 27). Whatever Yeats has produced and how his poetry changes would be encapsulated in his own discoveries and is not a construction in which other artists contribute to his evolution as a poet. What is left for the reader to ponder is if this Romantic presentation of Yeats also explains the way he is presented in the translations.

Much contrary to this view is Augusto de Campos's: for him, there is a "post-Pound Yeats" who is a direct product of his affiliation to Pound (Campos 2006, 175). In 1910 Yeats starts a rupture that takes shape in Responsibilities (1914), but reaches its peak in 1928 with The Tower. His rendition of "Sailing to Byzantium" [Navegando para Bizâncio] reflects his understanding that the 1927 poem belongs to a poet who is "a modern classic" with Rilke, Blok and Valéry, preceding the "proper Modernists" as Schwitters, Khlebnikov, Mayakovski, Pound, Eliot and Apollinaire (Campos 2006, 176).

Abei Journal 17.indd 45 03/07/2016 15:51:46

As Ramos, he chooses dodecasyllable verses and the rhyme scheme is also altered. The language of the poem sounds modern and precise, though not as musical as the original:

> Aquela não é terra para velhos. Gente
> Jovem, de braços dados, pássaros nas ramas
> — Gerações de mortais — cantando alegremente,
> Salmão no salto, atum no mar, brilho de escamas,
> Peixe, ave ou carne glorificam ao sol quente
> Tudo o que nasce e morre, sêmen ou semente.
> Ao som da música sensual, o mundo esquece
> As obras do intelecto que nunca envelhece.
>
> (Campos 2006, 186)

It can be argued that the extra syllable is necessary for rendering English poems in Portuguese, but it is not difficult to find translations that maintain the same number of syllables (as Campos himself has done a number of times) and can convey practically all the literal meaning of the original, even if it is not always the case. An example can be seen in the same poem, "Sailing to Byzantium" [Velejando para Bizâncio], by Vizioli, who chooses to translate the pentameter as a decasyllable (though he does use the dodecasyllable in other occasions):

> Este não é país para ancião.
> Jovens aos beijos, aves a cantar
> (Mortal estirpe), saltos de salmão,
> Cavalas que povoam todo o mar,
> O peixe, o pêlo e a pluma, no verão
> Só louvam o que nasce e vai passar.
> Na música sensual vêem com desdouro
> As obras do intelecto imorredouro.
>
> (Yeats 1991, 103)

Vizioli's version maintains the same rhyme scheme of the original and reproduces Yeats's rhythm more closely. His version brings Yeats to the twentieth century with a faster pace but uses a choice of less common, old fashioned words from the Portuguese lexicon that hints at the "unageing" art of Yeats's poetry. He also maintains the alliteration of "Fish, flesh, or fowl" as "O peixe, o pêlo e a pluma" where the other two have used "peixe, ave ou carne".

Paulo Vizioli's "Introduction" to his bilingual edition of Yeats's poems, states that the "modernity" of Yeats could not be directly attributed to Pound's influence, (even though he does not dismiss it completely), since it begins in 1904, before the two poets had met: "we should not exaggerate the relevance of Pound in the preparation of Yeats's mature phase, since the anthology *In the Seven Woods*, published as early as

Abei Journal 17.indd 46 03/07/2016 15:51:46

1904, presents us with all those characteristics clearly delineated (…) Yeats's style was already modern[3]" (Yeats 1991, 14).

What we notice, with this very brief comparison of excerpts of translations and critical presentations of Yeats's work, is that among these three very important Brazilian critics and translators there are three different views in the matter of the Yeats-Pound collaboration: the first ignores it; the second sees it as absolutely central to Yeats career and an episode that reinforces Pound's genius; and the last one understands it as consequential but not pivotal. It is my belief that these views have an influence in their translation choices, but this is only a preliminary investigation. These first considerations present a hint to a connection, but it would be necessary to have a more detailed study to seek for more precise answers.

And yet more questions are presented as we reach our conclusion: one that does not seem to appear in the debate as it was found was "Why is being "modern" a necessary thing for a poet to be?" "Why would the placement of Yeats as "modern" be of such primal importance for his appreciation as a poet, still today?" It would be interesting to follow Paulo Vizioli's appreciation of the Pound-Yeats connection and expand from there.

Pound as well needs a new reception in Brazil, one that would see what he has actually done, in all its complexity: from the authors he championed, and the avant-garde movements he shaped and helped create Modernism in English to the acknowledgement of the beauty of his early verse and a reception that try less hard to fit him into the role of a proto-post-modernist. This new reception has already started in the work of Dirceu Villa (Villa 2011) and Rodrigo Lobo Damasceno[4], but it is far from being what is predominant in Brazil. Pound should not be read because he is announcing what is to come, but because he is a genius who wrote one of the most important body of poetry of the twentieth century.

Both Pound and Yeats have reached very peculiar voices in their poetry. Yeats as a wise and experienced man who composed the mature poems of "The Tower" after having tried his hand at politics, occultism, theatre and helped revive Celtic cultural expression for his generation and after. Pound, much later, old and having reached the version of *The Cantos* as we know it, was in doubt of what his prophecies meant, as when he told Italian poet and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, in 1967, that he had tried to make his own verse cohere, but couldn't.

Their years together and their friendship should lead to our reflection on the meaning of artistic collaboration, instead of feeding agonistic ideas that seem to be more a product of criticism than what was really happening between the two friends and fellow poets. And, of course, they need to receive more attention in Brazil, to have more translations and criticism, in order to be more widely known and read.

Abei Journal 17.indd 47 03/07/2016 15:51:46

Notes

1 "Pound propõe ideograma, o método ideogrâmico, como princípio organizador dos cantos, é tão importante para a poesia contemporânea, como o princípio serial para as estruturas da música atual. o ideograma elimina as cortinas de fumaça do silogismo : permite um acesso direto ao objeto." e "o ideograma tem um futuro próprio, que não se esgota no edifício "maior" dos cantos. é a linguagem adequada para a mente contemporânea. permite a comunicação no seu grau mais rápido." (Campos in Pound, 1985, p.144).

2 Disponível em http://antoniocicero.blogspot.com.br/2007/03/ezra-pound-transcriado-por-augusto-de.html. The post was made in 2007.

3 "Mas não devemos exagerar a relevância de Pound na preparação da fase madura de Yeats, visto que a coletânea Nos Sete Bosques, publicada ainda em 1904, já nos apresenta todas essas características claramente delineadas". (Yeats 1991, 14).

4 His dissertation on Pound and Fernando Pessoa would be an example and can be found here: http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8150/tde-29062015-151506/pt-br.php.

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Abei Journal 17.indd 48 03/07/2016 15:51:46

Yeats Revisited by Kathleen Raine

Miguel Angel Montezanti

Abstract: *It is frequently stated that Yeats is a great poet despite the fact that his mind, tastes and inclinations were dangerously or eccentrically turned to mysterious or mystified matters. It is Kathleen Raine's contention that, far from being too credulous, Yeats was extremely conscious of his advances in this type of knowledge; and that words such as esoteric, occultism, hermetic lore and some others are more often misunderstood. The Academy misreads Yeats in the same way that it has misread Blake or Shelley. That traditional background is not the one which the Academy usually deals with. Yeats did not write his poems to provide material for doctoral theses but to heal and sustain our human condition. Yeats's poems related to the Irish Renaissance are concerned with an Ireland of the Imagination. In Kathleen's opinion, Yeats remains a poet in the traditional sense of the word, not in the modern one. The traditional meaning would account for a speaker of wisdom, truth and the tradition of the Imagination.*

Keywords: *Yeats's poetry; Irish tradition; Kathleen Raine.*

Katheen Raine (1908-2003) was a poet, critic and essayist as well. Her books on criticism have been translated into several languages. Her main concerns have been William Blake and W.B. Yeats, among other poets in which she perceives the "learning of the imagination". The purpose of this article is to analyze her stance as regards Yeats as an occultist or an esoteric since it is not infrequently stated that Yeats is a great poet despite the fact that his mind, tastes and inclinations were dangerously or eccentrically turned to mysterious or mystified matters.

Just to illustrate this point I mention a review of a biography published in the Literary Supplement of *La Nación* as late as 1997. The author, John Carey, reviews a monumental biography written by Roy Foster (1997) and calls Yeats's non-poetical activities, like those concerned with Irish nationalism and the Dublin Theatre, "distractions". He says that Yeats's ideas about the spiritual superiority of the Celts and about his programme of the Irish theatre are a mess of racism, pastoral primitivism, snob and rationalized desires. The most disturbing passage, however, so far as this article is concerned, is the one in which the reviewer says that Yeats's credulity had no limits; that he had been introduced into mysticism and magic by George Russell; that he (Yeats)

Abei Journal 17.indd 49 03/07/2016 15:51:46

took pills of hashish and imagined he was traveling to the heavenly bodies and regions of secret knowledge.[1] The reviewer remarks that these aspects described by Roy Foster can be more or less humorous but become tedious after some pages.

It is Kathleen Raine's contention that, far from being too credulous, Yeats was extremely conscious of his advances in this type of knowledge; and that words such as esoteric, occultism, hermetic lore and some others are more often misunderstood. Kahleen Raine devoted three substantial books to Yeats. Incidentally, as is frequently the case, these books and articles tell as many things about Yeats as about Raine herself; since she, in a way, went through a spiritual itinerary similar to that of the Irish poet.[2]

Though I have chosen to comment on Kathleen Raine's *W.B. Yeats and the Learning of Imagination*, it is obvious that the remaining books on Yeats written by her are worthy of close attention as well. Her opening remarks exhibit a stance about Yeats not very far from that already mentioned: she refers to an American Professor, R.P. Blackmur, who speaks about disbelief. Kathleen Raine comments critically: "Academy believed that disbelief is a form, even the ultimate form of wisdom" (Raine 1999, 2). She remembers that Orwell, Auden and other writers had accused Yeats of ignorance of the "leading ideas" of the time. She remarks that University or Academic Studies, heavily influenced by materialism and positivism, show this same kind of prejudices concerning Yeats's knowledge and practices.

As first editor of Blake's prophetic books, Kathleen Raine calls Yeats "Blake's greatest disciple". To understand her insight into Yeats it is necessary a parallel understanding of her insight into Blake. In *Yeats the Initiate*, Raine (1986) had declared her purpose: "to indicate a few of the many threads from the rich texture of Yeats's work; to indicate a few of the many themes in which he embodied the beauty and wisdom of his vision and his learning" (13). In her opinion, the Academy misreads Yeats in the same way that it has misread Blake or Shelley. Yeats's acquaintance with a traditional background is not the one which the Academy usually deals with. Yeats wrote his poems to heal and sustain our human condition. Those related to the Irish Renaissance are concerned with an Ireland of the Imagination. This feature, which was also highly appreciated by Blake himself, must not be taken as synonym of "unreal". It belongs to a different realm: a loyalty to which Yeats terms "loyalty to the vanished kingdom" as the main feature he perceives in the Irish tradition, collected in folk songs and folklore in County Sligo. His fairy world is therefore a mythological inheritance enriched through Blake's Neo-Platonism and also through English translations of Indian texts, some by Rabindranah Tagore and some by Ananda Coomaraswamy.

Raine is very conscious of how the thirties assessed Yeats's values and achievements: he had had a nice reputation as a poet not because but in spite of his "ridiculous" ideas. Now, she insists, Yeats was acquainted with a profound knowledge, not the one that is taught in Western Schools. He was familiar with Neo-Platonism through Blake and possessed a substantial lore derived form his contact with the Indian texts, for example the *Upanishads*, which he mentions frequently, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Yeats confesses that along many years he frequented

Abei Journal 17.indd 50 03/07/2016 15:51:46

> those mediums who in various poor parts of London instruct artisans or their wives for a few pence upon their relations to their dead. … then I compared what she [Lady Gregory] had heard in Galway, and I in London, with the visions of Swedenborg, and, after my inadequate notes had been published with Indian belief. [Had not been under the influence of Lady Gregory], I might never have talked with Shri Purohit Swami nor made him translate his Master's travels in Tibet, nor helped him translate the *Upanishads*". (*Selected Criticism* 263)

This is the knowledge of the *Philosophia Perennis*, in which Raine herself participates, very far from the naïve materialism of our age. Golden Age and Iron Age alternate and ancient traditions are the clue to understand Yeats's poem "A Vision", written just before his death. In the critic's opinion, Yeats remains a poet in the traditional sense of the word, not in the modern one. The traditional meaning would account for a speaker of wisdom, truth and the tradition of the imagination; whereas the modern meaning is for her that of a user of words with no authority above the others; the modern poet will be restricted to the concept that materialism is reality.

Yeats shares with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* the lamentation for the passing of those traditional values and with T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* an attempt to rescue them. This is what Yeats expresses poetically:

> We were the last romantics – chose for theme
> Traditional sanctity and loveliness;
> Whatever's written in what poets name
> The book of people; whatever most can bless
> The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;
> But all is changed, that high horse riderless,
> Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode
> Where the swan drifts upon the darkening flood. (Raine 1999, 22)

Kathleen Raine comments that "high horse" is Pegasus, now riderless, that is, without a superior force to rule it and that the swan (symbol of the soul) is now drifting in the darkness. Imaginative knowledge belongs to the type that Mozart and Beethoven possessed. It is an immediate, not a discursive knowledge, such as that of love, of a tree, of a waterfall or of a star. This special kind of imagination could be better described with a neologism coined by Henri Corbin, *imaginal*, as the commoner word "imaginative" can distort Raine's intended meaning. In a way similar to that of Coleridge as regards "primary imagination", Yeats wrote in "The Trembling of the Veil":

> I know how that revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memoried self that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusk and the child in the womb, and that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind. (*apud* Raine 1999, 23)

It is not surprising that the young poet supporting these ideas was inclined to study Blake and Swedenborg:

> I had an unshakable conviction arising how or whence I cannot tell, that invisible gate would open as they have opened for Blake, as they opened for Swedenborg, as they opened for Boehme, and that this philosophy would find its manuals of devotion in all imaginative literature". (*op. cit.* 24)

English Romantic poets and the Noh Theatre, Dante, the *Arabian Nights*, the Jewish and the Christian kabala, Plato, Plotinus and the oral tradition of Western Ireland constitute a fertile background for Yeats.[3] To them the names of Berkeley, Wundt and Pico della Mirandola can be added, and medieval mysticism and alchemy.[4]

In his introduction to the 1928 edition of *A Vision*, Yeats writes:

> The other day Lady Gregory said to me 'You are a much better educated man than you were ten years ago and much more powerful in argument'. And I put *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* into evidence to show that my poetry has gained in self-possession and power. I owe this change to an incredible experience. (*op.cit.* 25)

Raine remarks that Yeats's sources are Oriental. Orient, for both Yeats and Kathleen Raine herself, does not mean a geographical location but a metaphorical "orientation". It is obvious that her defense of Yeats as regards esoterism implies clarifying the meaning of this term. Luc Benoist, in his book *L'ésotérisme*, writes that for certain Greek philosophers this notion was applied to a type of oral learning which had been transmitted to chosen disciples. This learning may be ascribed to Pythagoras, and, through Plato, arrived in the neo Pythagoreans of Alexandria. Luc Benoist distinguishes three types of esotericism, the subjective, the objective and the essential or metaphysic. He makes clear that esotericism is the internal aspect of religion. What is secret in esotericism becomes a mystery in religion. While religion considers the human being according to his individual and human conditions, esotericism, through initiation, detaches the human being from his human limitations and makes him possible to access to superior states. Cartesian partition between soul and body should be enriched, and is in fact enriched through traditional learning, by a third hierarchy, that of spirit. The organ of the spirit is intellectual intuition or intellect.

Yeats was a deeply committed student of tradition, whose influence leads him to affirm that all religions are one. As a young man he studied at a theosophical society. The teacher was Bohini Chaterjee, who introduced him into the Vedantic tradition. Raine comments that Auden's criticism of Yeats as ignorant of "the leading ideas of his time" exposes his (Auden's) own misunderstanding of what these leading ideas have proved to be, not Marxist materialism but a worldwide spiritual renaissance. Yeats says:

Abei Journal 17.indd 52 03/07/2016 15:51:46

> I am convinced that in two or three generations it will become generally known that the mechanical theory has no reality – that the natural and supernatural are knit together, that to escape a dangerous fanaticism we must study a new science; at that moment Europeans may find something attractive in a Christ posed against a background not of Judaism but of Druidism, not shut off in dead history, but flowing, concrete, phenomenal.
> I was born into this faith, have lived in it, and shall die in it; my Christ, a legitimate deduction from the creed of St. Patrick as I think, is that Unity of being Dante compared to a perfectly proportionate human body. Blake's 'Imagination', what the *Upanishads* have named 'Self': nor is this unity distant and therefore intellectually understandable, but immanent, differing form man to man and age to age, taking upon itself pain and ugliness, 'eye of newt and toe of frog'. (*apud* Raine 1999, 35)

Byzantium is therefore a symbol of the highest expression of Christendom. These are Kathleen Raine's words:

> The generation of young poets of the 'thirties thought him (Yeats) ignorant because he saw the limitations and dangers of a scientific 'explanation' of the universe; because he used traditional verse forms which include sound and music as integral parts of the language of poetry; and was not left-winged in his politics. (*ibid.* 36)

Yeats himself, a profound student of history from the standpoint of the ancient cosmology – of "sacred history"– created his own symbolic diagram of the 'gyres' and saw the present century not as the dawn of Utopia but as the terminal phase of Western materialist civilization. Together with his Indian teacher Shree Purohit Swami Yeats translated *The Ten Principal Upanishads*. He had got a firm acquaintance with Indian tradition, more or less in the way Raine herself was to become acquainted with it. She considers him one of the great seminal minds of this century and remarks that the language of poetry, far from being something like an ornament, is the language of "an indispensable kind of wisdom" (*ibid.* 36). The following paragraph summarizes Kathleen Raine's appreciation of Yeats as a significant personality without having yet considered, strictly speaking, his poems.

> Whereas scientific knowledge is limited to the measurable world, and modern critical writings based on history, sociology and politics, Yeats sought, in the modern world, for all available sources of knowledge of another kind, those immeasurable worlds of meaning, values and truth on which all civilizations before our own have been established. … (*ibid* 36).

Byzantium, like William Blake's Jerusalem or St John's New Jerusalem, is an archetype (Lenowski 36). Byzantium is for Yeats the city of Imagination discerned by

Abei Journal 17.indd 53 03/07/2016 15:51:46

the soul. Imagination does not copy Nature but eternity. As if speaking of Ireland's holy books, he has chosen Byzantium at

> the moment when Byzantium became Byzantine substituted for formal Roman magnificence, with its glorification of physical power, an architecture that suggests the Sacred City in the Apocalypse of St John. I think if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato. I think I could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even… (*apud* Raine 1999, 42)

The gyres mentioned by Yeats in his poems should be related to the Platonic tradition, in which the Iron Age alternates with the Golden Age. Kathleen Raine goes on to affirm that a poem by Yeats, "Blood and the Moon" summarizes Plato's writings:

> For wisdom is the property of the dead,
> A something incompatible with life; and power,
> Like everything that has the satin of blood,
> A property of the living; but no stain
> Can come upon the visage of the moon
> When it has looked in glory from the cloud. (*apud* Raine 1999, 50)

In *Phaedo* Plato praises Socrates, who by accepting his death makes it clear that wisdom is to be attained in the next world. The following passage form "The Death of Cuchulain" reveals something similar:

> There floats out there
> The shape that I shall take when I am dead,
> My soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape,
> And it is not a strange shape for the soul
> Of a great fighting man? (*op. cit.* 50)

Kathleen Raine suggests another possibility of interpretation, although she anticipates that it is very much tentative. According to her, the gorgeous Byzantine iconography placed in Byzantium would provide enough support to the Christian symbol of the Cross, through which Christ defeated death after having descended into Hell. Thus, the poet would be an emblem of the ruler of two kingdoms, of the living and of the dead. Kathleen Raine's insight is exciting: her intellectual honesty avoids imposing her interpretation yet it must be seriously appreciated. She remembers that Gibbon had observed that Byzantine civilization had replaced reason, which had ruled the classical world, with a faith in the miraculous, *i.e*., the divine intervention in earthly events. Gibbon had scorned this shift. Yeats did not. Yeats himself, considering sculpture, indicates that the Byzantine art was

Abei Journal 17.indd 54 03/07/2016 15:51:47

no representation of a living world but the dream of a somnambulist. Even the drilled pupil of the eye, when the drill is in the hand of some Byzantine worker in ivory, undergoes a somnambulist change for its deep shadow among the faint lines of the tablet, its mechanical circle, where all else is rhythmical and flowing, give to saint or Angel a look of some great bird staring a miracle. (*op. cit.* 53)

Therefore, it is in Byzantium that an interworld has occurred. It is properly speaking the *mundus imaginalis*, the meeting place of the incarnate and the disincarnate, the conscious and the unconscious self. Watching a tablet Yeats says:

> To me it seems that He, who among the first Christian communities was little but a ghostly exorcist, had in His assent to a full Divinity made possible this sinking-in upon a supernatural splendour, these walls with their little glimmering cubes of blue and green and gold. (*ibid*.)

Yeats considers art against chaos while admonishing Ireland in "The Statues", 1938:

> We Irish, born into the ancient sect
> But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
> And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
> Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
> The lineaments of a plummet-measured face. (*op. cit.* 58)

A city, a statue, an organization, beauty, vision, change the meaning of a building, which ceased to be a mere building and becomes order against chaos. According to Raine Yeats views beauty not as decoration but as the soul of every true civilization. In 1914, Yeats had written the essay "Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places" and the critic comments that Yeats scanned all these fields of knowledge grounded in the concept that not lifeless matter but living spirit is the source of everything. This knowledge was not only derived from the great teachers but also from the "book of people", *i.e.*, Ireland. In his stay at Sligo, Yeats found that the dead and the fairies and their apparitions were a daily reality for common people. Kathleen says that Catholics were more aware of the miraculous than the more rational Protestants, although this is the creed to which Yeats's ascendancy belonged. She goes into details into a much illustrating way. It is very well known that the "supreme state" was for Blake Jesus the Imagination, who bears a slight relation to the historical Christ. For Yeats this Blakean Christ was identical to the supreme self of the *Upanishads* and of all Indian doctrines. Like Blake, Yeats rejects some notions supported by Swedenborg, especially Swedenborg's attempt to establish "proofs" of his theological system. What must be emphasized here is that Yeats was not improvising. On the contrary, he had a deep understanding of these uncommon issues. By 1937, Raine remarks that Yeats was familiar with the Indian more subtle

Abei Journal 17.indd 55 03/07/2016 15:51:47

thought on the nature of the Self. She states that Yeats "did not study Plato and Plotinus, Swedenborg or Blake as episodes in the 'history of the ideas' but because he was tracing a continuous tradition of knowledge, uncovering the traces of that 'vast generalization' he discerned in the fragmentary portions he assembles" (Raine 1999, 76). Knowledge cannot be discovered but may be revealed. Yeats lived in the humble hope of revelation. Kathleen Raine conjectured that Yeats might have converted to the traditional teaching of the East. This is another fragment of a poem:

> I asked if I should pray,
> But the Brahmin said,
> 'Pray for nothing, say
> Every night in bed,
> "I have been a king,
> I have been a slave,
> Fool, rascal, knave,
> That I have not been,
> And yet upon my breast
> A myriad heads have lain"
>
> That he might set a rest
> A boy's turbulent days
> Mohini Chatterjee
> Spoke these, or words like these. (*apud* Raine 1999, 77-78)

Faith and hope are the self realizing images of the Imagination. In Yeats's poem "Mohini Chatterjee", Raine sees a celebration of the love of life energizing Yeats's whole work and impelling him into the dark in order to discover whether "providence is there too" (*op. cit.* 79). She comments that perhaps neither the Greek philosophers nor the Christian theologians had attained the depth of Indian teachings, finding that the spirit has value in itself and that the purified soul itself is true.

The descent and return of souls can be directly ascribed to Yeats's readings of William Blake. Raine states that no poet knows so well to make the multiple overtones of symbolic images resonate as does Yeats. She adds that the learning of poets differs in kind from that of academic scholars, though they might have been reading the same book. Kathleen Raine frequently ascertains that the sources studied by Yeats are unlikely to be found in any university syllabus. These are John Dee and Paracelsus, Lombroso, and the seventeenth-century Reverend Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle's *Secret Commonwealth of Eaves, Fauns and Fairies*. But neither the works of Plotinus and Porphyry, nor those of Thomas Taylor, nor the *Baghavad Gita* nor the *Upanishads* have been properly studied according to her.

Poetry, for Yeats, was not an end in itself but a means to the higher dedication of the Adept whose work is "To know in order to serve". Raine discusses the concept of prophecy which, in terms of materialistic ideology, does not mean foretelling the future

Abei Journal 17.indd 56 03/07/2016 15:51:47

but telling the truth of Imagination. Only by way of metaphor or in Swedenborgian terms, “correspondences”, do perceptions relate to one another and the soul is in-illuminated from the higher regions of the spirit. So Yeats again:

> When we act from the personal we tend to bind our consciousness down as to a fiery centre. When, on the other hand, we allow our imagination to expand away from this egoistic mood, we become vehicles for the universal light and merge in the universal mood. (*apud* Raine 1999, 102)

Yeats says on Blake: “The man he seeks of is the inner and not the outer being, the spiritual, not the physical. The highest ideas, the ‘human form divine’”. Thus the prophet is the highest expression of that voice of the ‘God within’ affirmed by old traditions:

> The mood of the seer, no longer bound by the particular experiences of the body, spreads into the particular experiences of an ever-widening circle of other lives and beings, for it will more and more grow one with that portion of the mood essence that is common to all that lives. The circle of individuality will widen out until other individualities are contained within it, and their thoughts (…) He who has thus passed into the impersonal portion of his own mind perceives that it is not a mind, but all minds. (*op. cit.* 103)

Yeats evoked this world from a standpoint beyond the ‘gyres’ of history. “A Vision” is concerned with the underlying laws of the rise and fall of civilizations. Between Blake and Yeats, Shelley is to be found, a master of symbolic thought. Natural images are a metaphor through which he evokes the soul’s country.

By way of a conclusion a quotation by Shree Purohit Swami rounds up the general trend of this article:

> The wise, mediating on God, concentrating their thought, discovering in the mouth of the cavern, deeper in the cavern, that Self, that ancient Self, difficult to imagine, more difficult to understand, pass beyond joy and sorrow.
>
> The man that, hearing from the Teacher and comprehending, distinguishes nature from the Self, goes to the Source, that man attains joy, lives for ever in that joy. (*apud* Raine 1999, 111)

Notes

1 As regards this point James Olney says: “(Yeats)… was undoubtedly sincere when he implied that it was for him a matter of the utmost importance to determine what might be called the onto-logical relationship between himself, a living man, on the one hand and visionary figures, spirits of the dead, and discarnate demonic beings in general on the other hand.” (587)

Abei Journal 17.indd 57 03/07/2016 15:51:47

2 There is further ground for this affinity. Suheil Bushrui says: "It was natural that Kathleen Raine should feel drawn to Yeats's writings from an early age, infused as she was by the traditions of a Celtic heritage; what the songs and folk-tales of Ireland's past were to Yeats, the border ballads and ancient Scottish legends were to her." (148)

3 As regards the influence of Noh theatre, see Natalie Crohn Schmitt, 254. As regards the Cabbalistic Tree of Life, assimilated to the Irish sacred Hazel, see Lenowski, 36.

4 Robert Schuler discusses Yeats's relationship with alchemy. He remarks that especially the analogy between alchemist and artist fascinated Yeats. He quotes from Yeats's and Ellis's *Introduction to the Works of William Blake* the following: "A 'correspondence', for the very reason that it is implicit rather than explicit, says far more than a syllogism or a scientific observation" (51). Incidentally, he thanks Kathleen Raine for her insights into this matter.

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Abei Journal 17.indd 58 03/07/2016 15:51:47

Interviews

Abei Journal 17.indd 60 03/07/2016 15:51:47

Interview with David Rudkin

Mariana Bolfarine

Abstract: *Interview with David Rudkin on the radio play* Cries from Casement as his Bones are Brought to Dublin. *Medium: e-mail; date: 17/04/2012*

Keywords: *David Rudkin;* Cries from Casement as his Bones are Brought to Dublin.

The celebrated playwright David Rudkin was born in London in 1936, of Irish parentage, and spent long periods of his childhood and youth in Ireland, more precisely, in County Armagh. Much of Rudkin's work, like Ashes (1974) and Saxon Shore (1986), delves into the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland in an allegorical form. This also comes into view in the radio play *Cries from Casement as his Bones are Brought to Dublin*,[1] (1974), written in the 1960s when Rudkin was commissioned by the BBC to contribute to a series on historical rebels.

Cries from Casement draws on the biography of Roger David Casement (1864-1916), a controversial British Consul, acclaimed for exposing atrocities against humanity in the Belgian Congo and in the Peruvian Amazon. He was sentenced to death for high treason for turning into an Irish revolutionariy, and prevented from becoming a martyr due to a set of homosexual so-called Black Diaries, found by the British Home Office. Excerpts from these documents were distributed among members of his defense and he met his death at the gallows of Pentonville Prison on 3 August, 1916. However, as the interview revelas, the play is actually concerned with the issue of partition and it was first broadcast one year after the bogside massacre on BBC Radio 3 in February 1973, and in that same year it was staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Rudkin, thus, felt an urge

> to write a large piece that gave utterance to my Northern Irish Protestant identity as opposed to my English one ... This grew more pressing as Ulster lurched toward the brink of a sectarian war. Suddenly, I realized that my Casement play and my Ulster play were the same thing. (Rudkin)[2]

Against such a dramatic backdrop, Rudkin was aware that the piece's polemical content could be of "discomfort" in Britain. (Rudkin 81)[3] He affirmed that the radio, as a medium, conveyed the physical distance between the stage and the audience, who

Abei Journal 17.indd 61 03/07/2016 15:51:47

he believed could become aggressive, and who "would have good reason to withdraw whatever good will they came with" (Rudkin 81). In addition, radio was aesthetically appropriate since the action was supposed to be set in a box, Casement's coffin; therefore, it was meant to be heard from a box, the radio.

This interview with David Rudkin was taken during my PhD research, "'Between Angels and Demons': Trauma in Fictional Representations of Roger Casement", and it was focussed on the playwright's views of the play and of the historical figure, Roger Casement. It is relevant to underscore that, perhaps due to the controversial topics the play tackled at the time it was written and broadcast, it has not achieved the attention it deserves. It has been 43 years since the play was written, and it shows that at the brink of the centenary of Casement's death, his story brings to the fore issues such as politics, religion and sexuality that are contemporary and relevant to an understanding of Irish and transatlantic history.

Mariana Bolfarine: Do you see the period Casement spent in Brazil as fundamental to his transformation from imperialist to nationalist?

David Rudkin: And Africa. Yes. They exacerbate C[asement]'s sense of sexual alienation – also, the Foreign Office compromise his two Reports (for reasons of Higher Policy), and that provokes his political alienation.

MB: From the works that I have read so far, I feel that yours is the one that best depicts the complexities inherent to Casement, because, as one critic has said, "you fragment him in order to see him whole". Would you agree to that?

DR: I don't 'fragment' C[asement] – I discover the fragments into which his self is currently broken. My C too is on a journey of that discovery – and that determines the technique of the piece (it never felt to me like a 'play').

MB: In relation to this fragmentation, present in both form and content: literary theory has produced (of course in different perspectives: Frederic Jameson as a Marxist theorist on one side, and Stuart Hall and Linda Hutcheon on the other) numberless works about fragmentation being a predominant characteristic of "Postmodernity". Do you see *Cries from Casement* as a postmodern piece of work?

DR: I'm not sure I know what 'postmodern' means! I never think about critical terms. Each work emerges from inside its own material; I just try to be as honest and clear as I can.

MB: How do you see the relevance of scholars (like myself) today, in a way, trying to "unbury" Roger Casement in the 21st century and being completely carried away by his life story?

Abei Journal 17.indd 62 03/07/2016 15:51:47

DR: It's an existentialist issue: a multi-compromised individual, in quest of his authentic identity. That will always be political.

MB: I have found very few pieces of contemporary criticism (if at all) about *Cries from Casement*. In your opinion, why does this occur?

DR: Radio is given very little serious attention – though at that time there was at least (not any more) a very good weekly *The Listener* in which, around Feb/Mar 1974, Anthony Thwaite wrote a serious response to the piece.

MB: I have not found any documentation about the reception of the play (both the radio play and the stage production by John Tydeman). How was it received in the 70's, when the Troubles were at its summit?

DR: It was seen (as I intended it) as a direct contribution to the ongoing 'debate' about Ireland, a 'debate' then in a critical phase. Academics dismissed my piece as unscholarly, and simplistically polemical. One historian said my interpretation of C was 'crazy'. (He later publicly apologised.) Progressive Nationalists welcomed it; even traditional Nationalists welcomed it – up to a point; I remember a personal conversation with an IRA chief-of-staff who said the homosexuality 'didn't matter'. But the problem was, and still is, that nobody has really understood, or taken on board, the underlying biographical thesis: that C[asement]'s sexual alienation was essential to his politics, and in fact catalysed them. (The original radio production, by John Tydeman, was definitive, and is one of the BBC radio classics. The much later stage production was by somebody else, and misconceived, and does not merit discussion.)

MB: Do you think that if *Cries from Casement* were produced today, it would be better received than in the 70's? Do you think that society has changed in the sense that it would better accommodate a character as complex and as kaleidoscopic as Casement?

DR: Some attitudes are more liberal now, but 'progressive' critics and historians can be driven by ideologies that narrow them in new ways. 'Experts' are still shortsighted – I saw in the early 2000s a TV documentary analysing C[asement]'s handwriting(s). It thought it had all the answers; but even at 30 years old, my piece was streets ahead of the experts, in its *insight*. That insight comes from being the work of a dramatist experiencing C[asement]'s world from inside *him as a character*.

MB: In relation to your background, I have read that you, in some ways, identify yourself with Casement due to the difficulty in dealing with the fact of being aware that you have a split and incompatible (or irreconcilable) identity: British and Irish. Do you still feel the same today?

Abei Journal 17.indd 63 03/07/2016 15:51:47

DR: …and of course, in discovering my *character* C[asement], I discovered that I too had similar questions to answer and choices to make for myself. Existentialism again. The piece emerged as it did, because it was energised by that.

MB: I believe that *Cries from Casement* is an allegory for a fragmented Ireland (both in 1916 and in the 1970's) and that your construction of Casement is an attempt to enact a "poetics of reconciliation" represented by the third burial in Antrim that the character longs for. Do you still believe the "colours will mix", eventually, and that a united Ireland is still be possible?

DR: My ending was idealistic but not really very hopeful – and I am still not hopeful. At the moment there is still a Catholic-Fascist (*e.g.* pro-Franco *et al*) tradition active in Ireland that would wish the Protestants ethnically cleansed (and this is quietly happening in some lonely Border areas). As part of the so-called 'peace process' the Ulster Protestant tradition has been largely subverted, and the mood out in rural Ulster I find quite tense and hateful just now. The place just doesn't feel *true*. A political 'unity' could always be mechanically imposed on Ireland, but she would still be broken in her soul. It's a tragedy, because the 5-plus centuries of **pre**-Catholic Christian tradition in Ireland, and the Huguenot Protestant tradition, are essential elements in Ireland's identity (it was Protestants who led the first rebellions) – but Modern Catholicism prefers to overlook those paradoxes. Ireland's 'history,' as Joyce says somewhere, is a 'nightmare from which she is still struggling to awake.'

MB: Even today, some historians are trying to prove that the *Black Diaries* are forged. How do you stand in relation to this controversy?

DR: I think the play answers that.

MB: You did extensive archival research on Casement (like the *Author* in the play). I was wondering about your creative process in transforming so much historical material into fiction.

DR: I don't think of the piece as 'fiction' – I was finding out about C[asement] the man, and poetically 'becoming' him. To mediate such a quantity and complexity of material, I found myself logically evolving a variety of techniques, all of them thematic – and very much to do with radio broadcasting. (Looking at it now, I think it's rather like a radio *Citizen Kane*.)

MB: What's your view of the historical revisionism that had dominated the writing of Irish history from the 1960's to the 1990's? How does this affect the writing of fiction?

DR: I don't have any useful thoughts on this – and, as I've said above, I don't think of the piece as 'fiction', but as bringing a historical figure to poetic life.

Abei Journal 17.indd 64 03/07/2016 15:51:47

Notes

1 From this moment onwards, the play will be referred to as *Cries from Casement*.
2 Quotes by David Rudkin present in book jacket notes with no acknowledged author.
3 Following the script, there is a section written by Rudkin called "Thoughts on Staging the Play" (81-84), which offers insightful reflections on his choice over the radio as an appropriate medium for the play and how to transpose it to the stage.

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Abei Journal 17.indd 66 03/07/2016 15:51:47

Interview with Patrick Sutton and Brian Maguire

Fábio de Souza Andrade and
Luiz Fernando Ramos

Abstract: *This interview took place on 15th September 2015, at the University of São Paulo, when the Director Patrick Sutton and the painter and actor Brian Maguire arrived from Rio de Janeiro where Beckett's play* Waiting for Godot *was performed.*

Keywords: *Patrick Sutton; Brian Maguire;* Waiting for Godot.

Fábio de Souza Andrade: On behalf of the WB Yeats Chair of Irish Studies, I'm glad to welcome Patrick Sutton and Brian Maguire to the University of São Paulo. We all regret that the play Waiting for Godot, directed by Patrick and performed in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia won't be perfomed in São Paulo; but as he said, we hope it will next year. We know that Beckett always had a very tense relation to his Irish roots; to some extent, he always referred and refused Irish geography and Irish roots. So I'd like you to talk a bit about an Irish reading of Beckett today. Is there a particular approach to his work that an Irishman today would adopt?

Patrick Sutton: I think it's very interesting those phrases "to refer" and "to refuse", "to accept" and "to reject" at the same time. The landscape is in Samuel Beckett's DNA, you can never deny where you are born or your mother or your father, you can very rarely deny the place from which you've come. I was born about one kilometre from where Samuel Beckett was born. Now I didn't know that I was in the presence of greatness. But I'll tell you one thing that happened to me from a very, very early age. I had a distant relative who often told me about being in school at the same time as a man called "Boozie Sam" in Pretoria St, in the North of Ireland. I never realized, I never understood that this was the same man my uncle was talking to me about, this man, who kept illegal liquor under his bed at school was called "Boozie Sam". I never made the link or the connection between Beckett and this landscape, nor when my mother would take me for walks as early as I can remember and we'd go right, interestingly, right up to the hills where Brian now lives. I was born in that neighbourhood, Brian had

Abei Journal 17.indd 67 03/07/2016 15:51:47

subsequently moved into 30 years ago. But I found myself walking in that landscape, just as a part of what I did. So there's a man called Eoin O'Brien who's written a wonderful book called *The Beckett Country* which is a terrific work with a lot of photographs that enable you to get into the text. In answer to your question, I feel I have an understanding of this play not because I am an extraordinary academic analyst, but because I feel there is something in this play that is personal to me, that is private to me and that I own a piece of the universality of it. It's interesting, the conversation that Brian and I had when we discovered it; we've done this play in 2014 in this theatre in Dublin that I might talk to you about later on. But when you were going on tour, the first person I went to was Brian, Brian is extraordinary in his humanity, and his understanding of the world, so there was nowhere else I was going to go, but to knock on Brian's door and say, "What about this idea of painting that landscape for this tour?" And the conversation was very short, was very sweet and in a napkin from a restaurant, we drew out what we were going to do, and that's what we have here. But the understanding of place, of landscape, of colour, of texture to provide a context for the play was absolutely no rejection of the place but very much an insistence. I mean, if you saw the play, there is something about that backdrop, we can show you some slides in a minute, but there is something about that backdrop that resonates to me because it's my place. But strangely enough, like we played last week in Rio and, strangely enough, there is a resonance there that was phenomenal in terms of the audience's response and reactions. So when I'm directing that play I have a really simple approach to directing a play, really simple: the words are here and the actors are here and my job is to try and find some landscape of movement, of characterization, in which those actors are able to embody those words and take ownership of those words. And a play makes itself, the rules are there, the text is there, the pauses, the silences are there. If you can get actors to stop thinking, stop thinking and start moving and walking… If you see this production, at the end of a run, for example, in the theatre in Rio there is a pattern on the floor, very much in a circular nature, but it's got a very strong sense of simplicity. I made a note here, the first thing I did when I started to direct this is, "Folks, all we're doing in this play is we are just waiting for Godot. Are we in the right place to wait for Godot? Is this the place?" which is exactly all that happens in the play, "Is it, is that the tree that we saw? The boots are there… Pozzo and Lucky did that? Yes they did…" All that play is doing is trying to identify if this is the right place to wait for Godot, and if it is the right place we will wait on. And then my job, as a director, is to ensure that that level of simplicity, which is very simplistic, is owned by the actor, who then starts filling his own vessel with characters, with information, with relationships, with dialogue, with dynamic. And extraordinarily… it's been a joy. I've never seen actors work as hard, but it's been an absolute joy trying to create the simplicity of this piece. And maybe that's what it comes down to, people seem to somehow understand the place, not just because of Brian's picture but because of that, the world that the actors are inhabiting.

Abei Journal 17.indd 68 03/07/2016 15:51:47

Brian Maguire: But then, I have something to say about this play. The first thing: the attraction, and this idea of "accept and refuse" is very interesting, because a country is a complex, it's complex, you accept some of it and refuse some of it. I love it, I want to get out of it as much as I can. Interesting about Beckett for me is that Beckett performed this piece in a prison in North America and trained the actors, see they camped within the prison, and the relationship developed which continued throughout his life with those men. In Ireland when a criminal gets buried there is nobody from the middle class in the funeral. The pubs are shut. There is a real division. Nobody thinks about the jails outside of those who work in it. So, you know, I'm just so happy to be with Beckett because he thought about prisoners. And that is why you reject Ireland because it doesn't do so. Anyway, that's a bit complex and I'm sure you can get the message. The other thing is about waiting; waiting for Godot. I mean, the older you get the more you realize how little control you have over your life. In fact, you have absolutely none. All decisions in your life are made by other people. The only thing you can control is your attitude, and if you can work on that too, and "wait, I should have been happy", but… That sense of waiting is actually a fairly reasonable accurate description of what life is about. So... yes... it's not about doing nothing. Because, unlike almost the whole literary cannon of Ireland, who in the 39-45 war just abandoned Europe, he remained in Europe and he joined the resistance, and he just barely got out with his life at one stage. The idea of waiting, but also the idea of action which is futile, but necessary, you know; these are the lights I have; it is why I come to this thing, and why I jumped at this proposal from this man beside me... tramps. I just remembered as a small child … a knock on the door and a tramp at the door, and I brought him in, and my mother gave him bread, jam, and tea and he left. But I don't ever remember anyone else knocking to the door and me bringing them in. Ever. As a small child.

PS: There is a moment in this play which I will talk about, where the boy runs away in the second act, and there is a gesture I train actors to do; that is what I do, I direct plays and I train actors. And I think the more I know and understand the craft of acting the more I know and understand the imperative of a gesture to be honest and to be integral to how you're performing. It was late, last Summer, when we were doing this play and I needed to, there was somebody that was missing and, obviously I just went back and I said to myself, maybe there's something in the gesture language that these people speak that was missing, obviously, it fell out of it, it was obvious. The boy runs away frightened at the end of the second act, runs away, in Rio. He ran all the way down the back of the theatre, down the wall, but the actor Charlie Hughes… I've never done this before and I realised that there was something that was missing because those of you who know the play, the boy comes in twice, in the first act he comes in… and... there is a conversation, "Who are you? What are you doing here? Do you know Mr. Godot? / "I do" / "Well, any news from him?" / "Yeah, yeah. Come back tomorrow and everything will be fine." So the boy finishes the first act going, "Yeah, maybe,

Abei Journal 17.indd 69 03/07/2016 15:51:47

maybe it will be fine tomorrow." And there's that lovely sense of hope. The second act is a different thing. You know, *Happy Days* starts with her up to her waist. The second act she's up to her neck, and the third act which was, obviously, never written. But the point of making it is that there was a moment, a gestural moment, where the actor who's playing Vladimir says to the boy, "You're not gonna come back tomorrow and say you don't know who we are and you don't recognize us." And the boy runs off. And Charlie, the actor, reaches as if he is looking for his mother. And in that moment, the audience are going "oh my God". There is a tragedy, there is a heartbreak about that. And I think that gestural solution, often when you're directing a play, it's never gonna be up here, it's always gonna be in here, and sometimes the here is located from the gesture that might be made. I'm really tough when it comes to directing a play, because the natural gestures that are found, need to be found for a good reason, I know it's about gestures that I'm making them like an actor. But that's a new moment in this play, and I'm extremely proud of it, because it takes my breath away. And in the same way, as the most significant passage in the play, I'd love you to read it in Portuguese: "Was I sleeping while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now?"

For those of you who don't necessarily know the play intimately, this is for me at the heart and soul of what is going on in this play. I haven't acted for a long time, and I'm not about to stand up now. But Vladimir is standing there, the boy hasn't come in the second time and he is... things are bleak, more bleak than you can imagine. Estragon has fallen asleep here again, Estragon keeps falling asleep. Estragon can't stay awake. Estragon has fallen asleep and there is nowhere for the actor Vladimir to turn. Now, in this current production, you see this figure, bleak figure against this extraordinary landscape with the tree. This is the moment, that characters are standing on stage and there is nothing left; the biggest question is "Was I sleeping while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now?" We're sitting there now wondering, wow. "Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? He'll know nothing. He'll tell me of the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (pause) Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. But habit is a great deadener. At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (Pause.) I can't go on! (Pause.)" And then, in the production of the moment, Charlie, the actor who's playing Vladimir, he says "I can't go on", and then he does this. If you were looking at him in slow motion it would be like this, "I can't go on", which is the biggest admission of despair, I can't go on. He says, "I can't go on", and in slow motion he does this (Pause). And you can see it in his eyes, because the next line is (whispering), "What have I said?" In other words, "Have I just admitted that it's all over?"

Abei Journal 17.indd 70 03/07/2016 15:51:48

FSA: "Será que dormi, enquanto os outros sofriam? Será que durmo agora? Amanhã quando pensar que estou acordando, que direi dessa jornada? Que esperei Godot com Estragon, meu amigo, neste lugar, até o cair da noite? Que Pozzo passou por aqui, com seu guia, e falou conosco? Sem dúvida. Mas quanta verdade haverá nisso tudo? Ele não saberá de nada. Falará dos golpes que sofreu e lhe darei uma cenoura. Do útero para o túmulo e um parto difícil. Lá do fundo da terra, o coveiro ajuda, lento, com o fórceps. Dá o tempo justo de envelhecer. O ar fica repleto dos nossos gritos. Mas o hábito é uma grande surdina. Pra mim também, alguém olha dizendo: 'Ele dorme', ou sábio direi, 'Está dormindo. Não posso continuar.' 'Que foi que eu disse?' . . ."

Luiz Fernando Ramos: Patrick, Fábio has already put a very important question, but I'll insist on it a bit more, because I think that Godot is a cannonical play now. Almost 60 years after the opening, it's always a challenge for the directors, and the producers. I think it's a play like *Hamlet*; you will ever have new readings of Shakespeare's play. Likewise, you'll never finish *Godot*; *Godot* will always be open for new readings. If you have to define in a short sentence, which is the new thing your production shows?

PS: All I have done is I've taken as much away, as much over interpretation, over analysis; what is there is very raw. And it is in that rawness that the resonance happens for an audience. I mean, I remember, when I worked as an actor, I was not, I was pretty average, right, but I thought I was great until I went to do a play in Boston, a production of this play *Waiting for Godot*, directed by somebody who hadn't a clue. And they wanted to make an analogy with the stars and the moons and the alignment of the planets (laughs). And she wanted to do the play in the audience, and would put the audience on the stage (laughs). And I got bitten by, but didn't get bitten by, but a rat jumped over my leg in Boston, and I had to go to hospital. And that was nearly the best thing that happened to that production (laughs). At that production there was too much going on, and in my production we try to take it away. The other night one of the actors started mouthing a line "wait we'll see, wait we'll see, we'll see". And I say, "That line is not in that play, so don't do it. Keep it bare, spare, very, very stripped back." And I think that's my answer.

FSA: I know that Brian has a very important work done in Brazil that was in the Bienal of 1999. Could you say something about your work at the *favela* of Vila Prudente?

BM: There was a Dubliner priest, named Padre Clarke, who had worked in providing sewage in the Vila Prudente and had then moved on. At that time children were being used to tax on the cars at the traffic lights in Vila Prudente. He figured that what was needed was to protect childhood in the Vila Prudente. So he started a house culture, he got an arts student, a graphs graduate from here in São Paulo, a video person, a person dealing with theatre, and a psychologist; that was his team. There were about

Abei Journal 17.indd 71 03/07/2016 15:51:48

40 children who, only one of them went to school. I just went along, wondering what I could do to help; what was the role I could find in this small place. I started drawing the children, and it was the right thing to do. They were very pleased, their mothers were very pleased, and the drawings were ok. At the same time, I saw Osmar Araújo who got me into Carandiru Prison, where I worked with men who were incarcerated there and I did the same project, just drawing. The drawings then, were given to the children. There were two sets done, one I kept, the other was brought to their homes, and I remember the straightening of the nail. I don't know. Do you remember, in your house were nails straightened? In my house nails were straightened because we didn't have those little packets in those days of nails. And in every house in the *favela* there was one nail which was straightened, hammered in the wall and the picture hung up with photographs. I was intrigued by the culture of the *favela*, because this was a culture where you didn't go to like it; you actually built it yourself. That intrigued me and I respected it, and then we showed those photographs in the Bienal, we were completely rejected by the art world here. But don't doubt. I even gave one of them to a magazine in Ireland to do a review. Jesus, they absolutely hammered me. We were now rejected by the popular press who had a question mark from their own attitude to the *favela*, which was negative.

PS: Can we now take a look at some of the *Godot* pictures?

That's the tree. It's a painted tree. You get to see that landscape, the colour... That's Vladimir. We are having a problem with Vladimir this week because his costume is literally falling apart, and then the conversation last night was whether we should take them to the laundrette or not, to clean them, and the answer was: "take them to a laundrette, and they will not come out, at all." So, that's Vladimir on the left, indeed, and Estragon on the right.

That's just Vladimir, it's a big face on him... This is Pozzo who is really a strong construction... I made a conscious decision, sometimes Pozzo is dressed well, particularly well. I went to the other extreme, in terms of breaking him down. So they are all, I mean there is a moment where "I've lost my watch", and Pozzo says, tiny pause, "I must have left it at the manner". My two actors, Vladimir and Estragon, look at each other and go... "Oh yeah? You have a manner?" And that's a nice little moment, nice little moment. But this guy is trained at the Jacques le Coque Tour in Paris, and he teaches for me in the acting school in Dublin, and a more physical performance you won't see. Sometimes it is…. I was watching him on video the other day and … it's terrifying how detailed and precise he is. That will be the Jacques le Coque training out at Paris.

And there he is with all his acting. And there is Brian's tree, and there is Brian's backdrop, and there is poor old Lucky. And there is other perspective on it, which is nice… How that band's neck is not broken I do not know.

And this is the beginning of his 700 word monologue without punctuation…. And how do you get him to shut up? You know you take off his hat and he collapses. And it was

Abei Journal 17.indd 72 03/07/2016 15:51:48

lovely in Rio the other night, because it's quite big and quite physical, and he's building this thing and he's leaning on the front of the stage... and he's... well... he's dripping sweat, and the line is, "His hat", Pozzo says, "His hat". So as soon as you take off his hat, his ability to communicate and speak is gone.
That's one of my favourite images, and Brian was talking with us, to debate… and… that cruciform, that crucifixion scene, where he's broken and Pozzo is trying to put it all together again. It's interesting because Pozzo puts the suitcase in his right hand and that suitcase drops, and again he does the same on the other side. This is just before they move away again.
"Adieu! Adieu!" And the two boys, yeah, off they go. No, no, no, it's fine. That's what they are saying, "Adieu Adieu!". That's what they're saying.

Audience: I'd like to know if *Waiting for Godot* is your favourite work. And if it is, why?

PS: I went to drama school. I was at a all-male boarding Catholic school, and the day before I left school, the headmaster of the school, Mark Patrick Heatherman, gave me three books: one, *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter; two, *Creating a Role* by Stanislavski; and three, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. I went to drama school in England. It was the 1970's, and I was really terrified and nervous and really shy. It was only when I learned to breathe, that I was able to start to find myself. I was in so much trouble after three months in that drama school, that I didn't know where to turn. I turned to one man and he said, "I think we might be able to organise a scholarship for you. Can you, please, present an audition, a monologue?" And I said... and I said... I'll present that monologue "Was I sleeping while the others suffered?" I didn't know what it was about, I had no notion, but I sat in my room, and I learned it, and I presented it, and I... earned enough money to put myself through whole four years of drama school. And suddenly in that, I discovered something about myself, and about my ability and my confidence and a switch was turned on and... so... it was a play that became a very, very close and very private and a very special play. What is my favourite play? *Waiting for Godot* is my favourite play. If it wasn't my favourite play, maybe King Lear.

Audience: I'm guessing you performed *Waiting for Godot*, here in Rio, in English. Was it difficult for you to perform in a language that is not your own?

PS: No, because when we got the invitation to come over here from Consul General Sharon Lennon and Ambassador Brian Glynn with the support of Culture Ireland in Dublin, the very first thing they said was, "We're gonna pay for subtitles to be done properly in Portuguese." It was freaking me out because I'd never done this before. So, we got this company to do this, he installs his equipment. He forgot to close the glass, and I'm saying, please, it's like a typing pool. He was able to integrate the words with

the action, the action with the words, and it was so important. Now would I like to do *Waiting for Godot* in Rio without subtitles? No, I really wouldn't. But I saw people looking at that play in a way that I've never seen people looking at the play because, they're having to negotiate the words, the character, the character and the emotion, and what's said. And I've never seen that before. I've seen *Hamlet* done in Romanian, like that. And so I thought it was just a good example of things being done right. Because we've never toured before. Smock Alley Theatre was built in 1662, and it was only really recreated three years ago. And within three years we're doing an international tour. But we couldn't have done it without the work of Foreign Affairs, without the Embassy, without Culture Ireland, without the Consular General's Office. We couldn't have done it, because we've never done it before. It's interesting, there are people who gave us support above and beyond. There are moments I imagine people saying, "Not, *Waiting for Godot* again!" Anyway, good. That's a great question. I was nervous about the subtitles, I really, really was. But when I saw people interacting and engaging with them… it was important!

Audience: What is the impact of doing the text in English and seeing the production of the same text in French?

PS: I only saw one production in England many, many, many years ago, and I… frankly, I didn't know what I was doing. I speak a bit of French and I was able to follow it. Interestingly enough, I remember going home and looking up my text, and there was a resonance… Ronan, the guy who plays Pozzo in this production, he has a simultaneous translation. He has it in French on one page, and in English on another page. He trained in France with Jacques Le Coque. There were lovely, lovely moments in rehearsal where he was reciting pieces in French and then doing them in English. And there was a lightness to that. I know the play intimately in English but I don't know it intimately in French. I have a beautiful edition of *Krapp's Last Tape*, which is in German and in English and in French; it's a prize possession. I adore that play. And when I sometimes have a moment I will read that final scene, the punts on the lake, "I asked her…" "Picking gooseberries, she said. I asked her how she came by the scratch and she under us all moved, moved us gently, up and down, and from side to side. Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited." Reading that in English, and in German, and in Dutch, and in French in this book I have is lovely. It makes me feel real clever.

Abei Journal 17.indd 74 03/07/2016 15:51:48

Drama

Abei Journal 17.indd 76 03/07/2016 15:51:48

“*What remains of all that misery?*” *Time, Habit and Memory in Samuel Beckett’s* Krapp’s Last Tape

Fernando Aparecido Poiana

Abstract: *This article discusses how the flow of time in* Krapp’s Last Tape *constitutes an element of suspense to keep the audience’s attention and interest throughout. It also analyses the way Beckett’s play explores the paradoxical connection between time and meaning which, along with the corrosively comic potential it holds, offers the audience the opportunity to philosophize in concrete and existential terms.*

Keywords: *Samuel Beckett;* Krapp’s Last Tape*; existentialism.*

> Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals. (Beckett on Proust)

Krapp’s Last Tape was written in English in early 1958, the same year when it was first published in *Evergreen Review* and performed at the Royal Court Theatre in London. As history has it, the voice of Northern Irish actor Patrick Magee provided Beckett with the inspiration to write this play: Beckett had listened to Magee reading excerpts from *Molloy* (1951) and *From an Abandoned Work* (1957) on the BBC at the end of the previous year. That said, this article looks into how the flow of time in *Krapp’s Last Tape* constitutes the leading motif that generates and maintains suspense throughout Beckett’s one-act play. In addition, this study considers time as a central philosophical category to reflect upon the nature of the uncertainty and of the despair that afflict the ageing protagonist. Indeed, time imbricates memory and remembrance, and sets the frame for experience and existence to take place and acquire meaning. Paradoxically, it is also the passage of time that fades people’s memories into oblivion and ultimately renders personal experiences meaningless. Bearing that in mind, this article examines how Beckett’s play explores this paradox, and the corrosively comic potential it holds, to offer the audience the opportunity to philosophise in concrete and existential terms.

Abei Journal 17.indd 77 03/07/2016 15:51:48

The play starts with Krapp, a weary sixty-nine-year-old man, sitting at a table and facing front across from its drawers. He remains motionless for a moment, heaves a sigh, consults his pocket-watch, and after fumbling his pockets for a bunch of keys, gets up and moves to the front of the table. He locks and unlocks the table's drawers several times, paces to and fro at the edge of the stage, peels and eats some bananas –and nearly falls on their skin, which he drops at his feet –, goes backstage in the dark for a drink – the loud pop of a cork suggests so – and returns to the stage carrying a ledger which he finally lays onto the table. In strong white light, the table has on it a tape-recorder with microphone and a number of cardboard boxes with reels that contain recorded audio diary entries. Very near-sighted – but unspectacled – and hard of hearing, Krapp takes a spool out of a box – "box three, spool five" (Beckett 216) – in order to listen to it. He plays the recording back and forth, repeatedly switching the machine on and off. In this process, he stumbles upon a pompous and resentful thirty-nine-year-old Krapp, who broods on the memories of things that could have been and comments bitterly on the life of a much younger Krapp, possibly in his late twenties – "Just been listening to an old year, passages at random. I did not check the book, but *it must have been ten or twelve years ago*" (Beckett 218, *emphasis added*) –, who is at a certain point described as a young whelp. After listening to random fragments of his memories, most of which had already been partially or totally forgotten, Krapp switches off the machine, loads a virgin reel to it, clears his throat and starts recording a new audio diary entry. The sixty-nine-year old Krapp is contemptuous towards his thirty-nine-year-old self and makes bitter comments on his multiple failures as a lover and human being. Enraged, and after a long pause, Krapp wrenches off the tape and throws it away. He then puts the previous tape back on the machine, winds it forward to the passage in which he is with a girl in a punt and listens to it motionlessly staring before him, as the tape runs on in silence till the curtain falls.

The Krapp who is afflicted by impending death in his den is a victim of time and a prisoner of his own memories. Even though the ageing protagonist is "… disgusted with his earlier self's priorities" (Webb 70), he cannot refrain from harking back on the "… life of the selves he has made. Though his old selves may be forgotten, his successive patterns of habit grow out of one another, holding him the prisoner of men he can no longer even recognize" (Webb 68). His continuing efforts to evade the flaws and weaknesses of his previous selves emphasise the bitter irony embedded in the Manichean structure of the play. This exposes how suggestively interlinked his selves are, as well as how minimal changes, if any, have taken place throughout his life. The sixty-nine-year-old Krapp is never sympathetic towards his former selves, who are united "… by certain continuities, principally a continuous egoism, which ironically isolates them from one another by the mutual lack of sympathy it engenders. Each despises the others" (Webb 68). Indeed, Krapp still suffers from the same foibles and shortcomings he derides in his young selves. He is selfish and possessive, which is demonstrated by his strenuous obsession with keeping the table's drawers locked. At the beginning of

Abei Journal 17.indd 78 03/07/2016 15:51:48

the play, he "… *unlocks* first drawer … takes out a reel of tape … *locks* drawer, *unlocks* second drawer … takes out a large banana … *locks* drawer …" (Beckett 215, *emphasis added*). Apart from that, Krapp has also failed to keep the resolution to "… drink less, in particular" (Beckett 218). This becomes evident not only in his brief and solitary laughter after listening to his past aspirations and resolutions – "The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations! [*Brief laugh in which KRAPP joins*.] And the resolutions! [*Brief laugh in which KRAPP joins.]"* (Beckett 218) –, but also in the "pop of a cork" (Beckett 215) and in the "… sound of bottle against glass, then brief siphon" (Beckett 221) that are heard when he goes backstage, at different moments. Moreover, as the present Krapp sits, raptly listening to his thirty-nine-year-old self praise the new light above the table as "... a great improvement [to make him] feel less alone. [*Pause.*] In a way. [*Pause.*]" (Beckett 217), he reaffirms the rejection of the emotional side of life represented by his self-imposed exile and asceticism. In fact, the sixty-nine-year-old Krapp "… is not less alone with the dark around him; he only feels that way momentarily [and the] association of the ideas symbolized by light and darkness with the various women in his life is gradually revealed" (Webb 71-72). The image of loneliness that emerges from these associations is corroborated by the references to his former lover Bianca, whom he despises as a "hopeless business" (Beckett 218), and to the dark nurse who used to look after his mother. Indeed, Krapp's present activities and isolation make it "… even clearer how little fundamental change there has been, despite his feeling of loss of continuity among his successive selves" (Webb 70). In that sense, Beckett's dramatic irony is particularly corrosive in the following passage: "Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that's all done with anyway" (Beckett 222). This is so because Krapp's words are clearly contradicted by his attitudes and his current state of perplexity and precariousness. Added to that, his incurable obsession with the flow of time lures him into trying to capture and store the evanescence of the moments he lived, which he fails to do miserably. As a matter of fact, "deforming [time] and being deformed in turn, Krapp has made of his days and years the links of the chains that bind him" (Webb 66). To put it differently, Krapp's life has become a "… sequence of fragmentary selves held together by habit and by a thread of memory" (Webb 68) whose meaning time has altered, distorted and, in some cases, completely obliterated.

That time is a leading motif in *Krapp's Last Tape* is therefore beyond dispute. According to Weiss, the play "… takes place during a specific clock time of which we are not told, and on a specific calendar date: Krapp's sixty-ninth birthday" (31). Indeed, the 'last tape' in the title already suggests so, and it becomes an important element to reinforce the duality and the ambiguity that characterise Krapp's existence. Is the 'last tape' a reference to Krapp's most recent recording? Or is it an allusion to his final registration of the experience of self-denial his staunch asceticism has engendered? In fact, 'last tape' favours both interpretations, thus juxtaposing recentness and finitude, never actually privileging one over the other. Besides, 'last tape' also intimates the existence of previous

Abei Journal 17.indd 79 03/07/2016 15:51:48

tapes, and in turn, of previous selves, an implication which helps to allocate the passage of time at the heart of the play. Beckett pithily establishes the connection between past and present in his manipulation of language for aesthetic effect, and he never resolves the ambiguities that arise. Indeed, the interest and suspense generated by his choices fulfil "… the basic task of anyone concerned with presenting any kind of drama to any audience [, which] consists in capturing their attention and holding it as long as required" (Esslin 43). That said, Beckett's masterful use of time for dramatic effect increases the expectations of the audience as it constantly reminds them of the driving force behind the actions on stage. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, the "… ageing protagonist is consumed by two machines – his pocket-watch and his tape recorder – both of which make up his obsession with clock and calendar time" (Weiss 31). In addition to that, Beckett's use of time as structural principle and motif also causes the audience to experience its flow in a most intense and insidious form. In other words, Beckett invites the audience to feel the passage of time, and to a certain extent to sympathise with Krapp's irreparable losses. Furthermore, Beckett's skilful use of pauses and hesitations dictates the pace of the action, which is counterpointed with the alternation of prolonged and brief laughs, as in the following passage:

> More than 20 per cent, say 40 per cent of his waking life. [*Pause.*] Plans for a less… [*hesitates*]…engrossing sexual life. Last illness of his father. Flagging pursuit of happiness. Unattainable laxation. Sneers at what he calls his youth and thanks God that it's over. [*Pause.*] False ring there. [*Pause.*] Shadows of the opus…magnum. Closing with a – [*brief laugh*] – yelp to Providence. [*Prolongued laugh in which KRAPP joins.*] (…). (Beckett 218).

This experience of time also generates and maintains suspense, which is reinforced by both Krapp's switching on and off of the tape recorder as well as by his winding it forward at moments of potential resolution of this tension.

In addition, Krapp's laconic and elliptical language contributes to keeping the audience's attention by denying full access to the protagonist's existence. The audience can only gain access to fragments of Krapp's memory and experience while he impatiently attempts to edit out passages of his life he considers embarrassing or even not relevant any longer. In terms of dramatic effect, it is safe to say that *Krapp's Last Tape* pushes to the limit the notion that "expectations must be aroused, but never, until the last curtain, wholly fulfilled [and that] the action must seem to be getting nearer to the objective yet never reach it entirely before the end" (Esslin 43). The following passage illustrates this idea more didactically:

> What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely – [*KRAPP switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*] – great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark

> I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most – [*KRAPP curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*] – unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire – [*KRAPP curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches again*] – my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side. (Beckett 219-220)

What Krapp does is to interrupt his narrative several times at what seem to be moments of great revelation. This makes room for conjectures about the content of the parts he impatiently winds forward. The suppression of these passages, and the absence of meaning they represent, creates dramatic suspense that is never actually resolved. It is not that the action never gets nearer to its objective before the end of the play: it never reaches it.

Yet time is not only the structural principle of *Krapp's Last Tape*; it is also its central philosophical category in that it imbricates memory and remembrance. "*Krapp's Last Tape* deals with the flow of time and the instability of the self …" (Esslin 51). In that sense, time and memory are the elements that put Krapp's different selves into close contact. Moreover, it is memory the category which challenges chronology and brings into contact different Krapps, from different moments of his life. In this scenario, the self is not only "… ever elusive, split into perceiver and perceived, the teller of the tale and the listener to the tale [but] also ever changing through time, from moment to moment …" (Esslin 90). That the reading of the dictionary entry for 'viduity' – "… state – or condition – of being – or remaining – a widow – or widower. [*Looks up. Puzzled*.] Being – or remaining? …" (Beckett 219) – puzzles Krapp so greatly is therefore not surprising. As a matter of fact, the meaning of 'viduity' appears to have become of little importance or interest for Krapp at the very moment he reads the definition from the dictionary. Instead, it is the shape of the idea of being or remaining that seems of greater interest to Krapp. His perplexity makes the audience wonder whether being and remaining could actually be an alternative for one another, or whether these actions would not necessarily overlap in the end. In other words, to what extent does being become remaining when one thinks in terms of one's own misery, as Krapp manifestly does? Are not the ruins of our selves, corroded by the action of time, which remain in the end? Or else, is not it remaining a necessary condition of being? Moreover, Krapp has to come to terms with the fact that being or remaining can only be possible within time, which is ironically what consumes him physically and morally. The final implication of this idea is that the "… only authentic experience that can be communicated is the experience of the single moment in the fullness of its emotional intensity, its existential totality" (Esslin 90). And that existential totality which is only manifest in the singularity of the moment cannot be saved or remain. To put it differently, it is the memory of the moment that remains, not the moment itself: the moment ceases to be so that it can be stored in and rescued by memory. Memories in that sense are mere ruins. They are only remains of lived

Abei Journal 17.indd 81 03/07/2016 15:51:48

experience. As such they can be excavated for meaning, but are not guaranteed to have preserved any inherent signification. What this means is that they can hide as much as they can reveal. The scene in which Krapp meditates on his mother's death illustrates Esslin's point with great clarity

> I was there when – [KRAPP *switches off, broods, switches on again.*] – the blind went down, one of those dirty brown roller affairs, throwing a ball for a little white dog as chance would have it. I happened to look up and there it was. All over and done with, at last. (Beckett 220)

Death comes as a welcome relief, a profound liberation from the burden of being or remaining, which in that passage is reinforced by 'at last.' "I sat on for a few moments with the ball in my hand and the dog yelping and pawing at me. [*Pause.*] Moments. Her moment, my moments. [*Pause.*] The dog's moments. [*Pause.*]" (Beckett 219-220), says Krapp, and his words graphically express his difficulty in rationally finding meaning in a reality subjected to constant change. It is because the moment is evanescent that the emotional intensity and existential totality of the experiences he has lived are eventually consigned to oblivion. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, "… the self is a mystery, ever elusive [given] the impermanence of the human personality in time [in that] at each point in time our self is a distinct and different entity …" (Esslin 90). Even though the sixty-nine-year old Krapp is still affected by the predicaments of his former selves, his present self is "… confronted with its earlier incarnation only to find it utterly strange" (Esslin 79).

This utter strangeness builds an acute awareness that time marches on, which therefore introduces despair as a distinctive thematic element in *Krapp's Last Tape*. The critical element in Krapp's character is "… moral isolation. [His] various choices [have] made his life into a prison [and he] is driven in old age to the realization that he is about to die without having ever really lived" (Webb 66). His losses are many and permanent, and his persistent refusal to engage in prolonged relationships with women, for fear of what their outcome could be, confirms that. "[*Pause.*] Could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic.., and the pines, and the dunes. [*Pause.*] Pah! [*Pause.*] Could I? [*Pause.*] And she? [*Pause.*] Pah!" (Beckett 222). The irresolute tone of his words here attests that his staunch asceticism is in fact a result of his inability to make the first move. In fact, his attempts to do so are reported to have been an abject failure. For instance, the scene at the hospital, which the thirty-nine-year-old Krapp recounts, reveals that one of the nurses – "… one dark young beauty I recollect particularly, all white and starch, incomparable bosom …" (Becket 219) –, held a strong erotic attraction for him. Krapp insinuates that she was attracted to him as well – "… whenever I looked in her direction she had her eyes on me" (Becket 219) –, which might have only been a figment of his imagination after all. Be that as it may, the scene ends with his pathetically faltering attempt to approach the nurse: "And yet when I was bold enough to speak to her – not having been introduced – she threatened to call a policeman. As if I had designs on

Abei Journal 17.indd 82 03/07/2016 15:51:48

her virtue! [*Laugh. Pause*]" (Becket 219-220). The effect the whole passage produces, with Krapp's disdainful comment on the nurse he was obviously attracted to, is darkly comic: it shows the reader and the audience that "… behind the comedy lies a clear-eyed vision of the waste of most human endeavor, social planning and attempts to do good" (Calder 31).

Despite offering a startling and poignant insight into man's inherent tendency to failure, and into the despair it provokes, *Krapp's Last Tape* denies any forms of simple-minded nihilism and fatalistic solutions to its conflicts. Of particular interest is the fact that Krapp's approaching death, which could free him from the imprisonment of living under the veil of his fragmented memories, never actually comes. The tape running on in silence at the end of the play does not provide enough evidence about whether or not Krapp has finally ceased to be. If anything, it suggests that Krapp's life goes on. As John Calder argues, for Beckett's characters death is not a way to escape from life. Instead, "Krapp escapes through the Proustian past, reliving his memories with the aid of a tape recorder on which he has recorded his thoughts every birthday up to the present one, his sixty-ninth … But escape is never divorced from pain" (Calder 27). Beckett's artistic works are honest enough never to eschew the preposterous notions and attitudes that govern people's lives. Indeed, "… to find a way beyond the absurd, one can only pass through it [and this is what] Beckett's plays attempt to do …" (Webb 24). Yet, going through the absurdity of existence and its chaotic nature is not easy. Krapp has spent his life trying to escape it and now he lives solely on new retrospects, as his remarks in "… – a help before embarking on a new … [*hesitates*] … retrospect" (Beckett 218) evince. He has failed to find his way beyond the absurd, and as a result seeks comfort and consolation in the cultivation of habits that ultimately get him back to himself. As he admits, "[*Pause*.] I love to get up and move about in [my den], then back here to… [*hesitates*] … me. [*Pause.*] Krapp" (Beckett 219). Consequently, the resulting atmosphere of failure and despair of the play, along with the elusive nature of Krapp's memories and selves, corroborates the idea that

The drama of Samuel Beckett ... has no faith whatsoever in redemption, but presents a world which still looks as though it is in dire need of it. It refuses to turn its gaze from the intolerableness of things, even if there is no transcendent consolation at hand. After a while, however, you can ease the strain of this by portraying a world in which there is indeed no salvation, but on the other hand nothing to be saved. (Eagleton 57-58)

What is left for Krapp to save after all? As he admits, "perhaps [his] best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness" (Beckett 223). Krapp's misery is made all the more prominent by his "emotional dependency on the tape recorder" (Weiss 36), which represents the way "Krapp has become increasingly mechanised, and as such has become increasingly isolated" (Weiss 36). In this context, the tape recorder has a dual function and an ambiguous nature. This results from the fact that at the same time it "allows Krapp to remember, and keep remembering, his lost past, it also displaces Krapp's

Abei Journal 17.indd 83 03/07/2016 15:51:48

emotional and physical needs. The act of reviewing the past draws Krapp further into the past, into himself and into the machine" (Weiss 35). What this shows in the end is that the protagonist has arrived at an impasse. He cannot save his experiences from total oblivion through recollection simply because he has never been able to attach meaning to his existence. Krapp's dead end reveals that there is no essential or inherent meaning to experience, and also that it falls to people to render their experiences meaningful. Such experiences can only be meaningful when their potentialities are fully embraced, which Krapp has refused to do throughout his life. Instead, he has systematically confined them to a mechanised archive represented by the tape recorder. "Because the memory remains on tape only to be recalled with the help of a sterile machine, Krapp is unable to flush away his emotional longing" (Weiss 38). Nevertheless, his emotions seem to be as sterile as the accounts of the past Krapps registered on the tapes. A failed author, "Krapp cannot produce written texts because he hoards his memories of love and loss onto a machine which ultimately leads to an unproductive artistic life" (Weiss 38).

Krapp's Last Tape ultimately embodies "… in form a presentation of the formlessness of human experience in the twentieth century" (Webb 24). What Beckett's play does is to aesthetically represent the state of mind which produces the central paradox that twentieth-century man had to face: "we are impelled by our nature to seek understanding, but reason, the only instrument we have with which to seek it, has proven a clumsy and fragile tool" (Webb 23). The way that Beckett rewrites experience in the aesthetic realm of this particular one-act play reveals that he never looks away from the most excruciatingly unbearable aspects of human existence. On the contrary, his work as a playwright shows he is very much aware that "drama at its best, in the concreteness, the reality, of its nature, has the infinite complexity of the real world itself" (Esslin 114). Due to that, Beckett never overlooks the reality of human existence and its inherent contradictions. His plays address themes and topics that go way beyond exploring the dilemmas of twentieth-century man or of what came to be known as the theatre of the absurd. As a matter of fact, they delve into and, to a certain extent, re-examine the philosophical tradition that has transformed (post)modern man into a "… stranger in an unintelligible universe …" (Webb 23).

There seems to be little doubt, then, that time is of the essence for memory and recollection. It not only creates habit, but it also provides the frame within which human existence and experience may acquire meaning. In that sense, Krapp is the quintessential embodiment of the Beckettian principle according to which the individual is a succession of individuals and life is a mere succession of habits. In spite of that, time can also serve another completely different purpose. Indeed, it drains language out of meaning and in "… *Krapp's Last Tape*, the well-turned idealistic professions of faith Krapp made in his best years have become empty sounds to Krapp grown old" (Esslin 87). The present Krapp's inability to remember the word 'viduity' used by his thirty-nine-year old self at a certain point shows that. "[*KRAPP switches off, raises his head, stares blankly before him. His lips move in the syllables of 'viduity'. No sound.*]" (Beckett 219). He then goes

Abei Journal 17.indd 84 03/07/2016 15:51:48

backstage, picks up a dictionary, lays it on the table and looks up the meaning of a word which, like most of his memorable moments, had faded into total oblivion.

The blackly comic effect this scene creates is matched by the paradox of "… Hm…Memorable…what? [*He peers closer*.] Equinox, memorable equinox. [*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*] Memorable equinox?... [*Pause. He shrugs his shoulders, peers again at ledger, reads.*]" (Beckett 217). Krapp's blank stare added to his shrug of shoulders bespeaks his perplexity at the fact that language escapes him much as the relevance of his memories does. In fact, the medium through which the totality of the moment could be redeemed proves itself to be fallible. Indeed, language in *Krapp's Last Tape* "… becomes a living force of its own that can dictate the content that floats on it, and have the capacity to hide as much as it reveals" (Calder 17). Beckett's use of language also elicits Krapp's obsession with habit, and passages like "… Past midnight. *Never* knew such silence" (Beckett 221) and "be *again*, be *again*" (Beckett 223, *emphasis added*) illustrate that, with their emphasis on frequency and repetition. Moreover, the scene in which Old Miss McGlome does not sing her habitual songs of her girlhood shows very clearly that, in this play, habit is imbricated in both language and gesture. Besides, it is habit that helps to create the consciousness of past and present, as well as of their constant juxtaposition for dramatic effect. "*Extraordinary* silence this evening, I strain my ears and do not hear a sound. Old Miss McGlome *always sings* at this hour. But not tonight" (Beckett 217, *emphasis added*), says Krapp after noticing her unusual silence. Beckett's choice of words here creates a powerful metaphor that shows how great a deadener habit is. The absence of language, in the form of Miss McGlome's unsung song, disrupts the usual order of things, which is also alluded to and reinforced by the etymological nuances of 'extraordinary'. To put it differently, Beckett's word choice can hide and unveil meanings at the same time, which suggests that he viewed language in a somewhat ambiguous and paradoxical way. For him, "… language is both adequate and inadequate, life and art become expressible and inexpressible" (McCrae; Carter 15), to the point that he never takes for granted the gaps in meaning, as well as the tiny yet indispensable nuances of discourse that common sense will blithely take for granted. To a certain extent, this nature of words appears to justify his tendency towards minimalism. Ultimately, in *Krapp's Last Tape*, language "… serves to express the breakdown, the disintegration of language. Where there is no certainty, there can be no definite meanings …" (Esslin 86), which undermines the possibility for absolute truths to ever exist, let alone to be expressed. In Krapp's dramatic universe, where no transcendence is presented as alternative or consolation, and where reason has proved faulty to apprehend existence in its full complexity, it is natural that uncertainty meets despair.

Whether it is uncertainty that leads to despair, or is the other way around is a difficult thing to be sure of, though. "What went wrong? What choices led him to this dead end? Krapp himself seems to understand very little of this, only that the end he has come to is indeed a dead one" (Webb 71). An heir of enlightened reason, Krapp cannot figure out what went wrong because he is "… too close to [the clues]. The audience,

Abei Journal 17.indd 85 03/07/2016 15:51:49

however, is in a position to see more clearly" (Webb 71). The dramatic irony that results exposes Krapp's weaknesses while it also offers the audience the chance to look inwards and meditate on their own tentative existence. The ambiguity and perplexity that arise from this situation are also signaled in Krapp's faltering discourse. Excerpts like "… – back on the year that is gone, with what I hope is *perhaps* a glint of the old eye to come …" (Beckett 219, *emphasis added*), and "… I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and *perhaps* no place left in my memory …" (Beckett 220, *emphasis added*) confirm this idea. His hesitancy and vacillation between different selves, as well as the states of mind they represent, are also evident in "… Ah well, *maybe* he was right" (Beckett 222, *emphasis added*), and also in "… *Perhaps* my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness" (Beckett 223, *emphasis added*). What this suggests is that the key word and the defining notion in Krapp's life is 'perhaps'. Indeed, Krapp's fickleness entails his incapacity to sort out the puzzle that his existence has become. Besides, his reticent discourse reinforces this idea as it attests language's failure to communicate existential truths directly and positively. Beckett "… may have devalued language as an instrument for the communication of ultimate truths, but he has shown himself a great master of language as an artistic medium" (Esslin 88). Moreover, Beckett's virtuoso command of language as an artistic medium makes his writing, for either stage or page, at the same time self-consciously poetic in its form and philosophically disturbing in its content and effects. In his plays, "action on the level of reality [can at] the same time be a poetic metaphor" (Esslin 114-115). In *Krapp's Last Tape* this metaphor becomes all the more powerful as it encapsulates the complex nature of time and causes the reader or the theatregoer to experience its flow at work in the aesthetic realm of the play.

According to Martin Esslin, "most serious drama from Greek tragedies to Samuel Beckett is [a form of] philosophising not in abstract but in [concrete and existential] terms" (22). In and of itself, drama can exert a direct and profound impact on people's minds by appealing to emotions as well as to reason. What is more, drama constitutes a "… form of thought, a cognitive process, a method by which we can translate abstract concepts into concrete human terms or by which we can set up a situation and work out its consequences" (Esslin 23). If this is true, one can say that Beckett took this idea almost literally when he tried to translate the abstract notions of memory and time onto the stage by using a tape recorder as the quintessential metaphor for time and habit in *Krapp's Last Tape*. Moreover, within the framework that the stage provides, the recording machine *is* the protagonist's involuntary memory, the fragments of which are exposed to Krapp as he operates the machine. At the same time, the encounter with the tape recorder causes the reader and audience to reflect upon their own experiences and perhaps rethink their existence altogether. In conclusion, and bearing these considerations in mind, it seems appropriate to think of Samuel Beckett's theatre of the absurd as part of a broader philosophical tradition that meditates upon the emptiness of human existence, its origins and its consequences. As a result, the careful study of *Krapp's Last Tape* indicates that

Abei Journal 17.indd 86 03/07/2016 15:51:49

Beckett possessed a keen awareness and vast knowledge of the philosophical tradition that has thrown (post)modern man into this impenetrable and indecipherable universe in which he is just a stranger, and where going on seems to be the only way out of his moral isolation and despair.

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Abei Journal 17.indd 87 03/07/2016 15:51:49

Abei Journal 17.indd 88 03/07/2016 15:51:49

Fiction

Abei Journal 17.indd 90 03/07/2016 15:51:49

A Life of Their Own:
The Quest Motif in Contemporary Irish Women's Short Stories

Ann Wan-lih Chang

Abstract: *This article focuses on the motif of quest in contemporary Irish women's short stories, in particular those published in the 1980s and 90s by Clare Boylan, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Stella Mahon, Mary Dorcey and Marilyn McLaughlin. In these stories women, through the agency of various catalysts, attain a kind of enlightenment or "awakening" which leads them to strive to subvert or transcend the social norm or to reconcile with residual trauma from their past. This awakening process is a consequence of an inner journey of self development which takes place while engaging with society in order to renegotiate their place within that society. Irish women's stories are, in general, characterised by an undercurrent of anger, rebellion and subversion within the narrative which reflects a certain level of feminist awareness. Overall, there appears to be a strong case for evaluating contemporary Irish women's short stories from a feminist perspective. As suggested by Christine St. Peter, many stories by Irish women illustrate through narrative a latent power to challenge or to subvert the traditionally accepted and dominant patriarchal ideology of Irish society.*

Keywords: *Irish feminism, Irish short story, rebellious women, transformation, quest.*

Introduction: The lonely other voice

There have been some notable, if gradual, changes in many aspects of Irish women's role and life in general since "the other voice" emerged in Irish society in the post-Eamon De Valera period from the 1960s. It is evident, possibly inevitable, that these changes in Irish women's life are echoed in contemporary Irish women's stories, some writers of which are self-declared feminists or have engaged actively with the Irish women's movement. Consequently, their literary works tend to be gynocentric, concerned overtly with women's issues and seeking explicitly to give voice to women's quest for justice in a male-dominated Irish society. This article evaluates a recurrent motif in stories from the 1980s and 1990s by writers such as Clare Boylan, Éilís Ní

Abei Journal 17.indd 91 03/07/2016 15:51:49

Dhuibhne, Stella Mahon, Mary Dorcey and Marilyn McLaughlin. This motif is a quest for women's self-discovery through rebellion against their traditionally prescribed roles and destiny within Irish society. We argue here that Irish women's stories serve both as a vibrant narrative genre within Irish literary tradition, and as a strategic device by Irish women writers seeking to engage with a collective Irish feminist awareness. Typically, such stories focus on women who start by accepting passively a socially prescribed role and life as wife or mother, subsequently become "bad" by diverging from the traditional patriarchal view of women's role in Irish society, and ultimately undergo a transformative inner journey of self-discovery which leads them towards emotional independence and individuality.

The Irish contexts in which the stories analysed are set belong to a key period of time during which Irish women's formal status steadily improved through various legal and institutional reforms. In general, Irish feminism has fought vigorously to achieve successfully an enhanced level of equality. This process started in the 1970s when Irish women gained more representation in politics and, in consequence, were able to promote legal reforms which contributed to the gradual emancipation of women.[1] Moreover, various sex scandals amongst Catholic clergymen and tragic events such as the death of Ann Lovett and the notorious Kerry Babies case in 1984, the Lavinia Kerwick case (1991), or the X Case (1992) shocked the country and, as a consequence, led indirectly to the subsequent reforms relating to women's options in respect of marriage and reproduction.[2] The 1983 law amending the restriction of abortion set a backlash in motion. Nevertheless, in 1995 Irish women took a further step forward by gaining the right to divorce.[3] Many stories published in these decades were about struggles and personal tragedies such as those mentioned above. Irish female writers in the 1980s tend to focus on the context of the earl**ier** days of struggle for female emancipation in Ireland, with an emphasis on suggesting a glimmer of hope against an oppressively dark social background. By the 1990s things moved on socially and this is reflected in stories from this period which present more positive heroines and more positive outcomes as a result of the awakening of the female spirit and liberation of the female mind.

The short story genre as strategic narrative device for Irish women has roots in Ireland's literary tradition and heritage. According to Frank O'Connor, the short story is a "natural form" deriving from the Irish storytelling tradition "embedded in the Irish psyche" (Casey 9). It is indeed a genre associated closely with Irish history as well as with Irish women's writing. The short story is considered to be a "natural progression of story-telling, letter-writing, diary-keeping, and even school essay-writing", forms of writing with which women were already familiar in their lives (Madden-Simpson 13, 18). Traditionally, the short story also plays an essential role in Irish culture and politics.[4] O'Connor argues also that the short story is a vital expressive tool for the "submerged population" of a country, such as Ireland, in a post-colonial state (O'Connor 20). In the light of Frank O'Connor's view, Colm Tóibín, echoed by Boada-Montagut, connects the prominence of the Irish short story to Ireland's status as a country with a broken

and traumatic past.[5] Tóibín's or Boada-Montagut's association of a political discourse with the short story genre may suggest a reason for the significant appeal of the short story genre within contemporary Irish women's writing. The short story serves Irish women's purpose of expression because, among the *submerged* population, Irish women as the "Double Other" have actually experienced the legacy of a double dispossession (Edge 215-6; Boada-Montagut 10).[6] Within the male-dominated Irish literary canon and tradition, women's writing has tended to be marginalised.[7] We suggest that Irish women may find the short story both an effective and also an instinctive way of expressing varied issues related to women as well as a medium which offers fresh scope for women to create a distinctive style of literature, a literature of their own (Boada-Montagut 38). Apart from the convenience of the short story as a vehicle for expressing a political agenda through an economical, focused, and accessible narrative, the short story was also a practical choice for women, especially before the second half of the twentieth century, when women still mostly stayed home as full-time homemakers.[8]

In any case it is clear that many Irish women writers choose to write short stories. A pervasive motif in such short stories is that of a latent drive for liberation of the female spirit which, in some stories at least, results in the transcending of victimisation and powerlessness. Stories such as those by Boylan, Mahon, Ní Dhuibhne, Dorcey or McLaughlin can be contextualised within the goals and heritage of Irish women's movements during those times of social transformation. They span a period of upheaval, the 1960s through to the 1980s, which was characterised by women's rebellion and struggle, followed by the new millennium which ushered in a kind of transcendence and rebirth, a liberation from internalised and institutionalised "false consciousness", from the shadow of patriarchy. In this way short stories by Irish women writers signal a new direction and open a new page in respect of how women are represented in Irish writing and these representations consolidate the ongoing empowerment process of women within Irish society.

Marriage rebels: Subverting a female form

The modesty and devotion of women as mothers and wives is embedded in Irish culture. This image is closely associated with the worship of the iconic, quiet, suffering mother figure of the Virgin Mary which is rooted in Catholic religious doctrine. A "sacrificial" woman who devotes herself and her needs to her family is also, conveniently, endorsed officially in the public domain within the Irish Constitution.[9] Responding to this marginalised view of women as mothers and wives, Irish women's stories feature a quest motif in which middle-aged women rebel against their prescribed destiny. These older women strive for what might constitute a purpose, a meaning of life, in their own right. Typically, these female characters embark on a personal quest by distancing themselves from their present, usually secure, lives, by going into physical exile or by undertaking an inner journey which eventually gives birth to a sense of personal liberation via

Abei Journal 17.indd 93 03/07/2016 15:51:49

transformational artistic creativity. This theme of a female quest for self-discovery and freedom is sometimes located within a surrealistic context or, at times, given an ironic perspective. These middle-aged women who have already been through the experiences still awaiting the younger women are looking for a life for themselves. This life is one in which women attempt to negotiate within themselves in order to seek fulfillment in their lives. The catalyst for this goal-motivated quest is triggered by an urge to liberate a suppressed libido through **a** creative power and passion latent within the**se** women who are at a stage when they are no longer young, vulnerable or naïve.

In Maeve Kelly's "A Life of Her Own" (1976), the heroine, who is no longer willing to sacrifice herself for the welfare of her parents, proceeds to live *her own* life by taking the marriage vow which might, ironically, denote another form of conformity and self-sacrifice for women in respect of being a good wife in a 1970-Irish social context. This was a period of time in which women still had limited choices to live their own way of life outside the secure enclosure of marriage. Decades after Kelly's iconic story on women's choice, the women on the quests depicted in the stories by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Clare Boylan or Marilyn McLaughlin are individuals who seek to control their own destiny by the opposite strategy of rebelling against this marriage norm and by immersing themselves in an inner journey of self-enlightenment. The marriage rebels in these stories, who have devoted their youthful years to a secure marriage as a dutiful wife or mother, rebel against the sense of alienation they feel within their current marriage enclosure. The psychological development that occurs between marriage partners during middle age manifests itself through a feminist lens in Irish women's short stories. These middle-aged women seek to liberate themselves beyond socially determined roles and duties. They do not need to follow the guidance of another female role model as younger women are likely to do. Instead, these older women are empowered from within to rediscover and revive their own powers through forces of libido.

Ní Dhuibhne's "Estonia" (1997) depicts such a rebellious woman. The central character Emily is disillusioned about her marriage and her husband, who never "bolster[s] up Emily's need for security" (Ní Dhuibhne 1997, 185-6). The hardship of the reality entraps Emily for years in the same dull routine as a working mother, struggling to manage her life with children and unpaid bills. Emily's dissatisfaction and unrest result in daydreaming and complaints which eventually trigger her personal quest, from which she hopes to change the direction of her life. Emily's unrest also elicits forces of libido inside her which give birth subsequently both to her creative inspiration as well as to her buried passion. Both provide Emily with a way to compensate for what is otherwise a trance-like existence. The power which fuels older women in these stories manifests itself quite often in a form of artistically creative process. The female character's engagement in artistic creativity serve**s** as a way for the woman to liberate herself. The catalytic and cathartic inspiration released by such a process is, according to Harding (214-5), equivalent to a process of rebirth, in which a hidden potential energy from the psyche is discovered and produces either a new artistic work or a new self. The character's artistic inspiration

Abei Journal 17.indd 94 03/07/2016 15:51:50

within the creative process is juxtaposed with her psychological development, signifying a female aspiration for liberation and independence. Nevertheless, pursuit of such a goal is not always depicted as being promising. Anne Devlin's heroine in 'The House' (1986), for example, fails **i**n her attempt to achieve the goal after embarking on such a process **which** ultimately ends up in tragic alienation and madness. Notwithstanding, a decade later Clare Boylan made her character in "That Bad Woman" (1995) regain a lost part of her *self* through reengaging with an old hobby of photography. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's heroines in "Hot Earth" and "Estonia" (1997) are also successful in starting new lives as writers. In stories by Irish women in the 1990s generally more positive images prevail of Irish women's capacity to be choice makers by comparison with the depictions in short stories of the previous two decades.

In Ní Dhuibhne's "Hot Earth", Bernadette le**aves** both her husband and Ireland in order to be independent as a writer. The juxtaposition of the hot and cold climates in Italy and Ireland in this story evokes a contrast between the inner worlds of Bernadette and her husband. Bernadette, a romantic sentimentalist with a yearning for passion and recognition, is attracted to the hot earth while her husband, who appears to be an intelligent rational idealist, is only consciously aware of the damage from the sun and the risk of skin cancer. In this story, the higher temperature in countries other than Ireland is a metaphor for Bernadette's state of mind and desires. The hot climate of Italy evokes the passionate side of Bernadette, and acts as a kind of catalyst leading to a confrontation with her problem and an eventual discovery of a self with which she felt fulfilled. In the stories about such rebellious women, a separation from their husbands seems to be a primary and critical catalyst for their personal transformation. Bernadette in Ní Dhuibhne's "Hot Earth", as the woman in Boylan's "That Bad Woman", embarks on a quest for her own sake driven by a sense of alienation from the inertia of her married life, which, she believes, might be the main obstacle blocking development of her creativity. These women's husbands may not be dreadful figures but their roles as husbands are so rooted in the conventional social norm that these women can no longer feel satisfied with a role which involves the surrender of their selves to a male-dominated culture. Furthermore, there seems to be more social discipline imposed upon women to be more self-conscious of social expectation than men of what constitutes appropriate behaviour in various circumstances. In "Hot Earth", Bernadette feels awkward about the way her lover Kevin praises his wife as faithful and loyal as if by contrast Bernadette is *bad* because she is an unfaithful wife to her own husband. The quality of fidelity seems to be a virtue expected more of a woman than a man.

Apart from artistic energy acting as a catalyst to development, the symbol of water plays a significant role in middle-aged women's inner journey. In the wake of early feminist consciousness Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) already showed the female character as liberated when she is immersed in the "female organic element". Elaine Showalter observes that water is used symbolically to represent the "female element" because the female body is apt to wetness such as "blood, milk, tears and

amniotic fluid" (81). Showalter goes on to argue that "drowning" in women's writing is a "traditionally female literary death" which also symbolises women's ultimate liberation and return to the source of life (Ibid). The symbolic bodies of water adopted by Chopin in an earlier century still signify a source of liberation in various stories by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne or Marilyn McLaughlin stories from the late twentieth century. One of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's earlier stories, "Looking" (1988), not only depicted water as a source of energy and regeneration but also presented drowning as a symbolic transformation process for the female character concerned. Significantly, this story is set against the background of the late 1960s in Ireland in the wake of the new liberalism when the *Late Late Show*, which debated controversial societal issues, was broadcast on RTÉ. The female character Margaret, a housewife, finds her routine life one of inertia and without a purpose. Margaret's aspiration for a change, a meaning, in her life also emerges in a dream associated with water. The dream is "suffused with light and sweat", in which Margaret is immersed in the joy of a walk by the sea until a "hand" pulls her away from the water source towards a white concrete house "filled with bleakness and despair" (Ní Dhuibhne 1988, 37). The crystal clear water and the warm sunshine, as opposed to the bleakness and sterility of the white house, appear as a source of empowerment towards a potential transformation. "Looking" implies Margaret may have a chance to develop despite the obstacles blocking her to do so. Margaret's "spiritual death" by literary drowning in "Looking", as in Chopin's *The Awakening*, acts as a transition leading to a transformation. This transformation, seen through Margaret's imaginary "gaze" on her life-death struggle in a coma in a hospital ward, may cause symbolic annihilation if it fails while also having the potential for renewal and growth if it succeeds. The symbolic "looking" of the heroine at her life and her self as suggested in the story title denotes a process of struggle in which women aspire for a different dimension to life.

Another Ní Dhuibhne story "Love, Hate and Friendship" (1997), published a decade later than "Looking", develops the positive association of water with personal development in a story about a woman on a similar quest to that of the character in "Looking" who nevertheless is not required in the later story to undergo literary annihilation through drowning. The later story uses the device of a dream in which the main character, Fiona, is chased and embraced by waves of the sea. This dream empowers her to face herself as well as her problem. The waves appear as symbols of powerful forces in the unconscious, as well as of the power of the self. Prior to this empowerment, Fiona is described as surrendering herself to, and almost paralysed by, her love for Edward who always preoccupies Fiona's mind even in the absence of his physical presence, because "Edward colonised her territory. Everywhere she looked in Ireland reminded her of him. He had taken over every place and every object in her life" (Ní Dhuibhne 1997, 36). Fiona attempts to liberate herself from this troubled relationship because she finds no place for herself in the unbalanced bond with Edward. Therefore Fiona attempts to detach herself from the situation by travelling to the warm south of France, a contrast to cold Ireland. Again, the stark contrast of the climate between that of

Abei Journal 17.indd 96 03/07/2016 15:51:51

cold frigid Ireland and that of warm vibrant France mirrors the two conflicting elements which define Fiona's life – one stable but under the shadow of a tyrannical lover; the other adventurous and uncertain but with freedom. Once again, Fiona chooses eventually to follow her own way towards a life of freedom. In the last paragraph of the story, Fiona walks into the water and she feels warm and free, relaxed as if on a holiday. Immersed in the water, Fiona is finally able to re-focus her own way of life.

The water metaphor also features in some of Marilyn McLaughlin's stories. In "A Dream Woke Me" (1999), water plays a role in the character's struggle to break away from her emotional dependence on her demon lover. The woman's house in the story is haunted by a huge muscular tree, which was a gift from her dead lover. It reflects the shadowy state of mind and sense of emptiness of the anonymous female character in the aftermath of her lover's death. The meaninglessness and inertia of this situation put her into a trancelike state expressed as "two drowning lovers—the house clasped by the tree, being drawn down, down, down to its ending. I'll be dead before that happens" (McLaughlin 4). The strangling of the house by the overgrown tree symbolises the way in which the self of the heroine (like the house) is overshadowed, or swallowed, by her phantom lover (the destructive "carnivorous" tree). However, the heroine eventually survives the struggle, and restart**s** a new life. This heroine's aspiration is expressed through a "Camelot" dream vision at the end of the story. The dream recalls Alfred Lord Tennyson's romantic verses "The Lady of Shalott" (1842), narrating a woman's tragic aspiration for love. But unlike the Lady of Shalott, the heroine in McLaughlin's story reveals that her goal in making the journey on her own is not a search (nor a sacrifice) for her beloved but for something else, something more important—her own *Self*:

> I'll not overlook his blond and curling hair, or sail by his steady blue regard. I make no effort, and float along quite lazily, down to Camelot, maintaining only an edge of watchfulness. It will be pleasant to get to birdman, but it is also pleasant to make the journey. (McLaughlin 6)

The journey in the dream suggests a powerful female quest for self-discovery. The river, representing a source of power, will lead the heroine to the symbolic ideal.

In a nutshell, an archetypal transformative heroine is a characteristic feature of the stories by Ní Dhuibhne, Boylan and McLaughlin discussed above in this essay. These rebellious women in the stories are not radical martyrs and neither do they break away completely from their husbands or lovers. Nevertheless, they do not remain unchanged in their minds. They return with a different perspective, enabling them to re-evaluate and refocus their lives as well as their relationships. In "Hot Earth", Bernadette realises her own focus of life and accepts her husband's love as "loyal and enduring, if not very passionate" (Ní Dhuibhne 1997, 121). Emily in "Estonia" experiences once more a gush of "calm, wifely love" for her husband and the smile which "breaks out on her face is uncontrollable, delighted" as they are true feelings toward her husband (Ní Dhuibhne

Abei Journal 17.indd 97 03/07/2016 15:51:51

1997, 199). In “That Bad Woman”, there is a huge transformation both of the heroine’s appearance and of her temperament—her figure is “better defined and her step had grown jaunty” (Boylan 234). These women have become more aware of their situations and of themselves and now they take responsibility for themselves and truly become choice makers.

Reclaiming a lost self

Unlike those who are portrayed as luckier in respect to the starting point from which they embark on their journeys of development in the aforementioned stories, other women, prior to transcending their ways of life, are survivors from harsh experiences of abuse or exploitation by hideous or even demonic male figures. These stories, reflecting a symbolic process through which women heal a wound or regain a lost self, are best exemplified by Mary Dorcey’s “The Orphan”(1997), Stella Mahon’s “Knock Three Times” (1985) and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s “The Search for the Lost Husband” (1997). The first two stories, despite being written years apart and by different writers, each from a different region, convey an amazingly parallel pattern in terms of structure and story line: a traumatised woman returns from a visit to her childhood home to face the ghosts from her past, then goes on to discover a new life of her own. These female characters experience the annihilation of the *false self* that blocks them from moving on with their lives.

Dorcey’s “The Orphan” represents an iconic and symbolic response to Irish women’s victory in respect of marital choice in the divorce referendum in 1995. The false self which the female character in Dorcey’s “The Orphan” confronts is a self-blaming individual deformed by sexual abuse (child prostitution), experienced in her childhood. This oppression reinforces her self-loathing, which she shows when she reasons that she “must be an evil person to have brought this upon [her]self…there must be some kind of stain on [her] that [her] father could see that made him act the way he did” (Dorcey 117). A similarly distorted perception of self-blame is sometimes imposed upon the female victim of rape by a view that she (the victim) is the one who is responsible for the outcome. In Mahon’s “Knock Three Times”, the female character is similarly torn by traumatic experiences from her childhood. She regrets that she surrenders her own values in exchange for recognition among her peers or, later, for material survival when she recalls that she “sold [her] soul and killed a rat” and “sold [herself] for a colour TV” (Mahon 17-8). But her anxiety seems to be associated with a disturbing, nightmarish trauma or complex rooted in her girlhood when her “secret place” was intruded upon by a “Scrunchy Man”. It is not clear from the text whether this female character had been sexually assaulted when she was a little girl but there might be hints of this in the description of the dreadful male figure: “your leering eyes, your mouth that grins wetly at me. See your hand with its brown-stained finger point at me, choose me, reach for me. Not *this* time” [italics mine] (Mahon 19). Or perhaps at some other time she was

Abei Journal 17.indd 98 03/07/2016 15:51:51

attacked or molested? In any case, the female character is so trapped by this past trauma that she cannot take any action to move on in her own life. Symbolically, this dreadful figure, the "Scrunchy Man", is the shadow which the female character must overcome in order to regain her self. Eventually the female character achieves the goal successfully. By "knocking at their door, she had knocked at her own, and found, in truth, that no one was barring her way. She can walk in" (Mahon 20). Likewise, the female character in Dorcey's "The Orphan" comes to understand the oppression she has experienced and discovers her self in the process:

> I was an orphan. Everyone knew that. I belonged to no one, and so I belonged to everyone. That's what he used to say…I know he was wrong. I belong to someone. I have my house. I have my children. And I belong to myself. (Dorcey 129-30)

Both Dorcey's and Mahon's stories appear not only political but realistic in uncovering a dark corner revealing serious social issues of sexual abuse, exploitation and poverty within a dysfunctional male-dominated Irish family and society. In the late 1990s, likewise, Ní Dhuibhne's "The Search for the Lost Husband" depicts the female character's rejection of, instead of reunion with, her tyrannical husband and suggests that women eventually wake up to themselves and make their own choice. It is a parody of a typical patriarchal fairy tale with a so-called happy ending where a vulnerable maid is rescued and lives with her Prince Charming happily ever after. In Ní Dhuibhne's story, however, the woman is not vulnerable but the one who expels the magic spell from the goat-man as well as makes the choice to finish the relationship with him. Ní Dhuibhne's theme in "The Search for the Lost Husband", a theme which runs through the whole story collection of *Inland Ice* (1997), is one of rejection by the female of the male's concept of happiness as when the female character declares: "Because it's time for me to try another kind of love. I'm tired of all that fairytale stuff" (Ní Dhuibhne 1997, 262).

In summary, the female journey of development toward selfhood depicted in Dorcey's, Mahon's and Ní Dhuibhne's stories is an optimistic one, with the possibility of a positive outcome for the self-esteem and individuality of their female characters. The motif of female quest is once again the vehicle through which women overcome the shadow cast by the forces of social conformity, a shadow which evokes in women a sense of self-hatred and denial of their own bodies and minds and also blocks women's capacity to discover their "self".

Conclusion: Reading Irish women's short story as a feminist genre

The stories examined in this article demonstrate the use of a specific motif of "quest for self-discovery" as a vehicle for empowering women to seek liberation in their

Abei Journal 17.indd 99 03/07/2016 15:51:51

own terms. The use of this motif is also subject to a kind of feminist evolution within the corpus of stories. They depict an explicit rebellion against aspects of patriarchal ideology and the Irish social system, such as the male-dominated marriage institution or suppressed female sexuality. We argue that a noticeable level of feminist awareness is represented by the manner in which Clare Boylan, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Stella Mahon, Mary Dorcey and Marilyn McLaughlin construct the characters and plots in order to express their perspectives despite the constraints imposed by socially self-censoring public norms in Ireland about certain issues. It would, however be naïve and an oversimplification to suggest that Irish female writers in general either identified themselves with or associated themselves formally with any of the women's movements in Ireland, or that their short stories are mere propaganda tools to serve a particular feminist political agenda, even though this is certainly and explicitly the case with Mary Dorcey and her stories. In addition, it is not the purpose nor within the appropriate scope of this article to claim that Irish *women's* writing serves as a synonym for Irish *feminist* writing. Nonetheless, there is a strong case for evaluating contemporary Irish women's short stories from a feminist perspective. The Irish critic Janet Madden-Simpson has claimed that "most Irish women writing [is] feminist" in the light of the awareness with which Irish female writers have clearly expressed the experience and difficulties of being women as well as writers in Ireland, who "approached their subjects from a more crusading and analytical angle" (Madden-Simpson 11). Ailbhe Smyth argues that Irish women who in and through their writing refuse to accept the so-called *truths* imposed upon them by society are, by definition, subversive (Smyth 14). Christine St. Peter echoes Smyth's view on Irish women's quests to subvert through their writing. St. Peter goes on to argue further that Irish women's writing can be termed feminist since the precondition of feminist writing "assumes conscious political decision" with the focus on the "'refusal and subversion of received orthodoxy, to say nothing of an appeal to extra-textual 'truthfulness and authenticity'" (St. Peter 153). Although it may be debatable whether one can classify Irish women's short stories as the kind of conscious political expression to which Christine St. Peter referred, the characteristics of subversion and rebellion in some contemporary Irish women's short stories still appear feminist insofar as they seek to challenge a patriarchal ideology and socially imposed pre-ordained roles for women within an Irish context.

Notes

1 The emergence of action groups supporting women was a feature of this period. More women participated in public office and around 21% of those elected to parliament in 1990s were women, almost double the number of the women elected a decade earlier. Ultimately, in the 1990s, two women, Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese, were elected the president of Ireland. For more see Patrick Clancy, ed, *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives* (1995, 2000); Diamaid Ferriter, *Ireland 1900-2000* (2005); Yvonne Galligan, *Women and Politics in Contemporary Ireland* (1998).

2 For more see Ferriter, *Ireland 1900-2000* (2005); Nell McCafferty, *A Woman to Blame: the Kerry Babies Case* (1987).

Abei Journal 17.indd 100 03/07/2016 15:51:51

3 For a detailed history of Irish women's movements and achievement, see Clancy, *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives* (2000); Ferriter, *Ireland 1900-2000* (2005); Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (2005).
4 Declan Kiberd considers the short story to be "the natural result of a fusion between the ancient form of the folk-tale and the preoccupations of modern literature", holding a particular "appeal for the writers of the emerging Catholic bourgeoisie who hailed from regional towns" (Kiberd 14-5). For more see Daniel Casey, introduction, *Stories by Contemporary Irish Women* (1990); "Story-telling: The Gaelic Tradition", *The Irish Short Story*; Sara Edge, "Representing Gender and National Identity", *Rethinking Northern Ireland* (1998); Irene Boada-Montagut, *Women Write Back* (2003).
5 Tóibín argues that the limited scope of time and space of the short story genre makes it possible to conveniently omit the part dealing with "the bitterness of the past, the confusion of the present or the hopelessness of the future" (Tóibín 6-8; Boada-Montagut 35-6). See Colm Tóibín, *Martyrs and Metaphors: Letters from the New Island* (1987); Boada-Montagut, *Women Write Back* (2003).
6 Irish women, according to Sara Edge and Irene Boada-Montagut, were subordinated to both patriarchal power and to British national identity under British colonization; subsequently, to Irish nationalism, unionism, Catholicism or Protestantism. For more see Edge, "Representing Gender" (1998) and Boada-Montagut, *Women Write Back* (2003).
7 For more discussion on the connection between gender and genre, see Dinah Birch, "Gender and Genre", *Imagining Women: Cultural Representations and Gender* (1992).
8 Both Virginia Woolf and Margaret Lawrence have pointed out the close connection between women's writing and maternal/domestic duties in the traditional home (Woolf 57; Birch 43). Some writers, such as Katherine Tynan, chose to write short stories as they were more likely to be published in periodicals, while others like Edith Somerville and Violet Martin wrote them because they could provide an instant income (Madden-Simpson 13). See Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing* (1979); Dinah Birch, "Gender and Genre" (1992); introduction in Janet Madden-Simpson, *Woman's Part* (1984).
9 Subsections 1 and 2 of section 2, article 41 of the *Constitution* declare clearly: "In particular, the State recognizes that by her [woman's] life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home". For more see Roinn an Taoisigh (Department of the Taoiseach), 27 May 1999, *Bunreacht Na hÉireann* (*Constitution of Ireland*), online.

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Abei Journal 17.indd 102 03/07/2016 15:51:51

Voices from South America

From Tradition to Innovation: The Short Stories of Osman Lins[1]

Sandra Nitrini

Abstract: *Present in the literary and cultural life of Brazil from 1955, the year of publication of his novel* O visitante *[The Visitor] until 1978, when he died prematurely, Osman Lins produced a varied and complex body of work, which, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, has been of growing interest to academic readers, having been languishing in limbo for a number of years. Perhaps the best way to present Osman Lins to a public unfamiliar with his work is to revisit some of his collections of short stories, which reveal the transformation in the poetics of a talented and determined writer following in the tradition of Flaubert, in which the act of writing is the fruit of persistent work with words in order to reach perfection.*

Keywords: *Osman Lins;short stories; novels.*

The apprentice Osman Lins took over ten years of constant exercise to arrive at the harmonious configuration of the thirteen stories in *Os gestos* [*The Gestures*], published in 1957. Almost the same period elapsed before the writer, mature and assured, but no less determined in his search for his own narrative form, offered his readers the collection *Nove, novena* [*Nine, Novena*], in 1966, a mark in the transformation of his poetics. A similar creative process was also undergone by the author in his novels: *O visitante* [*The Visitor*] and *O fiel e a pedra* [*The Believer and the Stone*] (1961), successful achievements in the traditional register, and *Avalovara* [*Avalovara*] (1973) and *A rainha dos cárceres de Grécia* [*The Queen of the Greek Prisons*] (1976), novels notable for their innovative language, not always favourably received by the critics, unlike the reception of *Nove, novena* [*Nine, Novena*].

A man of his place and time, Osman Lins had a solitary literary formation, reading the great classics of literature. It was therefore natural that his first books should have been inscribed in the garments of the traditional narrative and have been immersed in the gloomy, sad melancholy atmosphere of the world in the years after the Second World War. Although he was from the Northeast of Brazil, he did not incorporate the tradition of the regionalist narrative of the 1930s. He is more interested in stories plumbing the inner depths of the character, in a world of elastic frontiers, spotlighting the old, the sick,

Abei Journal 17.indd 105 03/07/2016 15:51:51

children, adolescents and women in prosaic situations, offering us a gallery of characters, most of whom fit into the category that we nowadays understand as the excluded.

Confined, for the most part, to the domestic space, in affective family relationships which are tense, oppressive, stifling, the characters, caught in moments of the quotidian, with greater or lesser dramatic density, are notable for the consistency and complexity of their internal makeup, which is always drawn in firm outlines based on their confrontation with the other and the resultant perception of the impossibility of human communication.

The old man André, in "Os Gestos" [The Gestures], physically gagged by his mute condition, closeted in his bedroom, experiences despair, irritation, frustration and loneliness because of the impossibility of communicating verbally with his wife, his daughters, Lise and Mariana, and the visitor, Rodolfo. His gestures are not always understood, which confines him still further in his uncomfortable loneliness. The reader not only penetrates André's inner world but is also led by him to perceive the other characters, seen in contrastive pairs. His wife "dressed in darkness", with a permanent air of boredom, is "cold and vigilant", while Rodolfo "in his white clothes" is reminiscent of "a sailor", his presence marked by the amplitude of "voyages". The daughter Lise, devoted to André, is contrasted to Mariana, a self-centred adolescent.

This marked opposition between the characters governs all the stories in *Os gestos* [*The Gestures*]. Zilda is shown to have a serene, distanced view of the past, in contrast to her interlocutor, charged with emotion. She does not remember scenes and details recollected by her former neighbour and childhood friend, which results in the impossibility of them sharing a "treasure in common". The chance re-encounter between the narrator and Zilda, in a train carriage, is confused with their affective mismatch, a variation on the theme of incommunicability, in "Reencontro" [Re-encounter]. In "A Partida" [The Departure], the grandson, in search of a libertarian environment, is opposed to his grandmother, who devotes herself to him with exaggerated and oppressive affection. Julia Mariana, the pregnant character, in "Cadeira de Balanço" [Rocking Chair], sensitive, fearful and oppressed, submits to her husband, methodical, indifferent and authoritarian. "O Vitral" [The Stained Glass Window] presents Matilde, a middle-aged, ingenuous, infantile dreamer, who lives with her adult, realistic husband Antonio.

In these stories, loneliness, the theme shared with others based on human relationships, is experienced in the direct coexistence with partners. "Elegíada" [Elegiad] is different in this sense: the reader is faced with the utmost situation of loneliness, by means of the pungent and lyrical "monologic dialogue" of the character who takes on the narrative voice. The term "monologic dialogue" is used because the old man converses mentally with his dead wife, during her wake, confined in the purest expression of interior discourse, in which valued recollections of the petty detail of the quotidian lived with his partner are fused with complaints and observations of the neglect with which he is and will be treated by his children and grandchildren: not as someone deserving of consideration and affection, but infantilised, incapable and subject to supervision and orders. In this case, the contrast is established between the experience of coexistence

Abei Journal 17.indd 106 03/07/2016 15:51:51

(perhaps idealised due to the painful moment) with the wife he has just lost and with whom he constructed a life and a family and that which is evidently about to start. He will no longer have anyone with whom to share his memories and speak of trivial, loved matters.

Although he focuses on the inner tensions of his characters, Osman Lins does not neglect their insertion in the external space, with the particularity that this is never previously described as a setting, but always arises out of the concrete situation in which the character finds him- or herself. For Lins (1974), rather than organising plots, portraying characters, conceiving of structures, the distinguishing characteristic of the writer of fiction is the "capacity to introduce into his work the feeling world, concrete reality, the backbone of the universe, in such a way that those elements that are incorporated into the work sustain themselves without obstructing it, without us perceiving their voracious dominating presence". This theoretically formulated conception had already been put into practice years previously.

In the stories of Osman Lins, objects, discretely present, always serve a function: they emphasise the contrast between the interiority of the character and the external environment; they serve to reveal the emotional and affective state of the character, to emphasise their tension, to awaken their consciousness and bring it into contact with reality. In "A Partida" [The Departure], a few sounds caused by the "shuffling of flip-flops", by the "careful opening and slow closing of windows", by the "tick-tock of the clock", by the "clink of cutlery and cups" intensify the "quietness of the house" (imbued with sadness) for the boy, who is lying down and is going to be leaving his grandmother's house the following day. The story concludes in an emotional atmosphere, focusing on objects charged with affective history.

In "Vitral" [Stained Glass Window], Matilde, in her childlike happiness and alone on the morning of her twentieth wedding anniversary, becomes aware of the leaking away of time. Her husband ends up agreeing to his wife's wish to have a photograph taken of the two of them together on the day of their twentieth wedding anniversary, but brings her down to reality: "It is impossible to show any happiness he said. About anything. No stained glass window retains its brilliance". Matilde assimilates his lesson, before the vision of the five girls dressed in cambric: "... it was all intangible: it became deceptive or underestimated as soon as you tried to capture it."

In the story of the same title, the eponymous rocking chair, linked to the lullaby, to affection, to rest, becomes the symbol of Augusto's authoritarianism, expressing with poetic density the wife's situation, destined for domestic chores under her husband's submission, in accordance with the mind-set still reigning in the 1950s. Without the least inner movement of revolt, she accepts the image of her husband's social function as being a taskmaster to whom the right of rest is only conceded after work. Pregnant, tired, with swollen feet and low self-esteem, caused by the transformation of her body and Augusto's gradual distancing, having felt ill while she was washing shirts, Júlia Mariana goes back inside the house and sits down in the rocking chair. As she begins to

Abei Journal 17.indd 107 03/07/2016 15:51:51

enjoy the peace and quiet of the afternoon, in a form of examination of her consciousness, she lists the undone tasks and foresees her husband's complaints.

The expected complaints do not materialise, but something worse happens: Júlia Mariana is the victim of contempt, indicated by the gestures of Augusto (a significant name) with which the story closes: he throws a newspaper and his hat onto the sofa, takes off his jacket and tie, hangs them on a hook, opens the window, picks up the newspaper, and touches her shoulder without looking at her for her to get up and give him her place in the rocking chair.

For the cloistered André, in "Os gestos" [The Gestures], his bedroom window looks onto a landscape which brings him "a well-being he had not felt in a long time" and other moments of relief, on a rainy day, giving him motives for escape through an imaginary journey into the past, finding himself "gazing on a lakeside landscape, linked to his youth". The rhythm of the rain, for its part, in addition to marking the flow of the objective time of the story, also determines the movement of the opening and closing of the window in perfect harmony with the intensification and distension of André's anxiety, with the externalisation of his brusque gestures, angry and calm, in his relationship with his wife and daughters and with the content of his interior discourse, now reflexive, now evasive, now lucid, now dreaming.

There is no loose strand in the laborious warp of the fabric of each of the stories in *Os Gestos* [*The Gestures*], whether at the level of the elements of the narrative (relationship between character, space, time and point of view) or at the discursive level, characterised by short phrases, by precise words, by appropriate and beautiful images, in a confident and successful command of the fusion of technique and style, which enables Lins, as critics have never failed to point out, to capture the human condition directly and profoundly.

The rigorous composition of these short fictions, aligned in the tradition "of the neo-modernist story with its poem-like affiliation", as the critic Hélio Pólvora (1976) suggested, does not hide the adjacent reality, although there is no explicit period contextualisation.

An expert in the art of writing exquisite stories registering the illusion of reality, Osman Lins confirmed his literary talent, allied to the conception of workmanlike shaping of words, in the narratives of *Nove, novena* [*Nine, Novena*], under the sign of antimimetic art. Narratives because, in this book, there are very few nuclei of condensed action, irradiating tension and intensity. Narratives with a reduced number of pages, although most of them have the more extended duration of stories, as generally happens with the novel, although it is problematic to establish frontiers between genres, particularly between the story, the novella and the novel. Despite this particular treatment dispensed by Osman Lins to his short narratives in *Nove, novena*, critics generally refer to them as short stories.

Abei Journal 17.indd 108 03/07/2016 15:51:52

By including the term "narratives" on the title page of *Nove, novena*, Osman Lins intended to underline his lack of concern for the frontiers between short story, novella and novel and, above all, to emphasise his commitment to the story, in a book in which he introduced his new literary diction, at a time when the cultural scene was dominated by discussions about the French new novel. Under the baton of a writer jealous of his craft, *Nove, novena* amalgamates the rigorous construction of the narrative structures, in fragmented blocks, in the manner of modules; new processes of character composition; unusual modalities of narrative focus; the constant presence of metalanguage and the resource of ornamentation in a precise, beautiful, poetic style shaped for each case, in a poetic fabric.

Each pause, each word, each phoneme, each situation, each interlinking of stories, each type of character composition, each juxtaposition of fragments has its reason for being and constantly offers itself up to interpretations. The narratives of *Nove, novena* thus offer the reader an intriguing text, far from easy consumption, which require from him or her a reading which is differentiated and engaged, although no less enjoyable.

"Os confundidos" [The Confused] takes the form of the conflicted dialogue of a couple, over a short space of time, as indicated by the wife's statement which initiates the interlocution and the story – "I'm tired. Almost midnight" –, and that of the husband, at the end: "It's after midnight". The man relates the development of the attack of unhealthy jealousy that assailed him, when he was alone at home, while his wife was working. Oscillating between disgust, anger, madness and lucidity, she reacts to her husband's feelings of jealousy, doubt and distrust. The development of the verbal antagonism also includes reflections about love, loss of identity, the impossibility of knowing the other and the monotony of life. The dialogue is intercut with sections of narrative, which operate as theatrical stage directions, situating the characters and describing their spatial movements.

"Os confundidos" alternates between eight sections of dialogue and seven micro-narratives, exposing the balanced, geometrical organisation of the text, which becomes more evident when one perceives the interplay between the transparency of the discourse of the dialogue and the unusual register of the micro-narratives, which oscillates between the poles of definition and uncertainty, creating an appropriate climate for the theme of "Os confundidos", as can be seen below:

> One of us stood up, or is going to stand up, half open the curtain, look out at the night. The murmur of the vehicles, continuous, will rise – rose? – from the avenues, spinning around the room, over the watercolours in their fine frames, over the leather armchairs with red cushions, around the lighted table-lamp. The vibrating stars, appearing to be shaken by the murmur of the city that does not sleep. We are holding hands, which of these hands is burning. We look at the empty wall. (Lins 1966, 75)

The sequence of actions in mutually exclusive temporalities placed sided by side subverts the laws of chronology, establishing the uncertainty in the temporal sphere.

Abei Journal 17.indd 109 03/07/2016 15:51:52

The very subject of the action of "stood up" is undefined, we do not know whether it is the man or the woman. In opposition to this uncertainty is the inventory of the objects in the room, always highlighting some detail. The theme of confusion is also materialised in the sensations of the characters holding hands and in the subversion of the use of pronouns, with the absence of the second person in the dialogue.

This small sample of the warp of all levels into a balanced, geometrical narrative architecture is present in the nine narratives of *Nove*, *novena*. The quest for a balanced form, in a movement of convergence towards the unification of the various elements making up the fictional universe, lends substance to a vision of a literature which awakens the desire to recover man's harmony with the world and the cosmos, despite the fragilities of the human condition. Fragilities and dissonances glimpsed in personal relationships, domestic space and social structure.

The central nucleus of "Conto Barroco ou Unidade Tripartita" [Baroque Story or Tripartite Unity] consists of the mission of a man, hired to kill a certain José Gervásio, without knowing the reason. He gets in touch with a black woman, who had a relationship with José Gervásio, father of her son, and asks her to show him the victim. After the black woman has pointed out her ex-lover in three different situations and cities (Congonhas, Ouro Preto and Tiradentes); after the criminal has had an emotional-sexual relationship with the informer and parted from her in three versions; after he has been sought out by the father of the victim, by José Gervásio himself and by the black woman, in three different modules, with the intent of dissuading him from his criminal intent, the murder is executed in three versions: in the first, the black woman dies; in the second, a man (identified generically) and in the third, the father.

This nucleus of the story extends over five segments, each of which focuses on a precise moment, as though it were a module, with the particularity that the second, the third, the fifth and the seventh present three variations in the form of superimposed studies. Exhibiting the various choices of the narrator and proposing a multiple combination of variants for the reader, the device of tripartition, the principal innovation of this narrative, accentuates the anti-illusionist character of the poetics of *Nove, novena* and explicitly invites the reader to make a creative reading. Osman Lins informs us that, according to the calculations of a maths teacher, "Conto Barroco ou Unidade Tripartita" permits four thousand nine hundred and ninety-five possible recreations.

The offer of the possibility of a multiplication of stories based on the central nucleus of the action of the killer, who carries out the order of his boss without knowing the reason, sets the scene for the theme of the absurdity of the human condition, anchored in a stratified order, widespread in modern society. Through this procedure, Osman Lins focuses on this human problem on a collective scale. He removes himself from individualism, inherent in the tradition of the bourgeois novel, which also explains, in part, the fact that his characters are identified by nouns, without names: the killer, the black woman, the father. Only the victim is designated by his Christian name, José Gervásio, in addition to having a surname which is not mentioned.

Abei Journal 17.indd 110 03/07/2016 15:51:52

In an inverse movement to that of "Conto Barroco ou Unidade Tripartita", but with the same purpose of giving a collective dimension to existential and social problematics, in "Pentágono de Hahn" [Hahn's Pentagon], five independent stories are fused, narrated by characters who cover the phases of life: a child, a young woman, a bachelor, a married man and an old woman. The narrative opens with a description of Hahn's show. The subject only of the first paragraph, the presence of the cow elephant extends throughout the text, corresponding to the unifying centripetal force of the five narratives, as pointed out by Benedito Nunes (1967).

An epiphanic symbol, Hahn reveals to the five characters, identified by different signs, the mediocrity of their own existence, filling them with the desire to overcome their limitations, satisfy their needs and reach an ideal life. But the end of the stories brings no solution. The internal conflict and dissatisfactions of the characters remain. With the death of the brothers, all that is left for the old woman is the perspective of an accentuated loneliness; the woman embodies society's prejudice, which rejects the love between an older woman and an adolescent, and begins to conceive of her relationship with Bartolomeu as being impossible and sends him a farewell letter; in spite of his desire to end his loneliness, the bachelor remains alone; after seeing the act of writing as a solution in his life, the married man returns to Recife, aware that "he is like someone who, mentally assumes undertaking a journey, without knowing that it is necessary to create, in his soul, conditions to overcome his habits, his fears, and leave". All that is left open is the fate of the relationship between the boy and Adélia, in the final scene in which he declares himself and reveals himself to be a precocious man, in a poetic register:

> I enter my girlfriend, I enter a market, she is waiting for me, I take her hand and go on, I go on with her, naked in the market, through her body. Canvas-covered stalls, women on the game, horses with pack saddles, merchants, ox-carts covered with calico, treacle in pots, croché cloths, coloured hammocks, rattan mats, clay animals, fruit, greens, kites… Adélia, in her wet dress, penetrates me and discovers in my pupils, crouched, weeping, stalking, a precocious man. She smiles understandingly and strokes me with her wet hair.

The emotional-sexual encounter between these characters in a "market", a metaphor for a microcosm where objects, animals, people and natural elements share the same space, is transformed into a symbol of amorous fulfilment and acquires a meaning which transcends the particular sphere of this story, by signalling the possibility of union between loving beings and of harmonious integration between man and the world, in poetic language, with unusual tints. One observes the arrangement of the language underpinned by a syntax of juxtaposition, as if all the words were harmoniously interlocked with each other.

Composed of nine segments, corresponding to nine phases of the life of the character, from childhood to adulthood, arranged in non-chronological order, "O Pássaro Transparente" [The Transparent Bird] is the story of the failure of someone who succumbs

Abei Journal 17.indd 111 03/07/2016 15:51:52

to family pressure and absorbs his father's values. He gets married to Eudóxia, imposed by his father, in order to accumulate material wealth. In adolescence he tried to flee from his father's clutches and from all that the family meant. As his father's double, the adult represents the negation of the adolescent who wrote poetry, dated an artist, dreamed of travelling and disowned his family's narrow-minded values.

Each module focuses on a different space, connected to the characterisation or the description of the character, and is articulated, in a repetitive movement, in two parts: the first, assumed by a third-person narrator, who narrates a slice of the life of the character, and the second, emitted by the character, in direct interior speech, during the event in focus. This repetitive and even, up to a certain point, monotonous structure represents in the composition of the narrative the atmosphere of the life of a methodical man, tied to business, unhappily married for money, devoted only to material wealth, living in the extremely limited city of his birth. An upset in this scheme occurs in the sixth and seventh segments, when the man interacts with the artist, the girlfriend of his adolescence. The significant explosion of the monotonous structure, opening the way for dialogue, is linked to the presence of the "dream source" woman, now a famous artist.

Amongst her pictures, there are some which represent fruits, birds flying. One bird is transparent, both the bird and its heart can be seen. A clear reference to the title of the narrative, it can be interpreted as a kind of metalanguage of Osman Lins's creative process, because the bird has the appearance of bird of prey and a person's gaze. It is a frightening bird, which does not exist. The artist's drawing is anti-illusionist, the result of a process which amalgamates human and animal features, similar to that which Osman Lins makes use of to compose his characters, *flesh transmuted into word.* The parallelism widens and extends to the collection of narratives of *Nove, novena*, as a whole, because the anti-illusionism already begins and is exposed in the very structural composition of each one of them.

Although one should not always take into consideration what an author says about his work, it is pertinent to quote the explanation that Osman Lins gives, in a letter, to Gilberto Mendonça Teles:[2]

> The title "transparent bird" has to do with a problem of narrative focus. One sees the bird and the skeleton of the bird. The external and the internal of the protagonist, through the alternation of the he and of the I.

The metalinguistic content attributed by the author to title of the narrative which opens his innovative book is significant, based on a rigorously geometrical and balanced architecture. On the one hand the bird conveys the idea of open space, liberty, flight; on the other, as Osman Lins himself tells us in one of the few poems that he wrote: "the necessary weight! for the rigorous flight, is easy, weight that knows! the mysteries of numbers: point of intersection of the tense and invisible web …."[3] The transparent

Abei Journal 17.indd 112 03/07/2016 15:51:52

bird is the image of the new poetics inaugurated in *Nove, novena*, which does not exclude other meanings to be attributed to it, depending on the reading perspective adopted.

In "Pastoral" [Pastoral], the reader will encounter another adolescent in a situation of conflict with his family, in a rural environment, as the title announces, which refers back to pastoral poetry, which is generally in the form of dialogue. Ironically, in this environment, dominated by the patriarchal structure, dialogue is non-existent. Baltasar, the adolescent, carries the weight of being the son of a woman who abandoned her husband for another man. Rejected by the father, by the brothers (except one) and by Joaquim, the distant relation, because he looks like his mother, he lives suffocated in the exclusively masculine family environment. Only his stepfather, who had fallen in love with his mother, pays him any attention. One day, he gives him a mare as a present and tells him the story of his fugitive mother. The mare becomes the object of the adolescent's affection and the indirect cause of his death, when he tries to kill the second horse, provided by the family, to mate with her.

The oppressive environment is projected in the repetitive structure of the twenty paragraphs, corresponding to the scenes of Baltasar's life, set out almost entirely in chronological order, but always with interruptions, as though they were cinematographic cuts. The two dislocated scenes, those of the seventh and eighth paragraphs, the only ones that are coupled together without rupture, and which in fact antecede all the others, refer to the space of affection and liberty. The break in the expectation of structural rigidity in the narrative coincides with the breach opened by his stepfather for Baltasar: in giving him a mare (baptised as Canária [Canaria]) as a present and in revealing to him the story of his mother, a forbidden memory in that patriarchal, misogynistic space, the stepfather functions as a dispatcher sending him off in search of liberty.

Unlike the character in "O Pássaro Transparente", Baltasar refuses to be the double of his father. Like his mother in physical appearance and his psychological makeup, he faces his family to the point of death, but he does not succumb morally. "Pastoral" was the first narrative to be conceived and written by Osman Lins in his phase of seeking new routes for his fiction, when he was still in France, at the beginning of the 1960s. This fact tells us much about the author when we remember that, while he was in Paris for the first time, following a rigid cultural plan based on his literary project, he produced a narrative whose content was solidly linked to the Northeast rural environment, from which he had originated. He denounced the violence of the patriarchal structure, in an unusual narrative form, introducing a new technique to embody his anti-illusionist literature: the use of the I in a non-naturalistic perspective.

Baltasar is the first-person narrator of the twenty fragments, thus narrating his own death and describing his own wake. Unlike Machado de Assis's character, Brás Cubas, the adolescent is not a corpse narrator, because the "I" of Osman Lins corresponds to a false pronoun. Utilised as an instrument purely to lend movement to the phrase, the pronoun "I" is as distanced from the character as a "he". The adolescent in his bedroom describes everything that happens in the living room. Dead, he is the

Abei Journal 17.indd 113 03/07/2016 15:51:52

first-person narrator from the first to the twentieth fragment of "Pastoral". He seems to be the narrator, but he is not. Behind this false "I", there is a narrative instance with a complete view of the time and space of the fictional world, establishing aperspectivism, a feature that Osman Lins himself recognises is not exclusively his own, but dominant in contemporary art, a curious fact in a world characterised by fragmentation and violence.

The beautiful narrative, "Retábulo de Santa Joana Carolina" [The Altarpiece of Saint Joana Carolina], considered by many to be the author's masterpiece, is a perfect literary transposition of the plastic altarpiece, composed of twelve modules, called mysteries in a clear reference to the religious theatrical genre of the Middle Ages. "Retábulo de Santa Joana Carolina" is assumed by various first-person narrators, who highlight the exemplary profile of this woman from the Northeast (a character inspired by the author's paternal grandmother), demonstrated in her love, fidelity, loyalty, solidarity, strength of character, determination, courage, resistance against and confrontation of local authorities and in her coexistence with nature, based on specific events in her life. The reader sees that these events are described as though they were paintings being contemplated by the narrator of each mystery. However, this narrator also participates in the internal composition and narrates the events from this position, with a global command of time and space, explicable only by the use of the "I" as a false p ronoun.

In addition to this, aperspectivism makes it possible to establish the collective voice, an original contribution to literature by Osman Lins, by means of a rotation of narrative foci, centred on characters who are generally anonymous and identified by graphic symbols, and by means of choric sections, uttered by the people, as in the case of the last mystery in "Retábulo de Santa Joana Carolina".

Another resource devised by Osman Lins to transmit this vision in his own literary language is the embellishment, which makes it possible to render concrete a more intimate connection between man and the totality of things and the cosmos. "Retábulo de Santa Joana Carolina" achieves this very successfully. Its interconnection with the cosmos begins in the framework of the altarpiece: the twelve mysteries correspond to the signs of the Zodiac, beginning with Libra and concluding with Virgo, as Anatol Rosenfeld points out. This organisational principle of the altarpiece, by means of which the story of a woman who lives in Pernambuco is widened out, inserts the narrative "into the mythical-circular time of the celestial constellations, reconnecting it to cosmic dimensions" (Rosenfeld 1950).

Inlaid into the beginning of each mystery in "Retábulo de Santa Joana Carolina", the embellishments poetically create links between man and the world splicing the life of Joana Carolina into an evocation of the cosmos and the great cycles of human civilisation. In the twelfth mystery, the embellishment is dissolved into the body in the description of Joana Carolina's burial, assumed by the choric voice, collective in the full sense of the word, and not indicates by the rotation of the "I narrator". The bond between the radicalisation of the collective voice and the device of the embellishment

Abei Journal 17.indd 114 03/07/2016 15:51:52

integrated into the material of the narrative of the last mystery is achieved in the poetic language of the full integration of Joana Carolina with the universe through her death.

It should be noted, however, that Osman Lins, committed to his time, does not ingenuously reproduce the ancient idea of a natural harmony, marked by the balance and agreement of all things. Without failing to denounce the fragmentation of modern man and without ignoring the dissonances in the structure of society, this "practitioner of a unifying craft", proposes to awaken, through his literature, the desire of reconciliation with the world. The lucid gaze around him shows him the injustices, the dissonances, the acts of violence, the incomprehension, the anxiety of which contemporary man is a victim, but his desire is to recover lost unity - hence his poetics of tensions, so well exposed in the final mystery "Retábulo de Santa Joana Carolina". If, on the one hand, the insertion of Joana Carolina into the cosmos is achieved, as is demonstrated in a literary manner in the formal rupture in which the embellishment is embedded into the text, on the other, the burial scene is described by the people, in an intensely violent, pounding rhythm.

Finally, the innovations in the art of composing and telling stories are not merely sterile technical novelties, empty of content. Fruit of a determined commitment to the art of the word, they are also a formal exposition of the world view held by Osman Lins in his maturity. Amongst those authors of a lasting reputation, it is better that their work receives the recognition it deserves late than never.

Notes

1 Republication of the preface to Os melhores contos. Osman Lins, São Paulo: Global, 2003, with an altered title, and some cuts and minor alterations to the text. This presentation was also published under the title "Um singular contador de histórias", in my own *Transfigurações* (ensaios sobre a obra de Osman Lins), São Paulo: Hucitec/Fapesp, 2010. Translated from the Portuguese by Peter James Harris

2 Found in the Fundo Osman Lins, of the Institute of Brazilian Studies, USP.

3 "Ode", O Estado de São Paulo. São Paulo, 12 November 1959. I am grateful to Hugo Almeida for having introduced me to this poem by Osman Lins.

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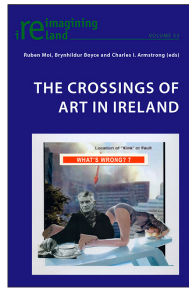
Abei Journal 17.indd 116 03/07/2016 15:51:52

Book Reviews

Abei Journal 17.indd 117 03/07/2016 15:51:52

Abei Journal 17.indd 118 03/07/2016 15:51:52



Moi, Ruben, Brynhildur Boyce and Charles I. Arjmstrong (eds). *The Crossings of Art in Ireland*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2014, 311 pp.

This collection, an anthology of essays about intermedial relations among the arts, proves a welcome addition to a field which has increasingly challenged the attention of scholars. The essays´ frequent engagement with experimental creations, especially involving the new media, does not exclude attention to canonical works. The book caters to a variety of interests: the connections between Irish art, history and culture_ including the sore issue of the relationship between Eire and Northern Ireland _ as well as theoretical questions and key concepts like ekphrasis. The abundance of details regarding artworks and the Irish context may make severe demands on the non-specialist´s attention, an obstacle counterbalanced by the intrinsic interest of the texts and by the editors´ Introduction, which underlies the connections among the essays and their theoretical underpinnings. To set the stage, the editors recall the state of flux in the contemporary arts, their continuous exploration of their own definitions and their increasing tendency to intermingle, within the framework supplied by the digitization of media. The essays emphasize the many forms taken by the crossing of the arts across temporal gaps, geographical spaces or contested border zones.

The editors further argue that while dynamics and change may take place at an increasing speed, there is no reason to give up on analytical distinctions. A relevant understanding of the complex imbrications of the differing terrains is indispensable for a reasonable appraisal of the current situation. Processes such as globalization and post-nationalism are only comprehensible within the framework of a historical analysis of the interrelationships between particular places, regions and nations. In fact, Irish crossings issue out of a long tradition of multilingualism and cultural diversity.Contemporary Irish people live in an in-between world, in-between cultures and identities_ a sense of liminality heightened by several circumstances: the complex negotiations concerning the border between Eire and Northern Ireland, large-scale immigration during the period of the Celtic Tiger, and the relationships between the island and the Irish diaspora around the world.

The essays endorse differing methodological approaches, from post-structuralism to a discreet essentialism or historicism. The anthology likewise brings back discussions about other contrasting critical views, including the modernist insistence on medium specificity as against the argument of the arts´ need for one another.

The book contains fourteen essays, often combining readings of crossings of the arts and their engagement with political issues. To explore the play by Ireland´s leading

Abei Journal 17.indd 119 03/07/2016 15:51:52

contemporary playwright, Róisín´s Keys´ "Brian Friel´s *Performances:* Meaning in an Intermedial Play", draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer´s hermeneutics. While bespeaking its historical situatedness in the world of the twenty-first century, Friel´s play offers a complex interweaving of forms which invites the study of meaning in arts involving two or more semiotic levels.

The political aspects of contemporary Irish life are frontally addressed in Anne Karhio´s "Between Text, Video and Performance: Landscape in Pamela Brown´s ' Ireland Unfree´". Karhio´s analysis of performance poet Pamela Brown´s openly polemical and political video poem (available on Youtube, with kinetic typography and music combining with the words and the voice of the poet herself) discusses the poetic persona´s claim that, freed from the colonial power and emerging in a post-Troubles society, Ireland continues to be "unfree", owing to dubious religious, political and financial orientations.

A strong political bent likewise marks Brent Sørensen´s "True Gods of Sound and Stone_ The Many Crossings of Patrick Kavanagh´s *On Raglan Road*", an account of the intertextual web surrounding the 2008 film *In Bruges* by the English-born Irish playwright, filmmaker and screenwriter Martin Donagh. The film, referring to Patrick Kavanagh´s poem *On Raglan Road*, traces the various media referred to in the text as well as some recordings of its musicalization. Donagh´s film is said to politicize the song, using it to spell out a message against the violence often associated with Irishness in the twentieth century.

Intertextual and political aspects involving films are also dealt with in Seán Crosson´s "'All this must come to an end. Through Talking' : Dialogue and Troubles Cinema". The essay asserts that *Hunger*_ a 2008 film by London- born director Steve MacQueen, represents a double departure from cinematic practices: it eschews both popular genre forms like the thriller and melodrama and a long filmic tradition portraying opponents of British rule with familiar negative stereotypes.

An essay which attaches equal weight to political questions and to intermediality is Fionna Barber´s "Visual Tectonics: Post-millennial Art in Ireland". The author discusses the use of photography, digital media, performance and installation – which now form the artistic mainstream – in order to analyze the strategies at play in the photographs and videos of Willie Doherty and films by Gerard Byrne, which explore traumatic events like Bloody Sunday and the Troubles. In this connection, the essay mentions the use of radical discontinuities deriving both from Brecht and the Irish conceptual artist James Coleman.

In fact, the consideration of theoretical questions looms so large in some essays that the anthology could be used for the study of different understandings of key notions like ekphrasis. In "John Hewitt and the Sister Arts" Britta Olinder discusses the evolution of the concept. She starts with Leo Spitzer´s definition of the genre as "a poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art", moves on to Mitchell´s and Heffernan's wider sense of "verbal representation of visual representation " and finally to Claus Clüver´s extended definition as "verbal representation of a real or fictitious texts composed in a non-verbal sign system". In a similar vein, Róisín´s Keys´ text

Abei Journal 17.indd 120 03/07/2016 15:51:52

mentions Clüver´s 2007 essay "Intermediality and Interart Studies", foregrounding the author´s suggestion that, because of its relation to intertextuality, intermediality holds the potential for a meta-reflexion on problems of mediality or fictionality and related questions. Keys also mentions Peter Boenisch´s arguments on intermediality as an effect of perception. Like Róisín´s Keys´ essay, O´Brien´s "A Shabby Old Couple: Seamus Heaney´s Ekphrastic Imperative" briefly traces the origin of studies on ekphrasis recalling the traditional definition of the concept as the description of real or imaginary paintings or sculptures. O´Brien moves on to consider what he calls "the fusion of the iconic and the textual" as a mode of access to the Lacanian Real, "an expression referring to the world of feelings, emotions and meanings which lie beneath the symbolic order." O´Brien also introduces the notion of unconscious ekphrasis, which he illustrates with a poem in which Heaney describes a portrait of himself, mentioning a basket not shown in the picture but considered by the artist before painting it. To O´Brien, the absent basket stands for that which, as Jacques Derrida would have it, exceeds the alternative of presence and absence.

The notion of ekphrasis in film is developed in Seán Crosson´s essay, especially the use of images in Steve Macqueen's *Hunger*, which, according to the essayist, encourages the audience to respond in a manner comparable to that inspired by ekphrasis. Crosson contends that "scholars have expanded their understanding of the concept to include film and the manner through which it may represent other arts, possibly even enhancing or transforming them through its visual representation".

Brent Sǿrensen´s "'True Gods of Sound and Stone – The Many Crossings of Patrick Kavanagh´s *On Raglan Road"*, controversially defines ekphrasis simply as translation from one medium to another. He proposes that certain images in *In Bruges*, which he considers commentaries on a song used in the film, should be read as counter-ekphrasis, that is, "the use of pictures about words and music".

Another essay including long considerations on ekphrasis is Charles I. Armstrong ´s "Proud and Wayward: W.B. Yeats, Aesthetic Engagement and The Hugh Lane Pictures". Returning to the relationship between literature and painting, as in W J. T. Mitchell´s account of the paragonal struggle between the arts, the text insists that a more open-ended and nuanced critical reading should be made possible by allowing the ekphrastic element to interact with its contextual frame.

Ruben Moi´s "Verse, Visuality and Vision: The Challenges of Ekphrasis in Ciaran Carson´s Poetry" argues that Ciaran´s oeuvre has been almost exclusively studied in relation to the theme of war and violence in Northern Ireland. The essayst tries to make up for this fact by focusing almost as much on the concept of ekphrasis as on Carson´s oeuvre. To Moi, ekphrastic elements support and supplant the shape and significance of traditional forms, giving a visual sense to the traditional intellectual tracing of intertextuality. According to the essayist, in his poems, as in his novels, Carson tends to experiment with ekphrastic crossovers in a larger format, which demands an expansion of the concept. From a mere representation of objects, Moi claims, the concept should

Abei Journal 17.indd 121 03/07/2016 15:51:52

include hermeneutic speculation and meditations upon historical circumstances and biographical facts.

Another group of essays shifts the emphasis from the analysis of the concept to the use of ekphrasis in specific texts, starting with Yeats´ influential precedent. Charles I. Armstrong´s "Proud and Wayward: W.B. Yeats, Aesthetic Engagement and The Hugh Lane Pictures" brings to the fore the institutional stakes of Yeats´s ekphrastic poem "The Municipal Gallery Re-visited"' highlighting the aesthetics and power relations in the poet´s dealings with art.

The title of Stuart Sillars´ "James Barry´s Shakespeare Paintings" speaks for itself. The essay interprets two eighteenth-century paintings inspired by Shakespearean texts produced for the Dublin Shakespeare Gallery: *King Lear weeping over the body of Cordelia* and *Iachimo emerging from the chest in Imogen´s chamber.*

Britta Olinder´s "John Hewitt and the Sister Arts" explores the way the poet represents his impressions of and ideas about painting and sculpture in poetry. Of special interest is Hewitt´s ekphrastic counterpart (with the addition of the words "October 1954") to the title of Yeats´s "The Municipal Gallery Revisited". Hewit´s poem illustrates what Elizabeth Bergam considers the tendency of ekphrasis to open into history´.

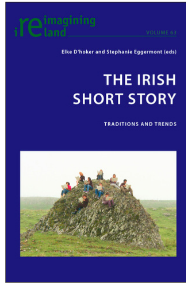
In " A Shabby Old Couple´: Seamus Heaney´s Ekphrastic Imperative" Eugene O´Brien argues that Heaney´s most telling poems draw on the ekphrastic dimension, as "Summer 1969" (a poem on the violent reaction from the Royal Ulster Constabulary against the civil rights protests in Northern Ireland) based on Goya´s "The Shootings of the Third of May".

Joakim Wrethed´s "A Momentous Nothing´:The Phenomenology of Life, Ekphrasis and Temporality in John Banville´s *The Sea*" stands out as a study of ekphrasis in a prose work. The critic illustrates the narrator´s general painterly vision by quoting descriptions in the novel *The Sea* which are clearly remindful of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo´s frescoes and of Pierre Bonnard´s and Vermeer´s paintings.

It would be vain for a short review to try to do justice to the richness and scholarship of *The Crossings of Art in Ireland* or to end this survey without signaling the importance of the anthology for the discussion of a particularly significant phase in contemporary Irish literature. Modern and avant-garde Irish poets are prototypical border-crossers. Yeats´s synaesthetic combinations in poems like *Leda and the Swan, Lapis Lazuli* and *the Municipal Gallery Re-visited* as well as his essays provide a point of departure for painterly poems prolonged via Louis MacNeice and John Hewitt to Paul Durcan, Ciaran Carson, Paul Muldoon, Miriam Gamble, Medbh McGuckian and beyond. Besides, inspiration goes both ways. Irish visual artists often take their cue from literature, beyond the standard form of illustration, as exemplified by the painters Louis le Brocquy, Edward McGuire and Jeffrey Morgan – a cross- fertilization not without precedent, as shown by James Barry responding to the art of Shakespeare as early as in the eighteenth century.

Solange Ribeiro

Abei Journal 17.indd 122 03/07/2016 15:51:52



D'hoker, Elke & Stephanie Eggermont (eds.) *The Irish Short Story – Traditions and Trends.* Bern: Peter Lang, 2015. 322 pp.

Kevin Barry (2013) in his collection *Town and Country – New Irish Short Stories* observes that there has been a stirring rebirth of the Irish short story. "The story has come alive again and (…) it has about it all the demonic energy (…) of a newborn infant" (p.ix). It is in the realm of this rebirth that the most recent publication in the field *The Irish Short Story – Traditions and Trends* by Elke D'hoker and Stephanie Eggermont was released in 2015 by Peter Lang.

Elke D'hoker begins her introduction by commenting on the significant amount of publications of short stories in Ireland in the recent years as a means of asserting the revival of the genre and its contemporary importance. The author refutes the insistence in what she considers an outdated perspective that sees the short story as a typical Irish genre when compared to the English novel. According to her, these essentialising definitions of the genre do not serve any longer its local and global reach. In her perspective, it is more than time that this debate about the short story as a national genre was over. D'hoker suggests, instead, that the Irish short story has a hybrid identity, one that negotiates international aesthetics and regional traditions.

D'hoker's criticism, however, is not shared by some of the very same authors she quotes in her introduction, such as Anne Enright, who writes the introduction to *The Granta Book of the Irish Short Story*, and William Trevor, in his introductory chapter to *The Oxford Book of Irish Short Stories*, re-launched in early 2015. In effect, these two prominent Irish writers discuss extensively the origins of the short story in Ireland and its identification as a national genre. This contrast between D'hoker's criticism and the writers' persistent look over the issue evidences the differences of perspective between academics and artists when looking to the present and future developments of a literary genre.

The book is divided in four sections. In *Transforming the Tale Tradition,* themes such as trauma, history and folklore are covered. Marguérite Corporaal argues that the condensed form of the short story contributed to the literary representation of the traumatic events of the Famine by erasing painful passages that could not be narrated. What is left to question, however, is whether these painful narratives of the Famine were repressed because of the form of the short story and not because of the near impossibility of expressing trauma, regardless of the literary genre. Gaïd Girard revisits the folkloric motif of changelings in Le Fanu's stories. His article appreciates the forgotten importance in academic debate of fairy tales in Irish short fiction in its origins and in contemporary

Abei Journal 17.indd 123 03/07/2016 15:51:53

productions. Girard follows an unpredictable path by presenting some ghostly and vampiristic aspects of the stories and how they differ from the traditional sense of fairy and folk tales. Also, he relates these presented aspects to the reinvention of such motifs in contemporary short fiction, which have used them in a broader and diverse sense. Lastly in this first part of the book, Heidi Hansson suggests a reading possibility of the short story as a historical genre by examining Emily Lawless's short fiction.

The second part of the book aims to (re)negotiate modernism in Irish short story tradition. Debbie Brouckmans's article establishes George Moore's *The Untilled Field* as the bridge between traditional and modern short story in Ireland. Michael O'Sullivan brilliantly defies one of the most central questions of the Irish short story tradition: Frank O'Connor's concept of the "lonely voice". O'Sullivan suggests that in James Joyce's *The Dead* loneliness is not individual, but polyphonic and collective. Brian Ó Conchubhair engages in the difficult task of thinking literary modernism in the Irish language short story and its close connection with folk tales. The article presents an excellent historical record of the Irish short story production in Gaelic language. Finally, Hilary Lennon extends the debate on Frank O'Connor by analysing his 1920's criticism, his mentor figures and poetic realism.

The next series of articles in part three searches for postmodernism in Irish short story. Johanna Marquardt sees Flann O'Brien and his oral tradition influence as revolutionary against the essentialism of nationalism. She pinpoints aspects in O'Brien's work that were at the forefront of portraying diverse dislocations of class and gender. Very similarly, Eibhear Walshe demonstrates how Elizabeth Bowen's stories convey postmodern uncertainties of loss and imprecision and how they dissolve history. Following the same perspective, Theresa Wray explores Mary Lavin's *Tales from Bective Bridge*'s themes of "loss, isolation, dislocation and death" in the period of civil unrest of the 1940s (p.242). Veronica Bala revisits the early stories by Samuel Beckett and, through extensive archive work at Trinity College Dublin, she identifies that Beckett's complex and organized modern ideals were already in development since the very beginning of his literary production. Yet, the reader of Bala's article might ask the reasons why it is placed in the postmodern rather than the modern section of the book. A clarification on this choice could have shed a new light on the debate of modernism or postmodernism in Beckett's work.

The final part of the book presents articles that deal with possible new trends of contemporary Irish short story. Heather Ingman deals with female writers' publications and how they contributed with a differing perspective to the ones of tradition. The article shows the unfavourable conditions for women writers to be published and to have a unified work. Mary Fitzgerald-Hoyt demonstrates how Claire Keegan reinvents rural Ireland and family, some of the pillars of Irish identity. Finally, Anne Fogarty points out new ways of reading cosmopolitanism and different forms of migration in contemporary urban Ireland. Fogarty examines how migrations create unfinished subjects and how they connect local and global, provincial and universal.

Abei Journal 17.indd 124 03/07/2016 15:51:53

Taking everything into consideration, *The Irish Short Story – Traditions and Trends* poses as a major publication in the field of academic study of short story tradition in Ireland. The book comes to revitalize the relevance of the genre in academic debate as an autonomous and prestigious literary form. Also, it promotes dialogue between tradition and modernity and addresses some of the most contemporary and controversial aesthetic issues of our present time.

Patricia de Aquino

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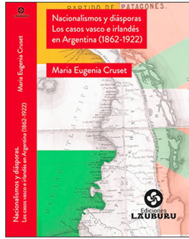


Cruset, María Eugenia. *Nacionalismo y diásporas. Los casos vasco e irlandés en Argentina (1862-1922)*. La Plata: Ediciones Lauburu, 2015, 280 pp.

Basques and Irish present such a remarkable inventory of parallelisms in their social, cultural and political development during the latter centuries, that somehow it makes a lot of sense to try some kind of comparative historical analysis. Actually, both countries share: *a)* the possession of an old, vernacular language not related to the official languages of the kindgoms and states they had belonged to for centuries (the United Kingdom, on the one hand, and France and Spain on the other); *b)* a strong and long-standing sense of self-identity; *c)* an out-of-the-ordinary social presence and popular attachment to the Catholic Church; *d)* a growing nationalistic movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and lately *e)* the creation and long-standing activity of some armed groups (IRA and ETA) that supported the fight for political independence through violence or terrorism. By the end of the twentieth century both the Spanish Basque Country and Northern Ireland were considered the only active focuses of political violence related to nationalistic movements in Western Europe. Even popular culture has somehow assumed the supposed links between the two peoples -or, more precisely, the two terrorisms, as it has been repeatedly shown for instance in blockbuster films such as *The Jackal* (1997) or *Munich* (2005). Public depictions of images and texts on the "Basque struggle for independence" could be found in graffitti all over the main cities of Northen Ireland (Image 1). Similarly, several groups that support the independence for the Basque Country have often tried to link themselves to the evolution or Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland. For instance, when several Basque nationalist groups signed the ceasefire agreement of Lizarra-Garazi (Sept. 1998) in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement in Belfast, both the Basque and Irish flags were raised in the room the announcement was publicly made (Image 2).

Image 1: Mention to the Basque conflict in a street of Belfast, 2007

Image 2: Representatives of the political parties that signed the Lizarra-Garazi agreement during the press conference.

But parallelisms are not limited only to the policital evolution of both nationalisms. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ireland and the Basque Country were among the European regions with the highest rate of emigration abroad, mainly to the Americas. While the example of early Irish emigration, due to the extreme precedent of the Great Potato Famine of 1845-49 and its subsequent exodus of a million of people that fled *Éire* to England and overseas destination, put the bases of the principal patterns of scientifically understanding international mass migration during the last two centuries; in the case of the Basques the weight of international emigration in the historical development of contemporary *Euskal Herria* has somehow been obscured by other not less important social and economic transformations, such as industrialization and even mass immigration from other regions to the Basque provinces south of the French-Spanish border. Nonetheless, figures of Basque overseas migration were, if not comparable to those of Ireland, at least quite remarkable in its context: it has been sometimes calculated that about 250 thousand Basques could have departed from their homeland to several American destinations between 1840 and 1970.[1] Among the consequences of these migrations, diasporic communities of Irish- and Basque-descendants blossomed in several American countries, from the USA to Argentina, during the second half of the 19th and all along the 20th century.

Cruset deals with two of these diasporic communities, as they were created and even thrived in one of the most attractive destination of European migrants in South America: Argentina. Actually, the main objective of the research that supports her book is to make a comparison between these two communities in relation to the creation and development of each nationalistic movement and their diasporic echoes in Argentina between 1862 and 1922. The choice of this period allows the author to cover the early decades since the beginning of the new waves of European mass migration to Argentina after the process of independence and national organization, up to a very significant year for the three spaces involved, specially for Ireland with the signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty that gave birth to the Irish Free State.

Abei Journal 17.indd 128 03/07/2016 15:51:55

The book derives directly from the thorough research (based on adequate, abundant primary and secondary sources) that the author made for her PhD. dissertation under the direction of Dr. Santiago de Pablo, a renowned specialist on Basque nationalism, and that was successfully defended at the University of the Basque Country in 2014. I myself was lucky enough to have early access to its content since I was one ot the members of the board that evaluated it. The book follows the main structure of the dissertation it is adapted from, formally divided into eight chapters (plus conclusions, sources and bibliography), even though they can be distinguished three main parts.

First of all, in the first chapter ("The New Forms of Diplomacy: Paradiplomacy and Diasporas). Cruset explores the theoretical background of the research, starting with a state-of-the-art on the diverse theories that has been historically used to understand nationalism, and specifically the crossroads between the traditional elements of understanding nationalism in Western scholar tradition, the changes derived from the new perspectives added to the field after the work of authors like Gellner, Anderson or Smith, up to the new paradigms of transnationalism and paradiplomacy that feed each other when trying to determine the complex relationship between ethnic identity, citizenship, adaptation and political mobilization in the context of diasporic communities. Basques and Irish represent, for this purpose, two very illuminating examples of the parallel processes of adoption, construction and development of a particular, distinct national identity both in the homeland and abroad. In the case of Ireland, the role played by the "American connection" (or, better said, "connections" if we also include other very active Irish diasporic communities, such as the Argentinian one, apart from the well known case of the Irish in the United States) has become common knowledge even outside the narrow boundaries of the academia. Less attention has been paid, on the contrary, in the case of Basque nationalism, whose overseas dimension (apart from the political exile that took place after the end of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39) has mostly remained basically obscure for historical research because of a combination of lack of interest, difficulty of accession to the sources and – last but not least – the delay of historiographical research in the Basque Country.[2] In several recent books and researches, the spread of Basque nationalism to the diaspora and the political feedback between the homeland and the Basque communities abroad have commenced to emerge. This book, in fact, can be considered one of the earliest examples of these new lines of research, at least from the Basque point of view.

Chapters II and III are, secondly, a quite sintetic review of the two main elements that compose the basis of the research. In the first of them ("Argentinian, Irish and Basque Nationalisms), Cruset abstracts the main lines that defined "nationalism," understood both as "national identity" and "political movement," in the three spaces that converge into the book: Argentina on the one hand, and Ireland and the Basque Country on the other. Cruset explores the similarities and differencies of such different ways of constructing the national identity: a creation from the top, under the impulse of the elites and with the support of the structures of the state, in the case of Argentina; in contrast with the

Abei Journal 17.indd 129 03/07/2016 15:51:55

emergence of Irish and Basque national identities as a mixture of culture, language and religion with politics, in a struggle against their respective states and the processes of nation-building they were implementing during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century.

The latter chapter ("Irish and Basque Immigrations) tries to make a comparison between the processes of immigration to Argentina from Ireland and from the Basque Country, putting the focus, not on the demographic or economic aspects of the phenomenon, but on two elements that are very relevant for the main topic of her research: the social organization of the communities of immigrants through the creation of ethnic associations, and the development of internal systems of ethnic leadership within both communities, in a process inextricably linked to the emergence of the communities themselves. This chapter is mainly based on literature; in the case of Basque immigration, the most relevant studies on Basque migration to Argentina are quoted, with only a few absences – absences that could have been noteworthy to justify.[3] Nonetheless, even though the author expresses specifically her aim to construct a comparative perspective, this chapter is to a certain extent not more than a juxtaposition of both processes. Only a few remarks on "some comparisons" between Basque and Irish emigration to Argentina close it (115-118), but they are interesting enough to make us ask more questions: for instance, what was the impact of being both cases the most important examples of "early migration" to nineteenth-century Argentina? (115) Was there in any moment parallelism in the processes of economic integration and social adaptation that could create more affinities between the two groups? And moreover, which was the impact of the internal divisions because of the divided loyalties within Basques and Irish, once the new identities grew into the political agenda?

In fact, the ambivalent role of the structures that held both diasporic communities up is the main element of analysis of the third, most original part of the book. Although it could make sense to think that nationalism is esentially a matter of politics, Cruset avoids to analyse the role of political propaganda and activism of nationalistic organizations and parties until almost the end of the book. Therefore, chapters IV, V and VI deal with three institutions that were extremely relevant in the process of construction, first of the elements that converged on the new definitions of Irish and Basque ethnic identities in the diasporas, and second of their transformation into political language. Chapter IV develops the topic of "Diaspora and Community Press", focused on the most long-standing, impacting newspaper of each community: *The Southern Cross* for the Irish (1875-) and *La Vasconia* (from 1903, *La Baskonia*) for the Basques (1893-1943). The continuity of both newspapers had somehow turned them into the most visible – if not the only – voice for the inner and outer spreading of news and the image of the communities themselves. Cruset, after describing the creation, evolution and main lines of the topics, opinions and ideology exuded from their pages, attempts to make a cross image of both communities by the way each of them reflected (or not) news, articles or mentions to the other community. This analysis is specially interesting, because it offers the best example

Abei Journal 17.indd 130 03/07/2016 15:51:55

of the dissimilar interest that Basques and Irish had about each other. In fact, if there is a word that could define the relation between the two communities, this would surely be "unbalanced," because of the existence of a real lack of comparability, or better said, correspondence of interest on each other. While the Basque-Argentinian mass-media, and specially those closer to the postulates and political organization of nationalism, paid sympathetic attention to the evolution and achievements of Irish nationalism, Basque nationalism is defined by Cruset as the "absent news" in the Irish-Argentinian press. This unbalance is also a reflection of the way both nationalisms looked at each other in Europe. Since its inception, the main political organization of Basque nationalism in the homeland, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, whose ideology mixed politics with religion (its main motto, as created by its founder Sabino Arana, was *Jaungoikoa eta Lege Zarra*, "God and the Old Laws"),[4] looked eagerly into the path opened by the rise and action of Irish nationalism. The struggle for the independence of Ireland was for a long time the mirror Basque nationalism wanted to see its reflection depicted in. Diasporic mass media for Basque-Argentinians did nothing more than to follow the practice set by Basque nationalistic journals and newspapers back in the homeland. But on the contrary, there was not the same vinculation backwards: if it were only from the news taken from their mass media, we could assume that very few of Irish nationalists would even know about the existence of a similar movement in the Basque Country, and still less to reach the point to fraternize with it.

Two more chapters are devoted to the role played by women and by the Catholic Church. In Chapter V ("Irishwomen, Basque women, Argentinian women"), after highlighting the stereotypes on the significant role that women had in the traditional societies of Ireland and the Basque Country, Cruset compares the reality and the image of immigrant women of both communities. First of all, the author presents some general ideas about the specific situation of women immigration, based on quantitative and qualitative sources: number, occupation, civil state, and the main fields of activity in which women stood out. Some interesting parallelisms emerge, such as the process of "immigration" of nuns from both homelands; a process whose roots and reasons were mostly linked to an inner development of the Catholic Church in Europe during the age of the so-called "missionary impulse." Nonetheless these nuns, and specifically some congregations, were able to create a direct connection with the communities of expatriate compatriots. It is therefore interesting to notice how some of these congregations of nuns finished up creating and managing services for the support of immigrants, such as schools, retirement homes for elderly people, and hospitals. Anyway, in part because of a lack of available sources, Cruset declares the difficulties to measure the role that women in the diaspora surely played, like at the homeland, "to conserve and transmit the cultural, religious and political values" of the old country. This is an interesting open gate that I would encourage Cruset to pursue in her research.

If there are two European people for whom speaking of their historical links with the Catholic Church seems rather pleonastic, these would surely be the Irish and the

Abei Journal 17.indd 131 03/07/2016 15:51:55

Basques. Any researcher, or even any person with an average interest and knowledge on both people and their past development, would agree that religion, and specifically the Church as an institution, played a significant role in the transmission and maintenance of elements that constitute some of the bases of their particular identities. It is known, for instante, how the literature in Basque language was confined for centuries to the hands of the clergy, making thus stronger the link between Basque identity and religion. Nationalisms were therefore also based strongly on religion: as a matter of contraries in Ireland (Catholic Irish vs. Protestand English), as a matter of intensity in the Basque Country (Basque piety vs. Spanish irreligiousness). Argentina received waves of priests and monks during the whole nineteenth century from Europe, along with the mass migration; Irish and Basques predominated. Even though Argentinian Catholic Church did not allow the creation of "national churches" for immigrants – like they were created in the United States –, it is nonetheless true that the structures of the Church in the countries of departure became growingly concerned about the impact that all the changes linked to migration could have on the maintenance of faith and religious practice among compatriot immigrants. So several groups within the European Catholic churches started developing some initiatives to provide emigrants with "spiritual help" before they traveled, during the trip, and after they settled down in the Americas. The lack of priests that could attend the immigrants in their native tongue was considered one of the most important elements that put in risk their attachment to the old religion of the homeland; therefore some European churches took the burden of providing them with chaplains and missionaries.

In chapter VI (simply titled "The Church") Cruset describes a general overview on both the role of the Church and the clergy as leading elements of leadership in the Basque and Irish communities back in the homeland, and also in the Argentinian diaspora. In the comparison, there are several elements of dissimilarity (as it happened with the total number of immigrants, Basques were overrepresented in number and position within the ranks of the Argentinian Catholic Church), but also of convergence: for instance, the special interest given to education, by the creation of schools whose main aim would be the transmission of the religion and culture of the homeland (168 and 175, specially). Once again, the structure of this chapter is closer to a juxtaposition of both cases rather than to a combined, comparative discourse; but the outcome is still worth enough.

Finally, chapter VII ("Politics: Diasporas and National Identities") describes the parallel processes of introduction and growth of political nationalism within both Basque and Irish communities in Argentina, with the implementation of structures, leaderships, tools for spreading ideology, and so on. As Cruset highlights, the early development of a specific sense of separate identity among Basques and Irish in the context of multi-ethnic, massive-immigrating Argentinian society, actually helped the acceptance of the new political language (in part imported from the homeland, in part developed *in situ*) that turned identity into nationality (193).

Abei Journal 17.indd 132 03/07/2016 15:51:55

The book closes with the main conclusions of the research, which can be summarized in the main idea that, in spite of the similarities between both communities (high level of ethnic identity, similar attachment to religion, parallel processes of immigration into Argentina, and development of a political nationalistic movement), they were looking into "inverted mirrors," with few or no contact at all; and because of this lack of contacts and common intitiatives, the author suggests that both communities played different roles in relation to the political evolution of their respective homelands: contrary to the Irish example, Basque nationalists were never able to turn their diaspora into an instrument of paradiplomacy (226).

Óscar Álvarez-Gila

Notes about images:

Image 1: Mention to the Basque conflict in a street of Belfast, 2007. Source: https://lasmanzanasdulces.wordpress.com/2008/12/01/%C2%A1zas-en-toda-la-boca-historia-de-700-presos-politicos/

Image 2: It's a widely known image. I can ask for a better quality one if necessary.

Notes

1 W.A. Douglass and J. Bilbao; *Amerikanuak. Basques in the New World*, Reno NV, University of Nevada-Reno, 1975. Let's take into account, in order to understand the accurate value of these figures, that the current population of the whole Basque region (including the territories both in Spain and France) is about 3 million people.

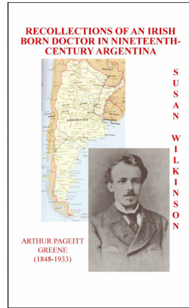
2 It is necessary to remark that the first Basque public University was not created until the end of the decade of 1970, right after the political change in Spain, the return to democracy and, in the case of the Basque Country, the recovery of political autonomy. The boost on historiographical production about the Basque Country is directly related to the implementation of the Basque state University (UPV/EHU), the creation of a Faculty of Letters (that included some departments of History) and, therefore, the formation for the first time of a group of professional historians devoted to study the past of the Basque Country.

3 Specially here I am referring to one of the first monographies on Basque emigration to Argentina of the last decades, *Paraísos posibles. Historia de la emigración vasca a Argentina y Uruguay en el siglo XIX*, by José Manuel Azcona Pastor (Bilbao, 1992). Cruset, in my opinion, should have explained the reasons for not using this book, that is only shortly referred to in the initial pages of the introduction.

4 Basically referring to the tradicional homerule laws that Basque territories of Spain had enjoyed up to the last quarter of the 19th century, that Basque nationalism considered the foundations of a centuries-old political sovereignty of Basque territories.

Abei Journal 17.indd 133 03/07/2016 15:51:55

Abei Journal 17.indd 134 03/07/2016 15:51:55



Recollections of an Irish Born Doctor in Nineteenth-Century Argentina. Ed. Susan Wilkinson. Washington, England: The Memoir Club, 2015.

This interesting book recounts the Memoirs of Dr. Arthur Pageitt Greene (1848-1933), a distant relative of the author.

Greene differs from most Irish emigrants to Argentina in that he was Anglo-Irish and not Catholic. He was born in Kildare in 1848. His mother was a member of a religion known as Separatists, apparently not too dissimilar to Quakers, and Greene was educated by various schoolmasters of that faith. At 17 he entered the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, earning his basic degree or Letters in 1870. Thence he went to Edinburgh's prestigious Royal College of Physicians, graduating as doctor in 1872. By this time both of his parents were dead, and most of Greene's male relatives were already in Argentina; two of these were practicing medicine. Arthur joined them in 1872. Unable to speak Spanish, he was precluded from gaining certification as a doctor and spent two years in the countryside before going to Buenos Aires to finish the requisites to practice medicine in Argentina.

For the following forty years or so he practiced general medicine, the majority of his time in Mercedes. The Mercedes hospital served outlying areas, some of them of significant Irish population, such as Suipacha and San Antonio de Areco, and there are many references to Greene's dealings with these Irish communities. He also spent a fairly long period at the British Hospital in Buenos Aires. Here he was colleague of fellow-Irishmen Drs Arthur Leeson and John O'Conor.

Greene retired in 1916, aged sixty-eight, and thereafter sailed for England. It was while in retirement in England that he wrote the papers which form the core of Wilkinson's book. It might have been expected that Greene would have been content to live out his life in the quiet and orderly suburban comfort of Kent. Rather strikingly, however, after some years in England he again felt the call of the pampa and decided to return, now in his mid-seventies, to the country where he had spent most of his life. He died a decade later and is buried in the British Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

Wilkinson's book is a collection of anecdotes taken from Greene's papers. They constitute a lively portrait of rural Argentine life in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is a place where death can come in many forms, suddenly or after drawn-out illnesses, be it by murder or revolution or by minor accidents which produce fatal complications. Cholera and smallpox are rife--there is a striking description of gauchos, fearing infection, lassoing a dead cholera victim and dragging the remains to the grave.

Abei Journal 17.indd 135 03/07/2016 15:51:55

Diseases such as anthrax and rabies are common and poorly controlled. Probably typical of a retired doctor, Greene likes to reminisce about the interesting cases he encountered over the decades, or describe his perceptive diagnoses and the innovative treatments he carried out. There are also comic interludes. One such is the case of a local policeman who wished to have a pregnancy test carried out for his wife. To this end he sent a soldier to a local *curandera*, bearing a bottle of the wife's urine. On the way the contents of the bottle spilled. The soldier, fearing retribution, filled the bottle with his own contribution and brought it to the curandera. Her verdict was that the urine had definitely come from someone who was three months pregnant.

Greene in fact despised the hold that curanderos maintained on the people of the pampa. He also condemned popular superstitions, such as the use of Holy Water as a 'vaccination' against such diseases as smallpox. "*Hanging over the bed-stead of all Irish patients of the Roman Catholic Church will be found a small bottle half filled with water which they call holy water because the priest has said some words in Latin over it and then made the sign of the Cross*." He mentions the popular belief in the curative power of what the people called "the powder from Knock" which was "*the mortar from between the stones of the wall surrounding the Holy Chapel at Knock*". As a man of science Greene regretted the people's reliance on what might today be thought of as alternative medicine, finding it "*disheartening to think that in this day men of such ignorance have such influence".* Nevertheless, he lived easily in the Catholic environment of Argentina. He married an English Catholic, Maria Latham, in 1877. The couple were married by Father Patrick Joseph Dillon, founder of The Southern Cross. Greene, never a Protestant in any traditional sense, by adulthood had become an agnostic. Nevertheless, he accepted his wife's Catholicism and indeed reared his daughters in that religion.

As was evident from *Sebastian's Pride*, probably her most successful publication till now, Susan Wilkinson possesses a fine knowledge and understanding of 19th century Argentina. Her notes to Geene's memoirs are particularly useful and expansive. Her description of mid-nineteenth century Argentina, "The Land to Which He Went" is vivid, while she also places Greene within the long medical tradition of Ireland in a very worthwhile chapter titled " Early Medical Education in Ireland".

Aside from its merit for those interested in the Irish presence in Latin America, this book would make an excellent gift to any friend or family member who is professionally involved in medicine. Indeed, since the book is full of humanity, humour and an eye for narration and description, it would be a fine gift for anyone who appreciates good stories well told. Since the structure of the *Recollections* is of a series of discrete anecdotes and observations, it is the kind of book which can be picked up, leafed through, and then set down to be picked up again later.

Anyone studying Irish emigration to Latin America will be struck by the trajectory of the many Irish doctors and other medical personnel who served that continent. There were Irish doctors working in the eighteenth-century Spanish colonial administration. Many more arrived during the Independence period. As early as 1823 William Duane

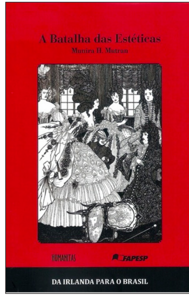
Abei Journal 17.indd 136 03/07/2016 15:51:55

described coming across several Irish doctors in his "*Journey Through Colombia*" and the following decades saw the arrival of a number of subsequently successful Irish medical immigrants to various Latin American countries. There is surely a book to be written which will chronicle the story of Irish medical men (and a few women) throughout Latin America. The author of any such book will undoubtedly be grateful to Susan Wilkinson for her publication of Arthur Greene's *"Recollections*".

David Barnwell

Abei Journal 17.indd 137 03/07/2016 15:51:55

Abei Journal 17.indd 138 03/07/2016 15:51:55



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*

Abei Journal 17.indd 139 03/07/2016 15:51:55

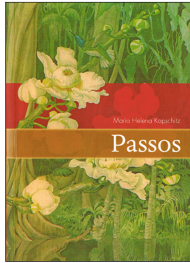
Palco Londrino [*The Irish Play on the London Stage*], published in 2009 and 2011, respectively. Professor Mutran's book is a worthy addition to the series and revives the hope that further volumes may still be in the pipeline.

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

Abei Journal 17.indd 140 03/07/2016 15:51:55



Maria Teresa Kopschitz de Barros and Maria Thereza Peixoto Kopschitz (eds.). *Passos de Maria Helena Kopschitz.* Niteroi: ZIT Gráfica, 2014. 180 pp.

Passos is a bilingual edition containing prose, drama, fiction and poetry by eight writers in English (four from Ireland, two from the United Kingdom, one from the United States and one from Guiana) in excellent translation by our sadly missed and much loved colleague Maria Helena Peixoto Kopschitz, who in some cases had the collaboration of the equally sadly missed Haroldo de Campos, a notable writer, poet and translator. Half of the book consists of works (mostly dramatic texts and some poems) by Samuel Beckett, one of four Irishmen to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The book opens with testimonials by a friend, a colleague and a niece, three people who were very close to Maria Helena. The selected texts, all of them short, are like a collection of finely crafted jewels.

The posthumous organisation of the volume is the result of dedicated research conducted by a sister (Maria Thereza), and a niece (Maria Teresa), of Professor Maria Helena. The book is more than a homage, since it is a literary testament to its subject: "an unequalled legacy to the Kopschitz family; a living portrait of Maria Helena – an aesthetic, literary, mystical and religious treasure in the field of poetic translation and literary translation", in the words of Terezinha Fonseca, author of the "Preamble", which also expresses the impression of all those who, like myself, even if for a brief period, came to know her: "Maria Helena was an affable, affectionate, attentive woman, with a highly spiritual character; but she was also independent, with a strong will and personality". In other words, she was an enchanting woman.

As Terezinha Fonseca also states, "with her studies of Samuel Beckett, Maria Helena made a great contribution to Irish literature, introducing one of its greatest exponents to the Brazilian reader." And in this endeavour she spared no effort. I heard from Maria Helena herself about her appointment with Beckett in a Paris bookshop.

In the second testimonial, entitled "Academic Trajectory", Nélia Bastos shows how Maria Helena, despite her intense teaching and research activity, never failed to participate in curriculum reform commissions and similar activities, sometimes considered to be secondary, but which occupy an important position in academic life. Nélia Bastos also states that Maria Helena referred to her own career, constructed over four decades of intense work, as "boats of our voyages", conducted with correctness and courage, which included the quest for transcendence to reveal that "each art form is in its own way a means of accessing the most profound reality of man and the world".

Maria Teresa, Maria Helena's niece and author of "Some Words", also gives her testimony about her aunt's legacy: "Up until the end, always lucid, in half-articulated

Abei Journal 17.indd 141 03/07/2016 15:51:56

words, she transmitted her unshakeable will, weaving out of silk and sisal the legacy of other cultures, particularly that of Ireland".

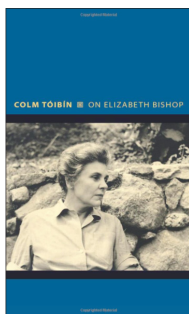
It is a pity that such an important and carefully produced book should have been published only in a non-commercial limited edition, when it could have reached, in addition to a few of the author's relations, friends and students, many other interested readers.

Carlos Daghlian[1]

Note

1 Translated from the Portuguese by Peter James Harris.

Abei Journal 17.indd 142 03/07/2016 15:51:56



Review of Colm Tóibín, *On Elizabeth Bishop,* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015. 209 pp.

On Elizabeth Bishop is much more than a book about the accomplished North American poet whose mind was hailed by poet John Ashbery as "capable of inspiring and delighting minds of so different formations." It also reveals much about its author, the acclaimed novelist Colm Tóibín, who belongs to the great tradition of Irish expatriates, having lived in Barcelona, Buenos Aires, and San Francisco and now resides in New York. *On Elizabeth Bishop* has been referred to by poet and critic Dan Chiasson as Tóibín's Valentine to Bishop, and evinces that engagement and influence among writers may not necessarily produce only anxiety, as Harold Bloom has theorized, but may also be celebrated as a gladly received source of literary enrichment and artistic development.

This book will be read with pleasure and profit by specialists and non-specialists alike despite the fact that it contains no critical breakthrough; it provides a cross-section of Bishop's work including published and unpublished texts, letters written by and to Bishop, biographical information, close readings, publication history, manuscript study, and reception history; as well it offers a lively and complex picture of friendship and mutual indebtedness among writers in the middle of the 20th century.

Context plays a major role in this book, and Tóibín's emphasis on contextualizing Bishop's poems and fiction with the places and times of their construction and in dialogue with her correspondence is a valuable contribution to those who are just beginning acquaint themselves with Bishop as an artist and a personality. As a devoted fan Tóibín has visited some of the places where Bishop lived, such as Great Village, Key West and Rio de Janeiro, and narrates facts and impressions of these places as he discusses the texts that are related to them. In Great Village he actually spent time at Bishop's house, when it was an artist's retreat. On December 4, 2015, it reverted to a private home.

Although it is a book of criticism where close reading techniques and objectivity are instrumental, there is no doubt that Tóibín has taken advantage of his narrative abilities to organize this book and to contextualize not only the poems he chooses to analyze but also Bishop's writing process and his own personal reactions as a reader of her texts. As part of a Princeton series entitled "Writers on Writers," the book is divided into thirteen chapters, which are organized according to a variety of topics that circle around important geographical or sentimental territories for Bishop and for Tóibín, such as, home, childhood, loss, wanderlust, memory, solitude and literary friendship. These topics pervade several chapters and are used as passwords that allow Tóibín free

Abei Journal 17.indd 143 03/07/2016 15:51:56

access to multiple zones. In this way, a single poem or prose text by Bishop, and this is especially true of the most important ones, are examined repeatedly in more than one chapter but each time with a different focus or in a different context.

The most important features of style that Tóibín shares with Bishop are clarity and precision artfully combined with reticence and silence or suggestivity. He calls attention to Bishop's difficulty in making a statement in poetry because it is "either too simple or too loaded to mean a great deal." Given this belief, all that was left for her was to describe everything very carefully. Tóibín identifies himself with Bishop and ascribes their shared passion for careful description to the *modus vivendi* of the places where they were raised. Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, in southeast Ireland, where Tóibín was brought up, and Great Village in rural Nova Scotia, Canada, where Bishop spent a short but highly significant period of her early childhood, are described as places where "language was a way to restrain experience." He adds:

> Language was neither ornament or exaltation; it was firm and austere in its purpose. Our time on the earth did not give us cause or need to say anything more than was necessary, language was thus a form of calm, modest knowledge or maybe even evasion. The poetry and the novels and stories written in the light of this knowledge or this evasion, or in their shadow, had to be led by clarity, by precise description, by briskness of feeling, by no open displays of anything, least of all easy feeling; the tone implied an acceptance of what was known. The music or the power was in what was often left out. The smallest word, or the holding of breath, could have a fierce, stony power.

The chapter entitled **"**In the Village" is a good example of the way Tóibín has constructed his book. He begins by describing Bishop's house in Great Village and ends with a quotation from "Song for the Rainy Season," a poem that makes reference to her house in Petrópolis, two of the houses the speaker of the poem "One Art" mentions as lost. To move around such as enormous and complex territory, he uses some of the topics or passwords mentioned earlier. In this particular chapter the passwords are home, childhood and loss – words that meant a lot to Bishop, who lost her father when she was 8 months old and whose mother was institutionalized in a mental hospital when the future poet was only 5 years old. Bishop, who would never see her mother again, was raised in various houses by different relatives. Several of the texts that Tóibín discusses in this chapter are connected to the places of her childhood: two prose texts, "In the Village" and "The Country Mouse" and the poem "The Moose," which was triggered by a bus trip Bishop took from Great Village to Boston in 1946 and which she finished only in 1972. Tóibín's description of Bishop's "system" of constructing a poem is worth mentioning as it can be widely applied:

> The poem inhabits that space where Bishop is most comfortable; it begins almost cozily, using fact and statement with no comment. There is something

Abei Journal 17.indd 144 03/07/2016 15:51:56

unsettling about this system, as though it were a camera moving in a place that had been the site of some catastrophe, but the camera instead picks up tiny details and leaves out any sense of menace, or instead succeeds in filming menace by filming absence of menace, and thus manages to capture menace all the more truly and effectively.

Bishop's Brazilian years and her life with Lota de Macedo Soares in Rio de Janeiro and Petrópolis are examined in more details in the chapter "The Escape from History." Toibín contrasts her Brazilian life with the Key West period in which politics and war were very much present. His analysis of the rhyme scheme in the poem "Roosters" in "Order and Disorder in Key West,'' is one more example of Bishop's skillful use of reticence. It is impossible not to agree with him when he concludes that " She managed to write one of the great poems about power and cruelty by not doing so, by describing, suggesting, by working on her rhyms and cadences, her rhymes and her half-rhymes, by leaving it at that, by understanding what might be enough."

In "The Little That We Get for Free," Bishop's creative process in the villanelle "One Art'' is carefully discussed. Tóibín reads this poem against previous interpretations such as those by Frank Bidart and Octavio Paz, who considered it a confessional poem, and one by Helen Vendler, who regarded it as "a personal poem of a poet who praised her aloneness." For Tóibín reads it is about "what cannot be said, about losses too large to be mentioned, about what is between the lines of the poem rather than in the poem, about what Bishop willfully almost playfully, left out of the poem." And what was left out, Tóibín argues, is somenthing that was mentioned in a letter to Robert Lowell: "I lost my mother, and Lota and others too."

Consider now another password – wandering. Unlike Thoreau who famously said that he had traveled much in Concord, both Bishop and Tóibín needed to inhabit a much larger space. Like Tóibín, who left his country to live abroad, Bishop too was "fond of wandering," something she attributed to the maternal line of her family, as she mentioned in a letter to Anne Stevenson, dated March 18, 1963. Besides living in many cities in the United States, she also traveled to other countries taking up residence at various times in France, Mexico and Brazil, where she lived for almost twenty years.

Solitude is the password in the chapter "One of Me." Tóibín focuses on an early moment in Bishop's life in which she first realized she was a single and separate person. This incident happened in a dentist's waiting room a few days before her seventh birthday and is depicted in the 1961 essay "The Country Mouse" and in the poem "In the Waiting Room," included in *Geography III*, published in 1976. Another poem skillfully explored in this chapter is "Crusoe in England," which highlights "the solitary nature of the self.'' In this poem solitude is depicted in two distinct moments: when Crusoe is on his island and when he is taken back to England. Pointing out that this poem echoes Bishop's own experience, Tóibín concludes, "no longer captive on an island, no longer living in isolation, Crusoe is imprisoned within the self, within a place where other people intrude."

Abei Journal 17.indd 145 03/07/2016 15:51:56

Friendship among writers is another key issue in *On Elizabeth Bishop*. Tóibín rightly observes that both Bishop's poetry and her development as a poet are associated with Robert Lowell and Marianne Moore. He regards them as "the surrogate family she could rebel against," or "as two places she visited, places she missed and avoided." People interested in Marianne Moore should read the chapter entitled "Efforts of Affection." Those who want to know about Bishop and Lowell should pay special attention to "Art Isn't Worth that Much." Thom Gunn, whose poetry was grounded in "an immense and powerful withholding" and who was a friend of both Bishop and Tóibín, receives a loving and careful regard in the chapter entitled "Grief and Reason," as well as in parts of "The Bartók Bird."

Someone with a Cartesian mind might find it difficult to extract the pith of *On Elizabeth Bishop* as it may seem, occasionally, redundant and somehow poorly structured. Like the snowman of Wallace Stevens's poem, who knows that "One needs a mind of winter / to regard the frost," we can say that one needs the mind of a Whitmanian loafer to appreciate the vast rolling hills that Tóibín has disclosed for our appreciation. Even so, he has assembled a great amount of informative and often entertaining material about Bishop's art and life. And, as a bonus, this amazing novelist, who stopped writing poetry at the age of 23, gives us some illuminating hints about the "dazzling dialectics" among different movements and generations of writers in the American literary scene of the middle of the twentieth century.

Maria Clara Bonetti Paro

Abei Journal 17.indd 146 03/07/2016 15:51:56

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Abei Journal 17.indd 147 03/07/2016 15:51:56

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Abei Journal 17.indd 148 03/07/2016 15:51:56

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Abei Journal 17.indd 149 03/07/2016 15:51:56

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