IRELAND'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE FROM COLONIALISM IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO POSTCOLONIALISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: AN HISTORICAL AND LITERARY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: Ireland's relationship to the British Empire has been considered something either confusing or controversial. According to Stephen Howe "most historians would concur that the history of modern Ireland has been associated with that of the British Empire"(HOWE, 2002, p. 220). In 1541, Ireland was granted the status of Kingdom. The Act of Union made Ireland "an equal partner in the United Kingdom". However, from the Glorious Revolution on, the Irish Protestant Ascendancy look inside themselves and what they see is a country which is "a 'sister kingdom' to England and Scotland". English politicians by their turn are not able to see anything more than "a depending kingdom, a foreign country or a child-colony". Supported by historical and literary approaches related to colonialism and postcolonialism, this work tries to demonstrate how ambiguous has been such relationship.

KEYWORDS: Colonialism; Ireland/British Empire; Postcolonialism; Relationship

Ireland's relationship to the British Empire is a sort of subject which tends to be based on two extreme positions either by academic or popular discourse. Those that take for granted the first of these two positions state that Ireland was never, in the very strict sense of the word, a British 'colony' and the maximum acceptable by them is a kind of 'semi-colonial' relationship. On the other hand, the ones who oppose this first position refer to self-evidence in Ireland's role as a British colony. According to Kevin Kenne,

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"neither position is of much use to historians. Both posit some ideal colonial form against which the Irish case can be judged as either adequate or deficient, but no such form existed in historical practice"(KENNE, 2006, p. 2). Maybe the origin of such a set of opposing ideas is in the fact that the British Empire, as Joe Cleary presents the question, "comprised a heterogeneous collection of trade colonies, Protectorates, Crown colonies, settlement colonies, administrative colonies, Mandates, trade ports, naval bases, Dominions, and dependencies"(CLEARY, 2006, p. 253).

Apparently, the difficulty faced by those who have tried to look for a term able to define appropriately Ireland's relationship to the British Empire is due to geographical aspects which along the history of colonialism has established the idea of 'colony' as "far-flung 'exotic' possessions, often marked by extreme racial subjugation"(KENNE, 2006, p. 2). It is a fact that the Irish were considered as an inferior race by the citizens of the British Empire, however such a prejudice does not seem to be caused by any geographical aspect determined by distance.

Evidence shows that distance by itself was not enough to explain a question which, despite its underlying political content, is more closely related to behavior. However, distance partially helps to explain Ireland's colonial relationship to the British Empire when, on December 3rd 1784, in a report to the Duke of Rutland, C. T. Grenville stated that "Ireland is too great to be unconnected with us, and too near us to be dependent on a foreign state, and too little to be independent" (H. M. C., 2014, p. 155). Indeed, his statement summarizes much of the attitudes of the British Empire towards Ireland along their antithetical history of imperial enforcement and subjection.

The origins of Ireland's relationship to the British Empire and the creation of this empire are, in a certain way, connected and can be traced back to the Middle Ages when on May 1st 1169, a force of loosely associated Norman knights landed in County Wexford at the request of Dearmait Mac Murchada (pronounced as *[dermot mak murka]* and anglicized as Dermot MacMurrough), the ousted King of Leinster, who had asked them for help to regain his kingdom. On October 18th 1171, Henry II landed a much bigger army

in Waterford to ensure his control over the preceding Norman force. In 1172, the King of England created the Lordship of Ireland as part of the Angevin Empire, the modern term to refer to the collections of states ruled by the Angevins of the House of Plantagenet.

In fact, the modern British Empire is considered to have started in 1497 when the Italian navigator, Giovanni Caboto, later John Cabot, under the commission of Henry VII, landed on the island of Newfoundland claiming it to the English Crown. Nowadays, Newfoundland and Labrador constitute one of the ten provinces of Canada. At its peak, the British Empire was the largest Empire ever seen in history. It held a population of nearly 500 million people – about a quarter of the world's population – and covered an average of 14.3 million square miles (17.4 million including Antarctic claims), almost a third of the world's total land area. During the mid-19th century Britain was the most developed hyper-power.

Considered 'the workshop of the world', by 1870 the production of the British Empire was over 30% of the global industrial output, with no other nation to parallel it. In 1885 the United States and Germany were also industrialized but Britain was still the world's most developed nation until around 1913 when it was surpassed by the USA. Being the owner of a powerful Royal Navy and having territorial possessions scattered across every continent and ocean and in every time-zone, the British Empire, in the 19th century, took the place of previous European empires like France, Spain and Portugal, being described as 'the empire on which the sun never sets'.

In its process of expansion, the British Empire contributed to spread commerce, language and technological apparatuses. Most of British imperial strength was underpinned by two of these apparatuses: the steamship and the telegraph. Invented in the 19th century, these new technologies allowed to control and defend the empire boundaries. By 1902, the so called All Red Line linked together the British Empire by means of a network of telegraph cables in five continents.

As England's closest large island, Ireland has been considered by most of those who have approached the historical, political and economic relationships between the two main British islands as the first and last colony of the British Empire. To Keven Kenny, "although early usage of the term 'empire' can be traced back to the 1570s, the term 'British' did not enter into common currency until the accession of James I in 1603, and the two terms merged in the modern connotation later still"(KENNE, 2006, p. 2).

Despite it, the relationship between Ireland and England established since the 12th century was far from being of two independent nations. A law passed by the English Crown in 1492 stated that the Irish Parliament could meet only under the permission of the English King and no law could be passed unless it had been previously approved by the King and his council comprised of Englishmen only.

In the 1500s the Tudors started systematically to confiscate the lands from Irish lords in favor of Protestants from England and Scotland. The Stuarts continued promoting the confiscation from Irish landlords in the 1600s, especially during the Plantation of Ulster. The Cromwellian confiscations brought the expropriation of most catholic landowners throughout the rest of Ireland. Late in the 17th century more settlers arrived and, known as 'the English in Ireland', started controlling most of the land, church and government. As English speakers they were considered ascendant or privileged and constituted the so called Anglo-Irish Ascendancy or Irish Protestant Ascendancy. The 18th century was the golden age for the Irish Protestant Ascendancy which got their highest political power after 1782 with the grant of legislative independence to the gentry-dominated Irish Parliament.

Although demands for expropriating native lands in Ireland dated from the later Middle Ages, it was after the Desmond rebellions in the 1570s and 80s that these demands won widespread acceptance. Plantation, then, came into being as an instrument of royal policy and private enterprise. Jane M. Ohlmeyer informs that "[i]n 1585, shortly after the first abortive English attempt to colonize the New World, the government an-

nounced an ambitious scheme which aimed to recreate the world of south-east England on the confiscated Munster estates of the Earl of Desmond"(OHLMEYER, 2006, p. 38).

In order to carry out this scheme, lands ranging from 4,000 to 12,000 acres were taken from Irish landowners and granted to thirty-five English landlords who were committed to colonize and to implement English style agriculture based on grain cultivation. "By the end of the sixteenth century roughly 12,000 settlers were actively engaged in this type of farming, and estimates suggest that by 1641 Munster had attracted 22,000 Protestant planters and, after 1660, 30,000" (OHLMEYER, 2006, p. 38).

While the number of settlements increased, a greater and greater number of military forces was necessary to protect the new English colonists on Irish soil. Thus, the endemic revolts and rebellions in Ireland demanded of the Tudor state the presence of thousands of soldiers. Ohlmeyer calculates that "[b]etween 1594 and 1599, 20,000 troops served against forces loyal to the Earl of Tyrone; between 1649 and 1651 the English Parliament dispatched 55,000 men to serve in Ireland; and at the Battle of the Boyne (1690) King William of Orange commanded a force numbering 36,000" (OHLMEYER, 2006, p. 39).

Certainly, one of the reasons the English had to submit Ireland to their control was the abundance of fertile land available which attracted their attention. Thomas Bartlett agrees with it and adds: "[E]ven if Ireland had been barren rock, its proximity to both continental Europe and England meant that it constituted in English eyes an all-too-convenient base for foreign enemies and a likely haven for domestic rebels and malcontents" (BARTLETT, 2006, p. 61).

Having submitted Ireland, the next step of the English Crown was to undermine the prevailing Irish-Gaelic order considering what Gerald of Wales, also named by the latinised form Geraldus Cambrensis, around 1188, had stated in his *Topographia Hibernica*. Also known as *Topographia Hiberniae*, this account on the landscape and people of Ireland is considered as the most influential medieval work on this island and its influence endured into the Early Modern period. In it, Cambrensis refers to the Irish as "'a barbarous

people', 'a rude people' with 'primitive habits', 'living themselves like beasts' […] 'they learn nothing, and practice nothing but the barbarism in which they are born and bred, and which sticks to them like a second nature"(CAMBRENSIS, 1795, p. 70 *apud* HAD-FIELD and MCVEAGH, 1994, p. 27-8).

Identical idea was expressed by Sir John Davies, in 1612, in his work: *A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued*. To this spokesman and direct collaborator of the British Empire, the Irish were "little better than Caniballes, who doe hunt one another, and hee that hath most strength and swiftnes doth eate and devoures all his fellowes" (DAVIES, 1612, p. 168 *apud* HADFIELD and MCVEAGH,1994, p. 47). Subjects from other European imperialist nations also shared Davies' prejudice against the Irish people. C. Maxwell registers in his *Irish History from Contemporary Source (1509-1610),* the following opinion by an imperialist Spanish traveller on the Irish: "[T]he chief inclination of these people is to be robbers, and to plunder each other; so that no day passes without a call to arms among them"(MAXWELL, 1923, p. 319).

Identified the lack of civility among the Irish, the supporters of the British Empire, the Anglo-Irish, alongside political subjugation, started promoting the Irish conversion to Protestantism. By means of a strong process of cultural assimilation which aimed to reach the core of the gaelic-traditions, the 'uncivil' natives as well as their barbarous customs, practices and culture were neutralized when anglicizing was carried out as the result of the British imperial effort to eradicate barbarism in its neighbor colony.

Imperialists and supporters of the Church of Ireland, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy took the place of the Gaelic Irish and Old English aristocrats as dominant class from the 17th century up to the time of the Irish independence in the 20th century. The Dubliner playwright from working class origin, Brendan Behan, a staunch *supporter of Irish republicanism*, considered an Anglo-Irishman as belonging to a leisure class and defined him as 'a Protestant with a horse'. In Act One of his play – *The Hostage* – Behan presents his satirical paraphrase in a conversation in which three characters take part – Pat, the caretaker of a lodging-house; Meg, his consort; and Ropeen, an old whore:

> "**Pat**: He was an Anglo-Irishman.
> **Meg**: In the name of God, what's that?
> **Pat**: A Protestant with a horse.
> **Ropeen**: Leadbetter.
> **Pat**: No, no, an ordinary Protestant like Leadbetter, the plumber in the back parlour next door, won't do, nor a Belfast orangeman, not if he was as black as your boot.
> **Meg**: Why not?
> **Pat**: Because they work. An Anglo-Irishman only works at riding horses, drinking whiskey, and reading double-meaning books in Irish at Trinity College" (BEHAN, 1978, p. 143).

The Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, the English, and occasional European imperial travellers in Ireland were not the only ones to condemn the native Irish's uncivilized habits. Early in the 17th century, according to Victor Treadwell, the Catholic bishop of Ossory, David Rothe, pleaded his synod to "eliminate barbarous customs, abolish bestial rites and convert the detestable intercourse of savages into polite manners and a care for the commonwealth" (TREADWELL, 1998, p. 30).

Richard Gott, the author of *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt,* shows that forms of savagery and barbarism were components pertaining not only to colonized minds. They were also strongly rooted in colonizers who, by means of them, managed to impose subalternity on native population of their conquered lands. To Gott,

> Britain's empire was established, and maintained for more than two centuries, through bloodshed, violence, brutality, conquest and war. Not a year went by without large numbers of its inhabitants being obliged to suffer for their involuntary participation in the colonial experience. Slavery, famine, prison, battle, murder, extermination – these were their various fates. (GOTT, 2014, access on July 6th)

Despite Gott's vehement utterance on the way the British Empire was established, Kevin Kenny reminds us that "[a]s in most examples of colonial history, the Irish case involved the cooption, or co-operation, of local élites, and presented significant advantages to certain sectors of the native society"(KENNY, 2006, p. 7). Jane H. Ohlmey-

er, on the other hand, deconstructs what has been often considered as victimization of Irish Catholics. She'd rather accept the fact that instead of victims,

> the Irish Catholics proved reactive and responsive to imperial schemes. Moreover, the fact that English imperialism in Ireland lacked any overriding, coherent, and consistent framework, allowed some Catholics, especially members of the élite, together with many Protestant planters, not only to co-opt the colonial process to strengthen their regional power bases but even to subvert the original imperial agenda. (KENNY, 2006, p. 7)

If, on one hand Catholics had been co-opted by the British imperialism, on the other hand among the Protestant Ascendancy a certain disgust soon to be changed into resentment was developing throughout the 18th century. The restrictions England made against Irish colonial commerce were considered a decision to maintain 'poor Ireland poor' by those early settlers who "slowly had developed a deep affection for their adopted land and keen appreciation of its distinctive beauties" (BARTLETT, 2006, p. 68-9). So, "[I]nstead of being welcomed as partners in the Glorious Revolution (and ushered to a seat at the table of Empire), Irish Protestants were dismayed to find themselves cast as colonists with their Parliament derided as a subaltern assembly" (BARTLETT, 2006, p. 68).

Their resentment was enhanced when they perceived that "Ireland, a sister kingdom to England in their eyes, was contemptuously dismissed by English politicians as variously a depending, a foreign country, or a child-colony; in no case was equality, much less joint sovereignty, on offer" (BARTLETT, 2006, p. 68). To the British Empire "Ireland was a troublesome child-colony to whom mother-England owed protection but whose primary purpose was to benefit the country. English writers professed to disbelieve that anyone could think otherwise" (BARTLETT, 1992, p. 36).

Judging by what Jonathan Swift did, the same was not true in respect to some ish writers. Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral and also a pamphleteer, in 1719, Swift published *Gulliver's Travels* in which he presents a strong criticism of the British imperial establish-

ment. Ten years later, he published anonymously the satirical essay – *A Modest Proposal* – which soon, due to its style, readers deduced that Swift was the author. The essay satirizes the British Empire's nonsatiable greed which was causing sufferings to poor people in Ireland.

Swift's satirical proposal to decrease the high level of poverty among the Irish is based on an estimated number of one hundred and twenty thousand children who were born every year in the country. He suggests that an amount of one hundred thousand of these children should be sold to the wealthy and eaten at the table and the twenty thousand remaining should be reserved for breeding. The satirist guarantees that an Irish child would make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dined alone, the fore or hind quarter would make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt would be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter. He grants "this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title for the children" (SWIFT, 1979, p. 2146). In an attempt to persuade potential consumers on the quality of this new source of nourishment, Swift compares swine's flesh to children's to conclude that there is "no way comparable in taste or magnificence to a well-grown, fat, yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a lord mayor's feast or any other public entertainment" (SWIFT, 1979, p. 2149).

When Swift presented this libel against his own Anglo-Irish ruler peers, Catholics were not allowed to vote, marry a Protestant, join the armed imperial forces, make use of arms, even if for their own protection, or go abroad to be educated in a Catholic institution. Despite making up 70% of about 2 million inhabitants, they owned just 5% of the land. This made farming in Ireland a very inefficient rural activity with Protestants, usually living in England, maintaining in Ireland large estate and Catholics forced to share their small lands among male heirs. As a result, food production shortfalls were frequent, which when associated with the imperial economic restrictions policy and occasional droughts caused great social upheaval.

The most devastating one was the Great Famine in the first half of the 19th century which brought about the death of one million inhabitants and the subsequent exodus of another million. It also gave origin to a process of mass emigration that 150 years later makes Ireland a country which has the same population it had in 1820. Some authors, among them Tim Pat Coogan in his book, published in 2012 – *The Famine Plot – England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy* – believes that the event was a deliberate action of the imperial authorities and as such it was a genocide. The 19th century Irish revolutionary John Mitchell, without making any explicit mention on genocide, coined the aphorism: "God sent the blight, but the English sent the Famine".

The 19th century witnessed the highest level of colonial expansionism reached by the British Empire. In this expansion, the sharp satire of Swift, who had written in his own epitaph: *Libertatis Vindicatorem* (*He served human liberty*), helped to pave a road through which rebelliousness was dexterously taking, demanding change in legislation and identity recognition.

The Famine, a great deal of the Irish autochthonous population believed, had erased the remains of the Gaelic culture and so, much of their own identity. The Act of Union, in 1800, had abolished the Dublin Parliament which represented a severe defeat to the Irish landlords´ interests. In 1829, the English Parliament passed the Roman Catholic Relief Act giving members of the Catholic Church the right to sit in the Parliament at Westminster. The five Land Acts, from 1870 to 1909, made the purchase of land by former tenant farmers easier, which meant to the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy peers the decreasing of their power.

Each one of these events *per se* contributed to the political actions that took place in Ireland from the second half of the 19th century on when republican and cultural movements subsidized the uprising of the latent Irish nationalism turning itself into a dominant ideological strength that, in the second decade of the 20th century, changed the Irish colonial *status quo* into the Irish Free State. In 1937, the Irish Free State came to an end being succeeded by the current sovereign State of Ireland.

The social, political and economic changing process that, since the early 9th century had been fermenting, affected the Anglo-Irish in so deep a level that a change from protagonists to antagonists brought to them the sensation of a quasi-irreality which was translated into literary forms. As most colonies had done to provide due accommodation to the amount of disempowered *élites*, in Ireland it was not different. In this way, the dilemma of surrounded southern Unionists was captured by writers like Elizabeth Bowen, Edith Sommerville, and Molly Keane in their 'Big House novels' so described by Vera Kreilkamp:

> The central architectural motif of these novels is a decaying mansion isolated from a ountryside of native hovels, but regularly sharing characteristics with them. Big House novels thus negotiate the psychic space between recollections of the rural estate as the power centre of agrarian colonial life and its identity as a shabby object of derision and contempt both to imperial visitors and the surrounding Irish communities. (KREILKAMP, 2006, p. 175)

Other literary format to express the power decline of the Protestant Ascendancy was the Gothic novel which unveiled the psychic torment that the process of disempowerment caused to a social class that having, as demigods, the control of the land and of all the beings on it, overnight, lost this control. To Kreilkamp,

> [t]he Irish Gothic novel stylistically and thematically encodes the sublimated anxieties of a colonial class preoccupied with the corrupt sources of its power. These novels create a range of demonic protagonists, doomed satanic villains who both exploit and rage against authority; they are explicitly identified as Irish landlords by Maturin, Le Fanu, and Somerville and Ross […] and Bram Stocker. (KREILKAMP, 2006, p. 172)

The counterpart of the Big House and the Gothic literary forms was a huge movement catalyzed by the Irish nationalism which from the middle 19th century on nourished the revival of Ireland's Gaelic heritage giving origin to the Irish Renaissance, also known as the Literary Revival. Its main aim was to restore the grandeur of Ireland's

Gaelic past embeded in a rich and mystic poetical content which had been preserved by live depositaries in the remote lands of glen rims and islands of Ireland. Among the pleiades of political activists, authors, most of them playwrights and poets one finds the names of James Clarence Mangan, Standish James O'Grady, Douglas Hyde, Arthur Griffith, George Russell (AE), Sean O'Casey, William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J. M. Synge**.**

The 19th century nationalism provided the basis to the building up of the new Ireland that emerged from the 20th century when, after about seven centuries of domination by Britain, it finally got rid of colonial subjugation. Apart from the debate on how far has Ireland come from colonial condition, the fact is that even if one of its four provinces continues under control of the semi-defunct British Empire, Ireland is a country apparently much more akin to a postcolonial condition than a colonial one.

Some postcolonial theorists do not accept Ireland to be inserted into the context of postcoloniality. These theorists dismiss the idea of Ireland not being considered a postcolonial state based on the argument that it was never a genuine 'Third World' society. Against this argument, Joe Cleary states that

> Ireland shares several postcolonial legacies and dilemmas with erstwhile colonial that include broad issues such as state formation, emigration, economics and culture. […] British rule was accompanied by a partition of the Island. [This] context is clearly one with suggestive parallels with process of state formation in former British colonies and partitioned territories such as India, Palestine and Cyprus. (CLEARY, 2006, p. 254)

Postcolonial perspective has provided a set of useful means to the new insight on the legacies and dilemmas that Irish literature has to deal with. In doing so, some of the phantasmagorical characters and events which populated Ireland's past, despite their insistence to come back, are not able to cause any destructive effect but a certain stirring with a mixture of semicaricatural sensation and *déjà vu* of human condition. In this sense, the proud Big House landowner from the 17th century is changed into a "patriarchy: a

paralysed, one-legged old man, incontinent and drooling, [that] lies in thrall to the illicit sexual excitement provided by a female servant, once the recipient of his sexual favours, now his devoted Irish nurse" (KREILKAMP, 2006, p. 179). Side by side this postcolonial Big House literary approach well represented by Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour*, published in 1981, is the Counter-Revival. While Revivalists "valorised the idea of noble sacrifice", Counter-Revivalists like Sean O'Faolain, Sean O'Casey, and Liam O'Flaherty reject it. For them, the "emphasis is not on the heroics and achievements of the revolution, but on its victims and atrocities, and on a general sense of betrayal".

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon, the anti-colonial writer states that the colonizer "is the absolute beginning […] makes history and is conscious of making it"[…] "he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country"(FANON, 1963, p. 51). The North Ireland's poet, John Hewitt, in his poem *The Colony* presents a dilemma which typifies the postcolonial fragmentation of identity, alienation and abandonment in his double condition of colonizer and colonized. First, in accordance with Fanon's words, he emphasizes his status of colonizer as an 'absolute beginning' with an historical sense of what he is consciously doing in the lines: "We took the kindlier soils. It had been heirs / We took their temples from them and forbade them / for many years, to worship their strange idols" (HEWITT, 1995, p. 70).

Then, he claims that "the heavy clay-sucked stride, have altered us; / we would be strangers in the Capitol […] / […] They multiplied and came with open hands […]" (HEWITT, 1995 p. 70-1). The poet in his double identity feels alone and forsaken by his mother country from which, according to Fanon, "he himself is the extension". At the same time there is on his head, as a Democles' sword, the threat of the increase of the native population. To Joe Cleary,

> the colonists feel abandoned by an imperial centre from which they have become distanced by time and residence, but still do not feel at ease in the land where they have settled – the poem voices a

late twentieth-century existential dilemma common among British-descended populations everywhere in the Empire as it began to shrink. (CLEARY, 2006, p. 284)

Hewitt recognizes how oppressive the Imperial ideology has been of which he has been a legitimate spokesmen and a minor mentor, recognizes his guilt and introduces himself as a kind of redeemer with the evangelical mission to promote reconciliation through a *mea culpa* suggesting a new messianism in form of an ecumenic 'fraternising' of men and nature as solution:

> the sores of old oppression, the deep skill
> in all evasive acts, the swaddled minds,
> admit our load of guilt – mourn the trees
> more   than as symbol – and would make amends
> by fraternising, by small friendly gestures,
> hoping by patient words I may convince
> my people and this people we are changed.
> (HEWITT, 1995 p. 72).

Considering all that has been stated on this discussion about Ireland's relationship to the British Empire from colonial and postcolonial perspectives, on how such a relationship contains in its core a set of well articulated contradictions, one tends to believe that any attempt to look for an explanation for this relationship out of colonial and postcolonial contextualization is out of focus. It is true that a set of colonial and postcolonial contradictions have been shamelessly denuded. Others, however, have been carefully masked by a code language decoded only by those who detain the power and insist to be hidden as if they were duly protected in a Pandora's box.

Maybe an attempt to peer closely into this box would give us a chance to look for an answer that even if rejected by the concreteness of historical events would be embraced by the abstract symbolical representation of the literary phenomenon. In this sense, in Oedipus' incest this answer could be found. This Greek myth is used by Freud to describe man development from ancestral to modern age in terms of male and female

sexuality. According to Freud, the first desires of young boys and girls, at a very early age, are manifested by an incestuous one for the mother.

All along the colonial period, to define Ireland's relationship to the British Empire, a meaningful number of euphemisms to refer to the mother-child reciprocal relationship have been used. Even in postcolonial status such euphemisms may be detected as if a Jungian collective unconscious had collected and organized those colonial and postcolonial personal experiences along history. Freud claims that if the child fails to enter into and pass through each stage by means of which he must successfully complete his transition to adulthood, the consequence is a series of damage to his psyche. Recent critical feminist readings of Freud's psychoanalytic theory on incest show that, from his patriarchal point of view, his writings legitimize a rape/incest culture. Ireland's relationship to the British Empire from colonialism to postcolonialism would be considered as one of the most vivid representations of this culture.

A relação entre a Irlanda e o Império Britânico desde o colonialismo no século XVI ao poscolonialismo no século XX: uma abordagem histórica e literária

RESUMO: O relacionamento da Irlanda com o Império Britânico tem sido considerado, às vezes, confuso, às vezes, controverso. Segundo Stephen Howe "a maioria dos historiadores concordaria que a história da Irlanda moderna manteve-se ligada à do Império Britânico"(HOWE, 2002, p. 220). Em 1541, a Irlanda obteve o status de Reino. O Ato da União tornou a Irlanda "uma parceira do Reino Unido com direitos iguais". Entretanto, a partir da Revolução Gloriosa, a classe Dominante Protestante olha para si mesma e o que vê é um país considerado como "um 'reino irmão' da Inglaterra e da Escócia". Os politicos ingleses, por sua vez, não são capazes de ver algo além de "um reino dependente, um país estrangeiro ou uma colônia infantil". Subsidiado por abordagens históricas e literárias relacionadas com o colonialismo e o poscolonialismo tem-se a intenção de demonstrar como, ao longo da história, esses dois países estabeleceram um ambíguo relacionamento.

KEYWORDS: Colonialismo; Império Britânico/Irlanda; Poscolonialismo; Relacionamento

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