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BRIEF ANALYSIS OF AESTHETIC WORKS REPRESENTING THE NORTHERN IRISH CONFLICT

UMA BREVE ANÁLISE DE TRABALHOS ESTÉTICOS QUE REPRESENTAM O CONFLITO POLÍTICO NA IRLANDA DO NORTE

*Andrea Ferrás Wolwacz*²⁰

ABSTRACT: The Act of 1920 created two political administrative units within Ireland, the Irish Free State (EIRE) and Northern Ireland, which remained part of the United Kingdom. After Partition, the Protestant Unionist government of Northern Ireland introduced a sectarian policy, which prevented Catholic Nationalists from having the same civil rights of Protestants. This policy led to sectarian violence between Protestant and Catholics. In the 1960's, a peaceful civil rights campaign sought to end discrimination against Catholics. However, this campaign **resulted in civil war, known as "the Troubles", which lasted four decades.** This work aims to show different artistic and literary representation and interpretation of this conflict. In order to perform this task some works of art and literature which show the impact of the conflict have been selected and are analyzed. The main purpose of this paper is to show these different forms of art have helped the Northern Irish citizens evaluate the damages sectarianism have caused to the society and promote cultural diversity.

KEYWORDS: Northern Ireland; sectarianism; the Troubles; artistic and literary representations.

RESUMO: A lei de 1920 criou duas unidades político-administrativas na Irlanda, o Estado Livre Irlandês e a Irlanda do Norte, a qual continuou a fazer parte do Reino Unido. Depois da partição, o governo protestante unionista da Irlanda do Norte introduziu uma política sectária, que impedia nacionalistas católicos de possuírem os mesmos direitos civis dos protestantes. Esta política levou à violência entre protestantes e católicos. Na década de 1960, uma campanha pacífica dos direitos civis objetivando protestar por mais direitos para os católicos resultou em guerra civil conhecida como "The Troubles", que durou quatro décadas. Este trabalho tem como objetivo mostrar diferentes representações e interpretações artísticas e literárias deste conflito. Para realizar esta tarefa, algumas obras de arte e literatura que mostram o impacto do conflito foram selecionadas e são analisadas. O principal objetivo desse artigo é mostrar como essas diferentes formas de arte têm ajudado aos cidadãos norte-irlandeses a examinar os prejuízos que o sectarismo causou à sociedade e promover a diversidade cultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Irlanda do Norte; sectarismo; the Troubles; representações artísticas e literárias.

For some years, I had been researching the Northern Irish conflict and relate it to the impact the conflict has had on literature. Luckily in 2012 CAPES granted me a PDSE scholarship in Northern Ireland, so I had the chance to learn more about the post-conflict society; and therefore, experience cultural and social changes Northern Ireland is passing through. Such strong conflicts like the one in Northern Ireland have left their marks in the society which can be expressed through different forms of art. This way, this paper aims to analyze different forms of representation and interpretation of the conflict by neither **hierarchically evaluating nor judging them. Therefore, the purpose is to "examine the set of cultural forms and structures of feelings"** (SAID, 1994, pg. 9), which the conflict has produced in artists and writers of Ulster, Northern Ireland, since I believe that every aesthetic representation has its specificity which makes them important works of art. As Tom Paulin writes:

If you believe that some works of art are better than the others, then you must condone social inequality. This is because aesthetic judgment assumes a hierarchy of values and therefore anyone who makes a value judgment is consciously or unconsciously

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upholding an unjust social hierarchy. Come to think of it, isn't that phrase "work of art" really a mystical term shot through with bourgeois value judgment? Better replace it with a neutral and descriptive term like "cultural artifact. The way is then clear for a systematic and committed "egalitarian" form of criticism (PAULIN, 1984, p.14).

The province of Ulster is formed by nine counties which make part of Northern Ireland. Six of them are officially united to the United Kingdom and have been governed by England while three of them belong to the Republic of Ireland. Protestants are the majority in Ulster and most of them are Unionists, which means that they want to belong to the UK. Nationalists are **the ones who want the "six counties to be integrated to the Republic of Ireland.** Most Nationalists want this by using peaceful, constitutional means; nonetheless, there is a group of Nationalists who want to grasp the remaining six counties by means of guerrilla. They are the ones involved with the IRA.

Nationalists are Catholics of Irish background. They are either the ones who lost their lands and business to the English and Scottish settlers or the one who have moved to the six counties of Ulster to look for jobs in industries, mainly, after the partition in 1922. After the partition, Northern Ireland resembled to an apartheid state. Protestants outnumbered Catholics and, consequently have ruled over them for almost 70 years. The Catholic minority was discriminated and treated as second class citizens. Because of this discrimination, in the late 1960s, Catholics began to protest for they demanded to have the same rights of Protestants. This led to the re-emergence of the IRA and its guerrilla, which lasted three decades. The protests also led to the Good Friday Agreement²¹. However it was not set after some disastrous actions, as for example, the Bloody Sunday, the Hunger Strikes.

Unionists are Protestants of mainly British stock who arrived in Ireland as colonial settlers in the seventeenth century. They argue that they have a distinctive culture and the right to preserve it. They also support the continuing status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom for they believe they are more British than Irish.

Loyalists are more hard-line proponents of Unionism, or sometimes, more specifically, those who support the use of violence. They support the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), a small loyalist party, which represents more left-wing urban Loyalist working class communities and has its most followers in the Shankill area of Belfast, a working class area which used to be divided by one of the peace lines.

In the nineteen-eighties, England started a series of negotiations with the Republic of Ireland in order to establish the basis for the devolution of government for Northern Ireland. On February 5, 2010, Gordon Brown and Brian Cowen, prime ministers of England and Ireland, signed the Hillsborough Castle Agreement. According to the terms of the accord, Britain would hand over control of the six counties' police and justice system to Northern Ireland. The final phase of devolution was completed on April 12, 2010. However, the conflict has not ended yet; there have still been some conflicts in some areas.

Thus, the conflict in Northern Ireland has become a fertile topic to artists in Northern Ireland. So, this paper aims to show the impact that the conflict has had on the Arts and Literature in Northern Ireland. It presents artistic pieces of both sides and makes a brief analysis of music, poetry, and fiction, as well as draws some very short comments when showing photography, cinema, mural painting, and architecture as forms of art.

²¹ The political agreement, signed in April 1998 that established the basis for devolution of government for Northern Ireland and the principle that all parties should be committed to exclusively peaceful politics. Agreed between leading nationalist and unionist parties and the British and Irish governments, then subsequently supported by 71% of the population of Northern Ireland on a referendum. The DUP was the only leading party to oppose the Good Friday Agreement, though they now have agreed to share power with Republican politicians, and the First Minister of the devolved Assembly is from the DUP

As Jean Paul Sartre writes, every artistic work is the artist's personal response of the world he lives in. His experience has formed his personality. According to Sartre (1949, pg 39), **another reason for the artistic creation, is that we feel that “we are essential in relationship to the world”**. In the case of Ireland, Politics and Religion have played so many tricks in people's lives that it is necessary for artists to express their experiences through arts.

Music forms an important part of the cultural identity of the two traditions in Northern Ireland. Song writing and the singing were important features of the 'Troubles'. The following lyrics are examples of Nationalist and Unionist songs totally engaged to their causes. The first one, *The Ballad of Bobby Sands* (O'GLACAIN, 1981), is one of several republican songs. Here is an extract of the song.

Come gather round me one and all
my song to you I'll sing,
In memory of a brave young Irishman,
Who would not concede defeat,
from his stand would not retreat.
I sing of the gallant Bobby Sands,
Bobby Sands.
Yes I sing of the late great Bobby Sands
He organized the hunger strike
To win and change, reform,
To stop the evil tyrants in their craze,
To regain the five demands
He took his young life in his hands
For the betterment of comrades in Armagh
and in the Maze
(<http://www.bobbysandstrust.com/multimedia/songs#19>)

Bobby Sands was an Officer Commanding of IRA member who was imprisoned at H-Blocks in the 1980s and fought for the right to be treated as a war prisoner instead of a murder as the British charged all the IRA members. To do so, he decided to go on hunger strike. He eventually died on May 5, 1981 after sixty-six days on hunger strike, but not before being elected a Member of Parliament for Constituency of Fermanagh and South Tyrone when he was **still in prison, short before his death**. **“On a rain soaked Tuesday morn / From the heavens tears of patriots were shed / With the joy that you are free.” describes the day of his death.**

The song also pays tribute to men who fought the English colonialism as Wolfe Tone, a leading figure in the United Irishmen who fought for Irish independence and James Connolly, an Irish socialist leader who was executed after the Easter Rising on April 24, 1916. As other aesthetic works, this song praises men who fought against the British colonialism in the island of Ireland at different times of the conflict. Tribute to politicians, militants, writers and artists who have joined their forces against colonialism is very common in aesthetic works, that is, songs, literature and visual arts, for Nationalists need to keep the memory of the deeds against oppression alive.

Our Ulster Covenant (1912) written by *The Old Volunteer* describes a Loyalist paramilitary group getting ready to fight a Nationalists militia, probably the IRA. The lyrics say that they will fight the republicans in order to keep Ulster united to Great Britain. This is their right since they signed the Ulster Covenant, on 28 September 1912 in protest against the Third Home Rule Bill.

The day is fast approaching and the hour is drawing nigh,
Republicans are encroaching so cunningly and sly,
But we'll follow in the footsteps of those men so adamant,
And keep the rights our fathers gained and our Ulster Covenant.

The Government is not trustable because they are negotiating power, so they have to fight and kill the enemy as they have already done in places like Derry. They remember Enniskillen an Irish Town, which its name has been Anglicized, and in which there was a campaign to bring province of Ulster under English control in 1594. The Plantation of Ulster seized the land from the Irish and gave it to the planters loyal to the British crown. They are protected by religion and their cause will send them to heaven.

Brian Friel's play, *Translations* (1981) opened the Field Day Theatre Company²² project in 1981. *Translations* show the problem concerning colonialism, and the involved range of choices the colonized faces between being resistant and being willing to accept colonization. *The play* also introduces the problem of the relationship of language to identity, memory, history, and community. English officials are mapping and either anglicizing or completely changing the original Irish names of places. Deane (1990, p.14) comments that the play is about **“adaptations readjustments and reorientation that are required of individuals and groups who have undergone a traumatic cultural and political crisis”** Here is an extract of the play:

OEWN: Now. Where have we got to? Yes – the point where that stream enters the sea – that tiny little beach there. George!

YOLLAND: Yes. I'm listening. What do you call it? Say the Irish name again?

OWEN: Bun na hAbhann.

YOLLAND: Again.

OWEN: Bun na hAbhann.

YOLLAND: Bun na hAbhann.

OWEN: That's terrible George.

OWEN: Bun na hAbhann.

YOLLAND: I know. I'm sorry. Say that again.

OWEN: Bun hAbhann.

YOLLAND: Bun na hAbhann.

OWEN: That's much better. Bun is the Irish word for bottom. And Abha means river. So it's literally the mouth of the river.

YOLLAND: Let's leave it alone. There is no English equivalent for a sound like that.

OEWN: What is it called in the church registry?

Only now does YOLLAND opens his eyes.

YOLLAND: Let's see...Banowen.

(FRIEL, 1991, 1207-1208)

Names have history and meanings; usually they describe the local nature or refer to natural phenomena observed by native ancient Irish. However, the colonizer does not even realize it. The traditional Irish names do not mean anything for them, except that they have to find a new name, which is chosen after a leader in the invader army. More interestingly, is that Owen, a native Irish, does not realize the danger of this task.

According to Sartre, poets operate outside the bonds of language because they operate outside language looking inside. After observing the world the poet attempts to describe it. In describing the world, the poet is not only influenced by the sounds of the word and images they

²² The Field Day Theatre Company was established in Londonderry, Northern Ireland in 1980 by the playwright Brian Friel and the actor Stephen Rea. The initial aim of the Field Day Theatre Company was to create a cultural space which was available to a popular audience and which would perform a discourse of unity. It soon turned a project concerned with Irish literary and political culture. By the same time the writers Seamus Deane, David Hammond, Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin were invited to join the Company. They established, as the main purpose, to help solve the present crisis or “the Troubles”. Thus, the Field Day became an artistic response to “the Troubles” by analyzing the established opinions, myths and stereotypes which contributed to the political instability and sectarianism. Moreover, the Field Day blended art with politics through plays, poetry, novels.

produce but also by facts. By searching for words which will reflect the world, poets enter the world of committed writing.

Seamus Heaney's²³ *Punishment* (1991, p.1399) describes Irish troubles by drawing a parallel between the young woman who apparently was hanged for adultery and events around him in Northern Ireland.

her shaved head
like a stubble of black corn,
her blindfold a soiled bandage,
her noose a ring

During the troubles Nationalist militants used to kill or to publicly humiliate girls who dated or who got married to British soldiers, sometimes by taking off their clothes, covering **them with dirty, feathering them, and then fastening them to lamp posts as public warning.** "Her noose a ring" symbolizes the loss of innocence and stores the memories of love. A noose put around the neck of a female victim of an ancient Jutland rite. Here we can observe the connection with the tribal past. This girl also represents the political and social punishment of Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. These people were publicly humiliated by having their right to vote taken from them, and by living in the poorest areas and having very few rights to welfare.

The "betraying sisters" is a metaphor. From the past, they are the family and siblings of the sacrificial victim, and in the present they are reference to France and Spain, the powerful Catholic Nations that refuse to help their oppressed sister, Ireland. This metaphor serves to make the reader examine the Irish Troubles from a Catholic point of view, by portraying the Catholic population as a sister, in need of protection. On the other hand the scene is barbaric. The conflict between Catholics and Protestants is nourished by hostility in both communities. It is a strong tradition of hate. The girl is punished for showing love to the enemy and betraying her heritage. The poet laments the outrageous condition of the remains of the girl and tries to imagine her alive

Little adulteress
Before they punish you
you were flaxen-haired
undernourished, and your
tar-black face was beautiful.
My poor scapegoat,"

She is a scapegoat because she was chosen to pay for the community's collective guilty but her lover is set free from humiliation for being male. Being a woman, she is powerless to stop the abuse from her own countrymen. The Irish as presented by Heaney will never forget their heritage and their culture. The conflict has spread so deeply into Irish culture that it is impossible to end with violence. In fact, *Punishment* discusses the dilemma of individuals and minority groups in Irish society and how they are affected by the Irish Troubles.

Tom Paulin's *Still Century* (1991, p. 1406-1407) describes unionist ideology of Shankill, a working class neighborhood next to the Catholic neighborhood of Falls Road. Both communities separated by peace walls.

The hard captains of Industry
Held the province in a firm control

²³ Seamus Heaney was born in April 1939 in Northern Ireland. When he was twelve years old, he won a scholarship to St. Columba's College, a Catholic boarding school in Derry. Later he studied at Queen's University in Belfast. Heaney was awarded the Nobel prize in Literature in 1995 and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award in 1996.

Judges, your pious tyranny
Is backed bone-dry in old

Bricks of hundred linen mills,
Shadows of black tabernacles.

A crowd moves along the Shankill.
And Lamps shine in the dull

Streets where the fierce religion
Prays to the names of power:

Edwart and Bryson, Craig and Carson.
On every wall, texts or a Thick char.

The stanza first refers to the industrialization in Belfast controlled by Protestants who are also Unionists or Loyalists and have as their main purpose to keep control of that specific area for economic reasons. Belfast is a heavy industrialized city compared to the rest of **Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland**. “**Black**” refers to “**the Black Preceptory**”, a fundamentalist protestant group. Shankill is the central thorough fare of Protestant Belfast. It is a Protestant working class neighborhood, mostly Presbyterians, who are considered orthodox and a great number of them are militants of paramilitary groups against Nationalists. Edwart and Bryson, Craig and Carson are important leaders of Unionism . They signed the Ulster Covenant against two Home Rule bills, in 1886 and 1893, so that Northern Ireland would continue being administrated by England. Carboys are large glass bottles, containing dangerous chemicals use for bombing the Catholic areas. Most militants of this area belonged to RUC, a unionist paramilitary group which fought against the IRA. Belleek is a prized, delicate pottery, manufactured in Belleek, Co. Cavan, one of the industries of Belfast that employs working class Protestants.

The description of the activities, the industry workers packing the porcelain while militants of the area are preparing homemade bombs for the guerrilla against Catholics, and murals painted with legalists symbols, phrases and names, altogether serving as means of alienating the residents, gives a very realistic picture in the readers mind.

Fiction is characterized by a deep historical sensitivity. In *The Historical Text as Literary Artifact* Hayden White writes that chronological events could be narrated through “**employment**”, which means stressing different parts of the series of historical events. Hayden White asserts that it is an essentially literary construction. For him, it is a way of reconnecting history with literature since the latter is a more subtle representation of historical events. Here are two examples of fiction in which history plays an important part and both of them are set during the conflict in Northern Ireland. *Fat Lad* (1992) by Glen Peterson is an example of criticism made against the sectarian ideology of Northern Ireland. The Protagonist comes back to Belfast Northern Ireland in the 1990s after many years of self exile in England This is the time in which the peace process and the power Sharing are being implemented. By analyzing the society, he makes a strong criticism of the **city’s citizens’ mentality**.

The battle between *destruction* and *construction*. Kay told him, warning to her guides role, was the oldest battle in Belfast. The congenital predisposition of various of its inhabitants of periodically dismantling the city had been matched at every turn by the efforts of those who, against this and other, even more elemental enemies, had struggled throughout its history to build it up. Men (for men, in the past they invariably were) who had looked at mudflats and seen shipping channels, had looked at water and seen land. Belfast as a city was a triumph over mud and water, the dream of successive generations of merchants, engineers, and entrepreneurs willed into being. They had had to build the land before they could work it. Dredging .scouring. banking.

consolidating, they fashioned a city in their own image: dry docks, graving docks, ships, cranes, kilns, silos: industry from their industry, solidity from morass, leaving an indelible imprint on the unpromising slob land and their names driven like screw piles into the city's sense of itself. Dorgan, Dunbar, Workman, Wolff, Harland. (PETERSON, G.1992, p. 204-205).

Fat Lad by Glenn Patterson²⁴, describes the image of a city built "on a sinking Irish bog". For the Protestants, the city symbolizes the triumph, of hard work over "unpromising slob land", In other words, it is a metonym of Protestant strength and energy molding the [Catholic] nothingness into a miracle of industry and modernity. In the book, Drew Linden, the protagonist, and his girlfriend Kay Morris are showing their city to Drew's English boss, James, who has just arrived from England on business and wants to go sightseeing. Kay proudly wants to show the visitor Belfast from a Northern Irish perspective, and works hard to change his "superior point of view". So she creates her Protestant version of Irish history by speaking the proud language of the Protestant settlers which believed had turned an infertile soil into a civilized land by working hard (protestant virtues and determination). The settlers (planters as they were called) have seized the land not only from the uncivilized Catholics but also from the sea. By following the Book of Genesis, they have built their own world from nothing.

Reading in the Dark (1998) by Seamus Deane²⁵ is set in Derry – or Londonderry, as it is called by the British Protestants – from the 1940's to the 60's. The narrator/protagonist tells about his childhood and adolescence in the Bogside, the Catholic part of the city, and the novel has the English domination of Northern Ireland as its background. The unnamed autodiegetic narrator, raised in a working-class family, tells about the everyday life of his childhood, the political issues concerning the English violence, and fantastic stories about his family and the members of his community, enveloped in Irish legends and mysticism. Throughout the novel, the boy senses the presence of an untold mystery, and tries to put together the fragments of what is told and what is hidden about his family's story, in an attempt to reveal the secret. Intriguingly, the secret is linked to events in Northern Ireland's history. This novel-in-stories is about both the boy's coming of age and the developing events that lead to the period known as "the Troubles"²⁶ in Northern Ireland; from the Easter Rising in the early 1916²⁷ to the "Battle of the Bog side"²⁸, major confrontations of this conflict. Although the setting surrounds the narrator with violence, chaos, and sectarian division, Derry serves as a place for the protagonist

²⁴ Glenn Patterson was born in Belfast in 1961. He studied on The Creative Writing MA at the University of East Anglia. He has written several novels among which *Fat Lad* (1992), shortlisted for Guinness Peat Aviation Book Award. Patterson has been Writer in Residence at the University of East Anglia, Cork and Queen's University in Belfast, where he teaches Creative Writing on the MA.

²⁵ Seamus Deane was born into a Catholic nationalist family in 1940 in Derry, Northern Ireland. Nowadays he is a professor of English and Irish Studies and a member of the Royal Irish Academy, founding director of the Field Day Theatre Company, writer and editor of several books on theory.

²⁶ "The Troubles"—the period of communal violence involving paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, ending with the signature of an agreement between the British and the Irish Governments and endorsed by most Northern Ireland political parties which aimed at developing a peace process, called the Good Friday Agreement.

²⁷ The Easter Rising was a rebellion set in Ireland in Easter Week, 1916. The Rising was an attempt of Irish republicans to win independence from Britain. It was one of the most significant uprisings in Ireland. The Rising lasted from Easter Monday April 24 to April 30, 1916. The Republicans seized key locations in Dublin and proclaimed an Irish Republic independent of Britain. The Rising was suppressed after six days of fighting, and its leaders were court-martialled and executed, but it succeeded in bringing republicanism back to the Irish politics.

²⁸ The Battle of the Bogside was a riot in which residents of the Bogside and Derry Citizens Defense Association fought against the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). After a three-day riot, the British army was called to restore the order. This riot was the consequence of a number of Nationalist protest acts dating from 1968, among them, an organized march by Derry Housing Action Committee and Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association pleading changes in their housing policies. The marchers were batoned by the RUC.

to grow, **both physically and mentally**. Throughout the novel the author, through the narrator's voice, implies that Unionists and Nationalists are so deeply involved in hating one another that it would be necessary to abandon their identities in order to stop this dispute. The history of the **protagonist's family can be also read as the history of the Northern Ireland with its oppressive** policy which stimulates sectarianism, forbids the human subjects to act on their own accords, keep secrets, creates biased myths, and stimulates phantasms. This traumatic experience becomes a deep wound for generations of people who will eventually free themselves from these contradictions and from mechanisms of domination by finding their individual identity.

The closing chapter, titled *After*, is **set in October 1968, at the beginning of "the Troubles"**. The narrator refers that while the IRA was rioting against the British soldiers, a British soldier **was killed on the front doorstep of their house. Sometime later, the soldier's father** knocks on their door to ask about his son. **When the man leaves, the boy's father says that, even if from the "opposite" side, that man was a father too, who had lost his son in a war that was not theirs,** but had been triggered by two political ideologies which aimed at alienating their society. Once more the narrator understands how empty that discourse of war can be for individuals, as you can see the following passage,

I opened the [door] to the man who hesitantly took off his hat and asked if he could speak to someone in the house about who had been killed here on Wednesday. Before I could say anything, he added hastily that he was not army intelligence or police. **He was the soldier's father. I invited him in. He introduced himself to my parents, told them he was from Yorkshire, a miner, and that his son, George, had been shot, he was told, at our doorstep. He wondered if anyone had seen what had happened. There was a silence. My parents looked at him. He knew, the Yorkshire man said, he knew what people around here felt about the British soldiers. But this was his son. [...]** Well my father told the Englishman, his son had died instantly. He had heard the thud, not the shot. He had opened the door. The boy was lying there, looking quite peacefully. But he was dead, definitely dead.

'So he didn't suffer, didn't speak?' The miner asked.

No. They talked a little more, but there was not much to be said. The English shook hands all round, we told him we were sorry for his trouble, he nodded and left.

'Poor man', said my father. 'I feel for him. Even if his son was one of those. It's a strange world'. (DEAN, 1998, p. 244-45).

This passage brings all the suffering individuals, families and entire populations of different countries have had to undergo when they were used like puppets because of the interests of political or religious groups who have led them to believe they belonged in a determined nation, or race, even though they did not really understand what that meant, or were not really treated as if they belonged. Humanity is often called to fight for arbitrary ideologies. We live and we grow old believing, preaching and teaching pre-established ideas we have been led to believe, because someone we trust has said that they were right. And when individuals dare to say something against those ideas they are regarded mad. Mankind has been following this pattern for thousands of years. Wars have been fought in the name of race, religion and politics.

What shocks the boy is the fact that, in the end, the Englishman is a father, just like his father. Is there a room left for individual happiness, dignity and freedom from imposed ideologies? In his attempt to learn and understand about the shadowed history of his family, the boy finds his individual freedom.. Throughout the novel, he refers to the history of his family and country in order to tell about his struggle to liberate himself from generations of secrets, myths, betrayals, and sectarianism that have kept both communities of Northern Ireland subordinated to the conflicts between the British Empire and the Irish Nationalists. Sadly speaking, a struggle that was also imposed by the political and religious groups. According to Michiko Kakutani (1997), **"the tragedy of the narrator's family, a family fractured and burned**

by love and betrayal, has become a metaphor for the tragedy of Northern Ireland, a land whose **troubles have been handed down from generation to generation, from father to daughter to son**".

There are a lot of movies which show the conflict and some of them are trying respond to the conflict by analyzing the established opinions, myths and stereotypes which contributed to the political instability and sectarianism. One of them is *Everlasting Piece* (2000) by Barry Levison (director) and McEvoy (screen writer), a comedy which gives food for thought when describing relationships and points of view of both communities.

Everlasting Piece is set in Belfast, Ireland. It is about two men, Colm, a Catholic, and George, a Protestant, who work in a mental hospital. Both of them decide to run a toupee business named the "piece makers" (a homophone for the peace makers) after, they have met a crazy Scot called "The Scalper", in the mental hospital, who ran the toupee monopoly in Belfast before losing his business by attacking his costumers. They use the Scalpers contacts to take over a franchise but then they get involved with a rival firm as well as with unionists and nationalists gangs.

Good Vibrations (2012), is a film written by Glenn Patterson and Collin Carberry directed by Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn. It is a chronicle of Terry Hooley's life. Mr. Hooley is a music lover who decides to open a record shop in Great Victoria Street, one of the most bombed streets during "The Troubles". Being against the sectarian fight, Terry Hooley introduces punk bands from Northern Ireland to the rest of the United Kingdom and, together with young musicians struggles to create a an alternative non-sectarian community in Ulster through music business. The Film was nominated by *British Academy of Film and Television Arts* (BAFTA).

Northern Irish Artists have been deeply inspired by the long lasting conflict. So, street murals were not only painted by Catholics but also by Protestants. These murals are usually located in working class areas like Derry's Bogside, the nationalist territory and Waterside, the unionist territory. Murals are also found in Belfast the Nationalist Falls road and the Unionist Shankill.

The following pictures were taken by me while researching in Northern Ireland. They are some examples of mural representations produced as a response to "the Troubles". The mural painting photographs below were taken in Derry, Londonderry. In the Bogside, there are twelve mural paintings by Tom Kelly, William Kelly and Kevin Hasson, also known as the Bogside Artists. These mural paintings are called "the Peoples' Gallery". The Bogside artists have reproduced these murals from pictures taken during the crisis in Northern Ireland. Derry was one of the worst sites of the conflict. The Bogside in Derry was the place where the famous Bloody Sunday, on 30 January 1972, took place. Fourteen people were killed by the British army while participating in a civil rights manifestation, the most of them were teenagers and young adults.

The following mural depicts a march for more democratic rights and a non-sectarian society.



(Andrea Ferrás Wolwacz on October 10th, 2013)

The following mural, titled “The petrol bomber”, shows a young man wearing a gas mask and with a home-made petrol bomb fighting the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), a police organization formed after the creation of the state of Northern Ireland in 1922, whose purpose was to control and contain the violence on the streets.



(Andrea Ferrás Wolwacz on October 10th, 2013)

This mural painting is in Falls Road, Belfast. It depicts the H-Block paramilitary prisoners during the Troubles from mid-1971 to mid-2000. H-Block was a prison for paramilitary groups and the site of The Hunger Strike in 1981, in which the leader Bob Sands, an IRA member ended up dying after being elected to the British Parliament as an Anti H-Block candidate. The group of prisoners, led by Bob Sands, was protesting against the removal of the Status of war prisoners.



(Andrea Ferrás Wolwacz on October 27th, 2013)

Architecture in Northern Ireland has been totally influenced by the conflict. During this period the great number of fortified buildings and walls dividing the cities were built against paramilitary actions of both sides. The following picture shows one of walls, called Peace lines that divided the Nationalist and Unionist areas.



(Andrea Ferrás Wolwacz on October 27th, 2013)

Since the signing of the Good Friday agreement in 1998, Belfast has lived in a relative peace. The city went through a huge development and today the downtown area is fully developed. The government is eager to turn Belfast a tourist city. Belfast has been advertised in Europe and the USA and has hosted a number of international events since the signing. However, there still are a good number of peace walls, covered with mural paintings, dividing Protestant and Catholic areas that are closed at night.

To close this paper, it is important to write that these communities are still developing the peace process, so when one walks around these areas, s/he sees this art everywhere: in the streets, bookshops, tourist attractions, music museums, bars, and restaurants. They are what Derrida states in his book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995 p. 6), “**the absolute impatience of a desire of memory**”. They are great examples of post-modern aesthetic work and

historiography because the participants have dislocated their aims to their community. By reconstructing records of ordinary human activities and their practices, they have modified the notion of the subject and the hierarchy of the facts. The works by these writers and artists have brought the possibility for individuals in Northern Ireland to bring their personal story to the public view. These testimonies are certainly both, manifestations of the self and of the public. They are there due to the a necessity of this community to self-examine and reconsider the historical events that have made and are making them become self-conscious and able to, at least, give some possible explanation their past.

The aim of this paper was to show different forms of representation of the Irish conflict. In order to perform his task I have selected some works of art and literature and made a brief analysis of them by relating to the conflict and showing that art is a cultural artifact since it is a set of cultural forms and structure of feelings. Art is a social personal response of the world the artist lives in. According to Eagleton (1998), literary and other cultural texts always reflect ideologies. And ideology shapes the individual mental picture of lived experience. This way, texts reproduce the ideological point of view of the reality. Therefore, these works also show how a human subject can be influenced by a set of political and social factors. In Ireland it is frequent to find artistic representations about English domination, revolutionary movements, religious institutions, oppressive forces and paramilitary groups, among others. Deane (1991, p.380) comments that **“police and priests, soldiers and assassins, invaders and natives, Gaels and Galls, revolutionaries and reactionaries, dominate in these worlds, where the only freedom from social and political pressures is in the writing about its elusiveness”** This paper, intended to show various interpretations of the political and social situation in Northern Ireland.

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