

TOM PAULIN'S POETRY OF THE TROUBLES

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This paper is based on the third chapter of my PhD dissertation in which I introduce and undertake a critical evaluation of the works by a contemporary poet called Thomas Nelson Paulin, who has been widely analyzed and discussed in Northern Ireland, The United Kingdom and The United States, but is unknown in Brazil. Tom Paulin is a well-known English-born Northern Irish poet and critic of film, music and literature who is regarded as one of the major Protestant Irish writers. Paulin is considered one of the most respected writers to emerge from the Ulster province of Northern Ireland.

Paulin was born in England, from an English father and an Irish mother and grew up in Northern Ireland, in communities that witnessed acts of violence by both paramilitary groups and the British Army. By living in Northern Ireland he also experienced the state protection of the Protestant interests that, most of the time, led to arbitrary threats to individual liberties such as the renewal of the Special Powers Act of 1922 in 1973, which enabled the government to take the necessary steps and issue the necessary orders for preserving the peace and maintaining order as well as internment, which is the imprisonment or confinement of people, commonly in large groups, without trial.

Paulin's poetry discusses the Protestant Republican heritage, concepts of Northern Irish Protestant identity, politics, authority, totalitarianism, and democracy, from the Troubles to the Power Sharing² and the Good Friday Agreement³. My aim is to analyze poems in which Paulin writes about what he witnesses. I examine how the

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² In December 1993, the British and Irish Governments issued a joint declaration for the end of violence in Northern Ireland. The aim was to bring both states together in a power-sharing arrangement in which they would jointly run Northern Ireland, with limited input from smaller nationalist and Unionist parties.

³ The Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement was a major political development in the Northern Ireland peace process of the 1990s which aimed to devolve a system of government to Northern Ireland. Signed on 10 April 1998, the proposals included plans for a Northern Ireland assembly with a power-sharing executive and created a number of institutions between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The Agreement was the outcome of a long process of talks between the Northern Ireland political parties and the British and Irish Governments, endorsed through a referendum held on 22 May 1998, and subsequently given legal force through the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

ideological discourses are represented as well as the issues of identity and the ideology of the Unionists. I analyze the author's critical evaluation of existing ideologies and identities and his attempt at responding to this period. I also discuss his political and social sense of consciousness in relation to the political clash and the contradictions of his discourse. Paulin makes a distinction between Nation and State. For him, nation is a dangerous idea since it presupposes topics like ethnicity, race, and identity. It can develop into a racist discourse used by both Nationalists and Unionists, which is an influence from Nazism. What he wants to discuss is the "state". He fights for a fair society, a just state, a transparent government, a just civil order, through the enlightened model of rational enlightenment. He uses as a point of reference the failed rebellion of the United Irishmen by emphasizing the union of Protestants and Catholics for a secular republic.

There are three recurrent themes in Tom Paulin's poetry: politics, history and language. This paper focuses on the poet's interpretation, critique and response to history. For the analysis of Poetry as a form of telling History, it is important to take into account that Irish history is defined by two basic struggles: the external struggle – the conflict between Ireland and England; and the internal struggle – the conflict between the Irish themselves. The internal struggle is about which group belongs to the Irish tradition and, therefore, has the rights to rule Ireland. After partition the Protestant government ensured Protestant control of all state apparatuses turning Northern Ireland into a state with a totalitarian government until the late twentieth century. In fact, authoritarianism, totalitarianism and dictatorship happened in other countries all over the world in the twentieth century, each of them with their own specificities. Paulin sees this time as a period of uneasy stillness of life under the repressive Protestant, ideology that has suppressed the living word and the author describes the society as oppressed, regulated, homogenized and dehumanized. He also denounces the uneasy stillness of the regime which does not acknowledge "the other"⁴ and enforces polarization. He criticizes his own heritage by saying that discourses are totally controlled and everything is known, so he looks for a model which he finds in the English and Irish Dissenters. For Paulin this repression cannot hold the spirit of revolt back and prevent

⁴ In Northern Ireland, "the other" and "us and them" are a term used by both Protestants and Catholics to refer to the opposite communities.

history from happening. His ideal republic is founded on the myth of the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798. In his point-of-view, this revolutionary movement would have been the only possibility of a multicultural secular state.

In the Next section, I discuss poetry as a form of telling history. I, first, discuss the relationship between poetry and Irish history. Second, I analyze four poems from different publications: *The Strange Museum* (1980), *Liberty Tree* (1983) and *Fivemiletown* (1987). These three books of poetry were published during the Troubles, so the poems in them show the internal and the external struggle in Northern Ireland between the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-nineties. Finally, I demonstrate Paulin's historical poems critically discuss and critically respond to the existing ideologies and identities as well as the political and social situation in Northern Ireland.

Poetry and History

Irish poetry can be characterized by a tackling of the past. Engaging with the past can be perceived as an imaginative response, an act of evoking memory and imagination in a different way. Many intellectuals feel it is necessary to explore the past to understand the present. Patricia Craig (1992, p. 107) notes that "getting the grips with the past is a longstanding practice in Irish Poetry. It is a matter of imaginative response of compression and evocation". It is impossible to disregard history when contemplating Northern Ireland since "history remains so telling the appendage" (CRAIG, 1992, p. 108). According to Peter MacDonald the reading of history is a crucial and unavoidable prerequisite for someone who intends to make a serious reading of Northern Irish Literature. For him, contemporary poetry has contributed in some way "to an all-too-pressing historical discussion, one conducted in the contexts not just of memory and tradition, but of real bullets and continuing deaths" (MACDONALD, 1992, p. 86). He also affirms that the discussion of history and the notion of community are always connected to the concept of identity. The importance given to identity, particularly among Protestants, when discussing politics and history "makes the topic almost inescapable. (MACDONALD, 1992, p. 86)

According to Johnston, until Joyce most writers aimed to unearth Celtic myths, folklore and history to the point of exhaustion and Yeats was the greatest of them.

“Joyce’s modernism paved a new way of dealing with the past since he was neither interested in the past nor in the Irish landscape. Joyce’s proposition that ‘all that exists, exists only now, and the past is really only as I imagine it’ helped the next generations of poets free themselves from the weight of the past” (JOHNSTON, 1997, p. 37). “History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake”. (JOYCE, 1987, p. 32) Joyce’s Stephen sees the Irish history as a complete chaos that can only be represented by art. Paulin (1984, p. 94) writes that “the struggle to wake is crucial to Joyce’s inspiration because the epic imagination draws on history in order to free itself from the past, to make a leap into imaginative freedom”. What is important is the emphasis that the individual imagination gives to the reading of history. Joyce’s Stephen⁵ sees Ireland as a chaotic place, controlled by the British and by the Catholic Church imperialisms, and is inhabited by bigoted people (English and Irish). Paulin agrees with Joyce’s Stephen. In fact, Joyce greatly influenced him, especially in relation to the need to overcome history. In *In the Chair: Interview with Poets of the North of Ireland*, Paulin (2002, p. 156) says: “I read writers like Graham Greene and Orwell and I studied Synge for my ‘A’ Levels but, most of all, it was Joyce who was fundamental to both me and my mates.”

Roy Foster, a revisionist Irish historian who also experienced the time of the “troubles” and whose works deal with the history and the nature of Irish identity, wrote “The most illuminating history is often written to show how people acted in the expectation of a future that never happened” (FOSTER, 2002, p. 34). Anyone can reconstruct historical facts, what is difficult is to investigate what did not happen. However, to understand those historical facts it is necessary to reconstruct the facts that could have happened, but have never actually occurred. Therefore, for Paulin, the ideal Northern Irish state is one that did not come into existence but could have come if the Rebellion of the 1798 had succeeded. Andrews (2008, p. 183) remarks that “the priority for [Paulin] is a social democratic Irish republic, founded on the equality of citizenship and civic institutions of the just state, and capable of transcending inherited colonial and religious divisions”. Once again, it is possible to observe Joyce’s influence on Paulin. In

⁵ Stephen Dedalus is the protagonist and of James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and an important character in Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Ulysses, Stephen says: "I am a servant of two masters, an English and an Italian" (JOYCE, 1987, p. 19). What he wants to mean is that Ireland suffers equally under British and Catholic oppression. Paulin says that Northern Ireland suffers from the British and Protestant oppression. In an essay, *James Joyce: A Centenary Celebration* (1984), Paulin comments that Joyce was able to create a full and complete Irish identity in *Ulysses* and the novel is "an epic monument that faces the United independent Ireland" (PAULIN, 1984, p.143-145). Joyce also commented that Catholicism was a 'coherent absurdity' and Protestantism was 'an incoherent absurdity'. Joyce and several other Irish intellectuals were influenced by French culture and by the long tradition of Franco-Irish Republicanism. Moreover, according to Paulin, Joyce hated the racial purity ideology and believed in cultural identity, so he usually showed the Irish provincial narrowness and sectarian stupidity.

Paulin's ideal state is a multicultural, secular state. In his book *Ireland and the English Crisis* (1984, p. 17-18) Paulin writes about his ideal state:

My own critical position is eclectic and found on an idea which has yet no formal or institutional existence. It assumes the existence of non-sectarian, republican state which compromises the whole island of Ireland. It also holds to an idea of sanctuary and to the concept of the fifth province. This other invisible province offers a platonic challenge to the nationalistic image of the four green fields.[...] I've come to believe that class politics and proper democracy will only be possible in Ireland once the "national question" has been answered. It is a question, not of religious, but secular values"

Literature for Paulin "becomes more powerful when it confronts history, and "history in [Northern Ireland] has to be encountered and faced down" due to the fact that it is a place of extremities where history "seems to be abstract or easily escapable" (McDONALD, 1992, p. 98). Paulin's historical memory focuses on the myth of Protestant radicalism and the United Irishmen rebellion of the 1798. This rebellion is the main theme of his poetry because it was when a union of people from different religions was possible. It was also when Protestant dissenters, like the Ulster Presbyterians, and the Irish Catholics fought side by side for the political independence of Ireland. In *In the Chair: Interview with Poets from the North of Ireland* Paulin (2002, p. 155) says: "When you get a politics outside democracy then it is a tragic politics and you have to

choose one position or the other.” Paulin chooses Republicanism as he says in the same interview:

I choose Republicanism. I don’t and never did support violence but it did come down to having to choose. Now traditional Irish Nationalism is having to take on board a British identity and history – to which I’ve all kinds of fealties – that is represented by Unionism while Unionism is obviously having to re-event itself (BROWN), 2002, p. 155).

“Martello” (1983 p. 55, 56) is a poem from his third collection *Liberty Tree* (1983). In this poem Paulin makes allusions to Joyce’s *Ulysses* and to Homer’s *Iliad*. The title, for example, is a reference of Stephen Deadalus rented government watchover, built against the French invasion that he wants to turn into a cultural center. The poem is dedicated to Roy Foster⁶ and his wife, Aisling Foster.

Cack-handed, like a stotious mason,
Napper Tandy picks at this coast
A brave chiseller that one,
he might be Nestor as *général*
in the army of the revolution

The first stanza glorifies Napper Tandy’s political activism by comparing him to Homer’s Nestor in the *Iliad* (1990), for both were wise, tactful counselors, challengers and motivators. By comparing Napper Tandy to Nestor, he is also comparing the political clash between Ireland and Britain to the Trojan War. Napper Tandy was a very popular Irish Protestant and political activist of the 1780’s who was appointed as a member of the Irish Parliament and became popular by his oratory and by being in favor of the rebellion against the British Empire. He took many actions against the British Parliament, denounced municipal corruption, and because of the restrictions imposed to the Irish commerce by the British he advocated a boycott of English goods in Ireland.

⁶ Foster is Paulin’s colleague at Hertford College in Oxford. He is a revisionist Irish historian and specialist in Irish cultural, social and political history in the modern period. He an honorary Member of the Royal Irish Academy and the author of the authorized two-volume biography of the poet W.B.Yeats among other important books and biographies.

He was strongly influenced by the French revolutionary ideas and helped Theobald Wolfe Tone, to organize the society of the United Irishmen. He also orchestrated a fusion between them to the Defenders, a Roman Catholic society of violent political agitators. He describes Napper Tandy by using dialect words like a “cack”, an agitator, and a “stotious mason”, “a brave chiseller” an inebriated skilled man who exploited the confidence of the British by creating a series of situations in which prevented them from imposing their rules.

There is a dead vigilance along this coast,
a presence that bruises like word British,
You can catch that atmosphere of neglected garrisons,
and rusted artifact of bully beef
in the dashed surprise of a cement watchtower
ruined on a sloppy of ragweed and bullocks grazing.
In the dovegrey Victorian hotel
a spooly at the bar and says,
“We’re nearly a nation now, before the year’s out
They’ll maybe write Emmet’s epitaph

The second stanza describes the poor conditions of the underground resistance against the British; “neglected garrisons, rusted artifacts, ragweed and bullocks grazing”; however, objective. “We’re nearly a nation now, before the year’s out / they will maybe write Emmet’s epitaph”. Robert Emmet was another Irish Protestant and member of the United Irishmen. After the Rebellion of 1798, he and his fellow members were exiled in France where they planned a new insurrection against the British rule. Emmet obtained French military support and went back to Dublin to organize the French landing, and the Irish army. However, due to an explosion in one of the arms depots, Emmet decided to call an early rising, which was put down by the British army. Besides, the French aid did not arrive. He was captured and tried for treason. On September 19, 1803, after being sentenced to death, he delivered a speech, “Speech from the Dock”, which became famous among Irish Republicans.

I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world — it is the charity of its silence! Let no man write my epitaph: for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them. Let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me repose in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times, and other

men, can do justice to my character; when my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done. <<http://www.robertemmet.org/speech.htm>>

There still are discussions whether his epitaph should be written. Some say Ireland is still divided; others say that the Republic does not follow Emmet and the United Irishmen's ideals. For Paulin (1984, p. 98), *Ulysses* is the epitaph because it gave Ireland a national and international identity. It does not mean that *Ulysses* is a nationalistic epic. What Joyce does is to shape the Irish political reality and describe the citizen's bigotry.

Can you describe history, I'd like to know?
Isn't it a fiction that pretends to be fact
Like *A journal of the Plague Year*?
And the answer that snaps back at me
is a winter's afternoon in Dungannon,
the gothic barracks where the policemen
were signing out their weapons in a stained register,
a thick turbid light and a brisk smell of fear
as I described the accident and felt guilty—
guilty for no reason, or cause, I could think of.

The third confronts the issue of whether history is a fact or fiction; however, the poet prefers to see it as a concrete experience as “in a winter's afternoon in Dungannon” when the British army opens fire against people. His view of history is rather skeptical since his historical memory is filled with hostile events of an oppressed history which is opposed to the metanarrative he is trying to reconstruct. Richard Kirkland (1996, p. 3) notes that “this forms a useful illustration of the difficulties surrounding any attempt to articulate the past historically”. The metanarrative that the poet is trying to write is one that did not happen but could have happened if the rebellion had succeeded. Like Nestor, the poet becomes the transmitter of memory, which is critical for the immortality of the republican movement.

Images of dark, wet, gloomy, miserable weather related to hostility, threat, bloodshed, guilt, and rage are recurrent in Paulin's poetry. This poem describes worldly experiences of the historical present: the civil servants at Stormont Castle are “stony bonkers talking to each other in their “accents that sound like dustbins” while violence

is happening all over the city. These images described in the poem can be analyzed as gothic influence of his internalized Calvinism. “The Calvinistic sense of sin and damnation slips easily into a secular mode. Fear, guilty, the atmosphere of menace a latent violence: these are the unmistakable conditions of Paulin’s poetry” (ANDREWS, 1995, p. 333).

Elmer Andrews (1995, p. 329) notes that Paulin’s poetry searches for a way of escaping from the nightmare of this inert, frozen life and from the destructive, eternal forces of Ulster Unionists and their polarization of politics, gerrymandering, and discrimination. Nevertheless, there are no possible changes, since the historical period which they live completely controls their discourses. The end of Stormont and imposition of direct rule in 1972 brought more violence, oppression and demoralizing hopelessness instead of positive, fair changes. To prevail over the present history of Ulster and by believing in the dissenting tradition, which resisted and opposed the authorities, Paulin tries to follow their ideology by writing poetry which also defies the present order and by revealing more accurate and complex reality. Besides, Paulin does not believe that we can set apart from history and write a poem which does not carry our identity, ideological position and our perception of the world. A poem is always political; it describes different versions of human beings and their ideological points-of-views. Elmer Andrews (1995, p. 331) writes:

Clearly, the kind of poetry Paulin admires is that which flees from the high ground of orthodoxy, which acts as a revelation of potential that is denied or constantly threatened by circumstances, a poetry which occupies the interstices of the prevailing codes and discourses, and gives voice to suppressed or marginalized life.

Patricia Craig (1992, p. 108) writes: “What you can do with history, as Paulin and others have shown, is adapt its ingredients to the most exacting and inventive of the purposes, taking an event or an emblem from the past and instilling it the utmost savior connotation”. In fact, it is almost impossible to forgo history in Ireland since it is always there. Lastly, History for Paulin is stagnated since Ulster Unionists dominate the population through ethno-religious discourse, discriminate the ‘other’ and rule through violence.

In “A Partial State” (1980, p. 18) Paulin criticizes the righteous politics of Ulster Unionists by being tenacious and unwilling to yield. He compares the grim, miserable state of Northern Ireland to the gloomy weather. “Intractable and northern/ dry in the sun when it shines, /otherwise rained on, justly. The “white god”, the conqueror who came to Ireland and, through power and a racist view, stole the land, forced relocation, committed cultural genocide, imposed the Protestant religion and left the Island in the hands of “the desert god”. Hence, “the desert god” or “the chosen”, according to the Calvinist tradition, also named Seth in the ancient Egyptian mythology, usurped the “throne” and brought chaos and misery.

White god to the desert god, ‘the
lines are open, what you do
to your helots is up to

you, no concern of ours. Say
no if you like, but keep them
quiet. Never forget that

irony is the weapon
of the disarmed , that yours are
blunter instruments, dourness.’

“The desert god” oppresses their “helots” by disempowering them and preventing them from fighting for their rights. The tactics to avoid uprisings are to split the dangerous proletarian citizens in neighborhoods divided by peace lines: “The chosen, having broken / their enemies, scattered them /in backstreets and tight states”. Contrasting images placed next to each other to create a state of opposition between persons or ideas or interests: “desert god” juxtaposed with “helots”; “Patriarch and matriarch”, hegemonic masculinity versus female oppression; “industry and Green Hills”, working class districts versus rich neighborhoods. A divided nation is easy to control. History is static since it is a totalitarian state that prevents history to happen, but your policies and your lack of concern have incited anger and resentment. Your instruments of control are not strong enough to keep the population from rebelling against this unjust state: “Leviathan spouts / bursting through manhole covers”. Paulin may either refer to a Christian leviathan as a metaphor for socially and politically

organized masses endangering “God’s creature” i.e. “the chosen” or the Jewish mythological Leviathan, which refers to an unnamed historical /political enemy of Israel. To contain the angered “helots”, the “desert gods” order military assaults against the population. Military force is the symbol of this stagnant despotic government:

The clocks are bleeding now on
public buildings. Their mottoes,
emblem of failure, tells us:

*What the wrong gods established,
no army can ever save.*

Along with weather images, other political images of totalitarianism and chaos are also recurrent in the poem, as for instance, machine guns, special constables, water cannons, and fire. The poet uses these images to depict the chaotic state led by the repressive Protestant Unionist government that spread injustice and reinforced sectarianism. Therefore, through poetry, Paulin denounces the system. Elmer Andrews (1995, p. 334) notes:

Poetry for Paulin, is a subversive act, a defiance of a linguistic and literary order designed for the ideological suppression or pacification of potentially rebellious impulses. It is a paradigmatic gesture of spontaneity in an increasingly, manipulated world. The poet is an underground resistance fighter (underground movements, secret societies, secret signs, coded messages – these recur throughout Paulin’s work) in a bleak, cold country occupied by foreign powers. He is an aspired dissenter in every way.

For Paulin, the only way to change and write history again is to have the social forces interacting, participating and influencing the process again. The society is dormant and being led and brain-washed by a few Unionist leaders and their authoritarian discourses. It is necessary to liberate people from the inoperative Unionist ideology and identity. The only possible way to change this situation and revive history is by following the revolutionary effort of the 1790s. Protestant radicalism was a historical movement which inspired an independent and self-determined nation above religious divisions. However, Elmer Andrews (1995, p. 337) considers Paulin’s idealism a utopia.

He is so absorbed in a Utopian model of redeemed Presbyterianism that he blinds himself to complication. His myth of the United Irishmen, it must be said, has little in common with orthodox Republican politics and his attempt to associate Republican socialism with Protestantism has no relation whatever to contemporary reality.”

Andrews might be right, but, at the same time, Paulin might not have found a movement which he believes fits the Northern Irish reality as the United Irishmen. Firstly, by being republican, this revolutionary movement held strong ideals of Libert  ,   galit  , fraternit  ; secondly, they were against the British Imperialism; and, thirdly, they were united under different creeds against the political order. Paulin idealizes this movement because it was a movement that gathered people from different dissenting groups under the banner of the United Irishmen. They fought for a universal and non-sectarian secular society and political project for the island of Ireland. What is important to consider here is that the failure of the rebellion led to circumstances that propitiated the establishment of a government that did not have, as its principle, political and social equality and incited sectarian divisions. It is very difficult to imagine what would have happened if the movement had succeeded. It is possible that Paulin is not only romanticizing the movement but believing in a better outcome for Northern Ireland by seeing the movement as one that would have had more chances to establish a democratic government

Sara Broom (2003, p.132) writes that *Liberty Tree* (1983) is “Paulin's most forthright espousal of his political vision. The title derives from the iconography of Republicanism. *Liberty Tree* is pervaded by Paulin's fierce ambivalence toward the heritage of Northern Irish Protestantism”. “Presbyterian Study” (1983, p. 49) is a representation of Paulin’s love for the Free Thinkers’ movement as well as his hate for the contemporary Protestantism. Edna Longley (1983, p. 19) writes that *Liberty Tree* “is an assault on Unionists, and one which certainly does not fear to speak of 98 evocations of ‘McCracken/Hope, the northern starlight’ in contrast with the generation epitomized by ‘Desertmatin’” (1983, p. 16). Edna Longley is a former teacher at Queens University; she is an influential literary critic in Northern Ireland since the times of “the Trouble” who disagrees with the post- colonial literary school. She strongly criticizes Paulin’s

poetry and the Field Day Theatre company's obsession with colonialism and nationalism. She also disagrees with The Field Day's concept of the fifth province and with their tendency of abolishing the limit between poetry and prose, poetry and politics. According to Edna Longley, "Poetry and politics, like Church and State, should be separate" (LONGLEY, 1985, p. 26). Her concern is that political art may lead to propaganda. By studying the Irish experience, one realizes that it is very difficult for Irish writers to avoid representing the public and private spaces. However, it does not mean that they will necessarily be engaged in propagandist art.

The first stanza of "Presbyterian Study" describes a quiet, bright but empty room, which resembles a description of a museum. In this place, the poet visits the images of long-dead patriarchs, the ones who held strong beliefs of a free society. He emphasizes the moral values and the responsibility of independent individuals of making autonomous judgments.

A lantern ceiling and quiet
I climb here often and stare
At the scoured desk by the window,
The journal open
At a date and conscience.

The museum exhibition represents those men, the United Irishmen, who shared optimism concerning the primacy of human reason and the need to act as a group to set up a better society based on the Enlightenment ideals over the established one who is based on the doctrine or faith.

It is a room without a song
That believes in the flint, salt
And a new bread rising
Like a people who share
A dream of grace and reason.

In the next three stanzas, he honors those who participated in radical movements and their knowledge independent of their creed for "But choosing the free way, / Not the formal / And warming the walls with its knowing." Then he realizes that it is not

possible to bring this association back to the present because these men and those ideals are restricted to the museum space. The poet praises these men but, unfortunately their ideals and deeds will be more likely to be forgotten than to be revived, especially because they are not taught at schools. “Hardly a schoolroom remembers/ their obstinate rebellion”;

We wait on nature,
Our jackets of a dungy pattern
Of mud and snapped leaves,
Our state a jacked corpse
Committed to the deep.

In the last stanza, he also recognizes that such a union is impossible nowadays because the Protestant culture lacks activism. It is sad to observe the present Protestantism society who once took action to achieve political and social goals. Nowadays, the society has lost dignity and is powerless. There could be a chance of reviving those ideals if the current Protestant society did not passively believe in the demagoguery of the Unionists. Citizens are comfortably paralyzed. Everybody accepts and perpetuates the static and stagnant politics of the state.

“Desertmartin” (1993, p. 16) from *Liberty Tree* (1983), is a poem in which Paulin criticizes the bigot politics of Ian Paisley. Sara Broom (2003, p. 133) writes that “Paulin underlines the restrictive aspects of communal identity and religious institutions. The central theme here is that of freedom.” Desertmartin is a predominantly Protestant town located in the middle of Northern Ireland. On February 6, 1981, Ian Paisley joined 500 men into a military formation and pledged to them to oppose the reunification of Ireland⁷. In this poem, the poet states that the citizens' violence surpassed the British violence. Those men's hypocrisy is the cause of violence. This poem conveys Northern Irish Unionism's cultural inadequacy.

In the village, the poet observes the Unionist movement in “the dead centre of a faith” from the outside. “Here the world has withered to a few / Parched certainties, and charred stubble/ Tightens like a black belt, a crop of Bibles”. Words that denote dryness as “bitter”, “baked”, “parched”, “charred stubble” describe the rigid Protestant ideology.

⁷ The Anglo-Irish Agreement

Alliteration in each line emphasizes this rigidity. The Protestant state controls its citizens. The main authority is “The Big man”, Ian Paisley.

Because it is a territory of Law
I drive across it with a powerless knowledge –
The owl of Minerva in a hired car
A Jock squaddy glances down the streets
And grins, happy and expendable,
Like brass cartridge, He is useful thing,
Almost at home, and yet not quite, not quite.

The law is above all citizens. It is there to tell them what to do. And there is a group of supporters controlling the streets. The poet does not recognize Ulster as his home. His ideal home would be the time when the community could be described as “plain Presbyterian grace”, when there was a “free strenuous spirit” and when “the word was alive”. But especially after the partition and with the events that took place in Northern Ireland the Protestant ascendancy became more and more rigid. Added to this, the Unionist policy of based on the religious fanaticism of Ian Paisley turned the Unionist ideology “hard”, weak and “servile”.

It's limed nest, this place. I see a plain
Presbyterian grace sour, then harden,
As free strenuous spirit changes
To a servile defiance that wines and shrieks
For the bondage of the letter: it shouts
For the Big Man to lead his wee people
To a clean white prison, their scorched tomorrow.

The poet also compares the loyalist Politics of Ian Paisley to the political extremism of the Islamic fundamentalism “Masculine Islam, the rule of just”. The Protestant Religion is compared to a “theology of rifle-butts and executions”. Desertmartin, as other places in Ulster, is desert from the “free spirit”: “These are the places where the spirit dies”.

The Protestant Unionist politics in Northern Ireland is known as stern and rigid. What the poet wants to depict in the poem is that the Protestant society has been homogenized and regulated by the Loyalist, bigot politics of Ian Paisley. Due to a

change in the politics of England towards Northern Ireland, these Loyalists are protesting against being excluded. The poem ends with the following emblematic lines: “I see culture of twigs and bird-shit / Waving a gaudy flag it loves and curses”. Even though having been betrayed by England, they are waving the Union Jack flag. In the interview with John Haffenden (1981, p. 159), Paulin says:

But what I find at the moment is a real sense of how fundamentally ridiculous and contradictory it is to be an Ulster Protestant. It is a culture which could have dignity, and it had it once—I mean that strain of Radical Presbyterianism, free thinking Presbyterianism, which more or less went underground after 1798. I pretty well despise official Protestant culture, and can’t now understand how people can simultaneously wave the Union Jack and yet hate the English, as many Protestants do. I think there really has to be a unite Ireland, and I don’t mean in any way that I’m committed to bloodshed—but it’s a fundamentally absurd political state, and it’s got to go.

Unionists want to avoid losing their status within the United Kingdom but this status is not of interest to England anymore. Northern Ireland has given them too many financial and political problems. Besides, the English do not see Northern Ireland as Northern Ireland sees themselves and “the poet accurately transmits a sense of impasse, of an avoidable social evil hanging over Ulster” (HUFSTADER, 1999 p. 202). Being excluded from the negotiations raised an ambivalent feeling love and hate towards to England, a feeling which the poet depicts accurately and strongly criticizes. Jonathan Hufstader (1999 p. 202) writes:

At the dead center of the faith, Ulstermen cling to a dead faith; they cannot give it up and they cannot receive it. They are loyal to England but England is not loyal to them: they cannot give England up and they cannot rejoin it (so they love to curse their gaudy flag).

Figurative language used in the poem to represent the Unionist speech – “Dead, bitter, baked, withered, parched, charred, tightens, black, blind” – “depicts the sterile spiritual atmosphere (...) and the feeling emanated by a place where even the primordial life giving word has been used to sow victims” (RADU, 2012, p. 4). The unionist language is contrasted with the accent of the Unite Irishmen in “Fathers of History”

(1983), which is analyzed in the language section. Paulin uses fricative words to show the engaged Ulster. These words not only turn the poem aggressive but illustrate the sterile spiritual atmosphere of a place where people are mobilized by religious words used for radical and militant struggle.

A criticism that could be made here is that Paulin does not see the United Irishmen movement's internal contradictions. The movement was formed by men with vague and diverse political and religious views. Moreover, because of their conflicting and contradictory conceptions of society, it is difficult to predict what would have happened if the revolutionary movement had succeed; therefore, Paulin seems to be romanticizing the movement instead of trying think of a more valid solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was a great disappointment to the Unionists who had a deep sense of belonging and loyalty to Britain. It made them feel betrayed and abandoned by the British. The poem, "The Defenestration of Hillsborough" (1987, p. 54), is a reference to "The Defenestration of Prague", a 30-year struggle (1618–48) between the Roman Catholic and Protestants, the name given to the time when Protestants threw two of the Holy Roman Emperor's officials out of window. In the poem, Paulin identifies with the displaced Ulster Protestants who became aware of their "impossible imperative of belonging to something under scrutiny might cease to exist" (MACDONALD, 2002, p. 94). Paulin describes the community's ontological insecurity in the introduction of *Minotaur* (1992). He writes that by reading the Apocrypha: "Prayer of Azariah" Chapter 1, from a Protestant point-of-view, he found a passage that describes the wound that was reopened by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The verses 14-16 say:

For we, Oh Lord, are become less than any nation, and be kept under this day in all the world because of our sins. Neither is there at this time prince, or prophet, or leader, or burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, or place to sacrifice before thee, and to find mercy. Nevertheless, in a contrite heart and an humble spirit let us be accepted. (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/aza001.htm>)

Paulin (1992 p.15) also writes that these verses are related to the Ulster community, a people who is not internationally accepted as a nation. "To adapt Benedict Anderson's famous phrase, there is an underground 'imagined community', without a leader or prophet or a place where it can be secure and worship its God". In *Ireland and the English Crisis*, Paulin (1984, p. 17) states that the Unionist "community possesses very little in the way of an indigenous cultural tradition of its own and in its more reflexive moments tends to identify with the British way of life." The Anglo-Irish Agreement dismissed the Community from a powerful nation.

In the first two lines of "The Defenestration of Hillsborough" Paulin reworks the words of a loyalist leader "Here we are on the Window ledge/ with the idea of race". In *Minotaur*, Paulin (1992, p. 16) notes that the tormented statement of the loyalist leader, who refers to the Defenestration of Prague 1618- a thirty-year-war between Protestants, which ended with the Catholics defeat and a weakened and fragmented Holy Roman Empire in independent states- was an effort to find an "imaginative image for a sudden shock of being marginalized by two powerful nations" and by being forced to be dismissed from the British nation. Paulin (1992, p. 16) writes that "the school syllabus in Northern Ireland was designed to reinforce a protestant identity and to submerge the Catholic population of the province within those dominant values" The signing humiliates the Protestant pride, so Ulster Protestants, betrayed by the British Government, are involuntary taken to the end of the road or to the verge of the window.

The following lines impel the autocratic leaders to come back to reality and find a new beginning as a post-colonial nation. The poem suggests that Ulster will have to find its place among small nations, just as the Holy Roman Empire had to do after the Thirty Years War (1618–1648). Northern Ireland is not part of the British Empire anymore, so it is time to follow the examples of Tomáš Masaryk, who fought for the independence of Czechoslovak and eventually became the founder and the first president of a new nation. Masaryk had Ulster and Scot-Irish background. Paulin also identifies himself with Scottish and Presbyterian movement of the United Irishmen. Martin Mooney comments (1983, p23) "The Enlightenment origins and subsequent darkening of Ulster Protestant ideology are exposed in a network of analogies. In opposition to the historical tradition of Irish republicanism, Unionism is a dependent ideology which is being dismissed by the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement".

The door's locked on us
So we begin again

With a cack on the sill
and *The Book of Analogies*

It falls open at a map
of the small nations of Europe,

it has a Lutheran engraving
of Woodrom Wilson's homestead

in a cloon above Stabane,
and it tells you Tomás Masaryk

Is Paulin mocking the Unionist ideology or is he trying to show how this dependent and authoritarian politics made them lose their control of the situation? Many of Paulin's poems are considered obscure and cryptic, therefore difficult to read. In *Poetry in our time: Poet, Publisher, Reader and Reviewer* (2008). Eddie Wainwright writes about the obscurity of "The Defenestration of Hillsborough" He quotes Eliot's concept in *The use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) about the reasons for a poem to be obscure. According to Eliot (2008, p. 55), obscurity is the result of, firstly, "the poets personal causes which make it impossible for the poet to express himself in any but an obscure way"; secondly, readers have been told the author is difficult to read; and thirdly, "there is the difficulty caused by the author's having left something which the reader is used to finding; so that the reader, bewildered, gropes about for what is absent, and puzzles his head for a kind of 'meaning' which is not there, and is not meant to be there". He also writes that "complexity seems to do with several things going on at once, or in sequence, but capable of being 'sorted out' by appropriately- careful reading" (2008, p. 49). Another important aspect mentioned by Eddie Wainwright is that certain poets and poems are obscure for being faulty, fawned, incompetent, cavalier, and arrogant among other reasons. Nevertheless, obscurity sometimes, is only apparent and can be clarified at the end of the poem. According to him, the last two lines in Paulin's poems, "This means we have a choice / either to jump or get pushed" clarify the rest of it. Andrews (2008, p. 185) notes:

To get pushed means to be forced to change since there is no other way out; to jump means to rethink the whole political and religious structure, seen that, in Northern Ireland, religion is politics and politics is religion, and be willing to liberate themselves from rigorous ideology, an “act of defiance”.

By using dialogism and layering historical events and personalities within his poems, Paulin satirizes Ulster unionists. However, Paulin’s poetry may cause estrangement to common uninformed readers; for they find them difficult to understand and appreciate if they do not know historical events alluded to in the poems.

Final Remarks

This paper introduced and undertook a critical analysis of Tom Paulin’s works written from the nineteen-seventies – a period known as “The Troubles” – to the nineteen-nineties in Northern Ireland.

Seeing as Ireland is divided into two political entities, one remaining an English colony and the other an independent republic, the ideal of a nation-state comprising the island of Ireland remains an unfulfilled dream until now. This failure has been exemplified by innumerable unsuccessful rebellions in the preceding centuries, and movements such as the human rights movements. In more recent years the literary, historical, political, religious and psychological discourses about Ireland have had a tendency to approach Ireland’s problematic history as a national myth of “historic failure”. Therefore, Irish writing, strongly conditioned by historical and political factors, has produced excellent literature which discusses the destiny of individuals and of their community and nation. Tom Paulin is not an exception. Influenced by the historical and political context in Northern Ireland, he writes contemporary poetry that investigates history, politics, language, ideology and cultural identity of his community and nation. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to investigate how historic context and the issues of identity and ideology were dealt with in the poetry of an author with a Protestant background, and to also make a critical analysis of his works.

The analysis of Poetry and History convey that his poems represent this time of history as a period in which there is an uneasy stillness of life, therefore history is not

being written because of the conservatism of the Protestant politics. It is a chaotic historical period in which discourses are completely controlled, and a period that brought oppression, violence and death. Unionism does not let the social forces participate in the historical process; this is the reason why history is not being written. Paulin makes his individual reading of history to reach his personal freedom which he finds in the Rebellion of 1789. He focuses on the United Irishmen as a movement that would have set his idealistic “fifth province”, characterized by fair politics, an egalitarian society and rationalism. Therefore, he praises the movement but knows that these men have been forgotten and that they can only be seen in museums. However, there is a contradiction because he is in favor of rationalism, which does not involve the mythic and legendary Ireland and the quest of national identity, but he clings to the enlightenment principles and to 1798 myth of the dissenters.

Moreover, the poems that depict the poet’s attitude towards the Anglo-Irish agreement could be considered as his personal victory over Unionism. Paulin ridicules the unionist leader’s immutable, sensed identity and their reaction to the signing, as well as ironically invites them to find a solution since they lost their statues within the British Empire. History may be resumed from now on.

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