

Reinventing Brazil New Readings and Renewal in the Narratives of Irish Travellers *

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Marion McMurrugh, *Between the Amazon and Andes; or Ten Years of a Lady's Travels in the Pampas, Gran Chaco, Paraguay and Mato Grosso* (London: E. Stanford, 1881).

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Brazil is a geographical area that exerts great fascination in the global context of the history of the movement of people. 'A giant by its very nature,' the character of Brazil's people, and the image of its natural wealth, unity and security have for many centuries inspired the imagination of foreigners coming from different corners of the world to fulfil their dreams in these tropical lands. Its territory transforms itself into a 'diaspora space' [1] where the immigrants, who had been part of the most diverse type of diasporas, interact with individuals who are represented as a generous and hospitable people. Marilena Chauí in *Brazil, Founding Myth and Authoritarian Society*, demolishes the internal image of a nation with a unique and indivisible identity, with peaceful and orderly inhabitants, who are happy and hard-working. She delves deep into the heart of these representations that reactivate the founding myth that propagates itself continually, and unmasks the paradoxes that make up the identity of the Brazilian people. Chauí affirms that 'the founding myth offers an initial repertoire of representations of reality and, at each moment of historical formation, these elements are reorganised not only from the point of view of the internal hierarchy (that is, what is the main element that commands the others), but also from the

enlarging of its meaning (that is, new elements come to add to the primitive meaning)' (10). Keeping this in mind, how do the narratives of foreign travellers and immigrants interpret and reinvent these representations produced for the foundation myth, and how do they adjust to historical moments and ideologies that contribute to transnational displacements? What images of Brazil do they construct, why, and how do they circulate?

The aim of this essay is to analyse the images of the foundation myth present in the narratives of Irish travellers at the end of the nineteenth century in comparison with the images at the end of the twentieth century constructed by the Irish poet Paul Durcan on his visit to Brazil in 1995. The question arises as to why one should focus on Irish stories and not English stories in general, since the former had dissolved in the language of the latter after more than ten centuries of English domination. When analysing the founding myth, Chauí points to the medieval writings that, on a symbolic level, had consecrated a powerful myth in the history of the great sea voyages, 'the so called Fortunate Islands, promised land, or blessed place, where perpetual spring and eternal youth reign, and where man and animals coexist in peace' (59), according to the Phoenician and Irish traditions. *Braaz*, as designated by the Phoenicians, or *Hy Brazil* as designated by Irish monks, appears on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century maps as an island divided by a great river, *Insulla de Brazil* or *Isola de Brazil*, to the west of Ireland and south of the Azores.

The mention of the Irish origin of the name of Brazil was the subject of a lecture written by Irish diplomat Roger Casement when he was British consul in Belém do Pará in 1907. [2] The text starts with an exposition of the sublime nature of the name Brazil, 'probably the sweetest sounding name that any large race of the Earth possesses' (22), but affirms that he only became interested in its origin after he disembarked in Santos as Consul in 1906. By refuting the theory that Brazil had received its name as a result of the abundance of red dye-wood (Brazil wood or *Pau-brazil*), which soon after the discovery of Brazil became a constituent part of the opening of new markets to European mercantile capitalism, Casement tried to demonstrate how, at that time, every concept associated with Ireland was 'wiped out.' This was due to the preconception generated in the eyes of England of a dominated people, namely, 'a race of senior barbarians liv[ing] in squalid misery without parallel in civilization' (24). He was subsequently to recognise the negative dimension of the direct or indirect participation of Great Britain in the violations committed in Africa and South America, as denounced later in his diaries, and he would eventually rebel against that power, being condemned to death for his participation in the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916.

On the other hand, his writings reveal the elements that contributed to the celebratory image of Brazil. Casement confirmed that Ireland 'was the home of the legend which for centuries had turned men's minds westward in search of that fabled land':

Brazil owes her name to Ireland – to Irish thought and legend – born beyond the dawn of history yet handed down in a hundred forms of narrative and poem and translated throughout all western Europe, until all western Europe knew and dreamed and loved the story, and her cartographers assigned it place upon their universal maps. (28-29).

The land 'beyond the sea' was to inspire, in various political contexts, utopian thoughts, especially among those who had suffered the effects of the potato famine and British direct rule in the middle of the nineteenth century. That historical period witnesses the scattering of the Irish Diaspora to English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia, the destinations of the majority of those emigrants. However, a smaller number of Irish people, inspired by travel stories and letters from those who had established themselves south of the equator, set off for South America where they had to live side-by-side with other cultures and face the challenge of learning their languages. Some emigrants had probably chosen tropical lands as their destination because the rumours rekindled imagery that had been incorporated into the folklore memory of the Irish people, i.e., the legendary myth of *Hy Brazil* that was associated with holiness and an original Garden of the Eden. Nevertheless, the largest group of this second migratory wave settled in Argentina where they formed a politically, religiously and economically united community, and established their own means of communication, which they consolidated, as for

example in the case of the newspapers, *The Standard* (1861-1959), *The Southern Cross* (1875 up to the present day), *Fianna* (1910-1912), and *The Hibernian-Argentine Review* (1906-1927). In Brazil though, there are some records of Irish immigrants prior to 1827. It was on that date that 2,686 Irish people from counties Cork and Waterford, including women and children, were transported to Rio de Janeiro as mercenary soldiers under the command of an Irish officer, Colonel Cotter, to serve in the new Brazilian imperial armada, and to fight in the war against Argentina for the disputed lands that today form part of the Republic of Uruguay (Basto 1971). Once the war was over, they were supposed to remain on in order to work in the countryside, where manpower was much needed. However, the Brazilian government did not concede the reward as promised – namely, accommodation, food, and land. Many were deported after the failure of the military confrontation, and a bloody riot that lasted three days, which was initiated by 200 soldiers of the Irish regiment unsatisfied with their treatment by the government. One hundred families were sent to Taperoá, State of Bahia, to form a colony know as Saint Januária, while others were settled in an agricultural colony in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, and some spread to the states of Paraná and Santa Catarina.

Approximately four decades after this frustrating experience, Irishman William Scully founded the *Anglo-Brazilian Times* newspaper in Rio de Janeiro (1865-1884), which became a vehicle for spreading a positive image of Brazil in Ireland as the land that offered 'more opportunities' than the other countries chosen by emigrants. Scully negotiated with the government and promised the Irish that they would receive their salaries immediately on landing in Brazil, contrary to what had happened in the past. In his letter to the clergy of Ireland in 1866, [3] he asked them to encourage farm workers to emigrate and compared the benefits of the country to the situation in the United States. Scully reinforced the myth of a paradisaical climate as described in medieval writings (the eternal spring) – that was more moderate, 'the heat of summer never reaching the extremes' and the winters resembling more an Irish summer, 'though somewhat warmer to the north, and cooler in the south and interior, where frosts occasionally occur'. He also affirmed that there was religious tolerance, although Roman Catholicism was the official religion, and he promoted justice and the spirit of progress of the country.

Scully asserted that laws protecting the individual and property were similar to Irish laws, and that immigrants could become naturalised citizen after two years of residence, compared to five in the United States. The editor of the *Anglo-Brazilian Times* thus borrowed from the ideologies that accompanied the historic movements in the formation of the Brazilian nation. In addition to the celebration of nature, the romantic nativism of the nineteenth century also established the image of a peaceful people, with no racial or religious discrimination. Scully described the type of people the Irish would find in Brazil and wrote that they would receive much affection and kindness, demonstrated in various forms 'as in their native land', and that they would experience 'nothing of the unconcealed contempt which the native American is apt to show 'raw' Irishmen, until five years residence has entitled them to vote.' The elements that constituted the foundation myth became evident – the grandeur of the country and opportunities for all, without prejudice towards differences. According to Marilena Chauí, the idea of the non-existence of prejudices was part of the effect produced by Brazil-Nature, since this cover up was decisive in the foundation of the myth because 'the natural juridical way of things, being a hierarchy of perfect acts and powers desired by God, indicates that Nature is constituted by human beings who naturally subordinate to each other' - a form of *voluntary servitude* (64-65). Also present is what she called the sacredness of history, that made Brazil 'the country of the future', guaranteed by the presence of an ecclesiastic institution and religious tolerance.

Among the first people to rewrite the imagery of *Hy Brazil* and contribute to the above-mentioned tales were Irish travellers. Hamilton Lindsay-Bucknall's *A Search for Fortune (The autobiography of a younger son. 1878)*, for example, portrayed the author's impressions of Argentina and Brazil in the 1870s. Many works were also written by Michael Mulhall and his wife Marion who lived in Buenos Aires, but who travelled around Brazil on some occasions during their holidays. Michael was editor of the newspaper, *The Standard*, together with his brother Edward Thomas Mulhall, the founder of the publication. Michael and Marion kept diaries of their trips, where they recorded their impressions of the places they

visited and the economic progress of the country. Their narratives, published in the form of letters in the newspaper, also incorporated elements of the foundation myth that had produced historical inventions and cultural constructions about the geographic space and the people who inhabited it. While in *Handbook of Brazil* (1878), Michael Mulhall and his brother Edward showed a 'progressive Brazil', in *Rio Grande do Sul State and its German Colonies* (1873) Michael recommended the city of Porto Alegre for 'its beautiful scenery and kindly people, so little known to the outer world'. The adventurous outlook of Marion as the first 'English' woman [4] to 'penetrate the heart of South America' is evident in her book *Between the Amazon and Andes; or Ten Years of Lady's Travels in the Pampas, Gran Chaco, Paraguay and Mato Grosso*:

the first Englishwoman to penetrate the heart of South America, travelling for thousands of miles through untrodden forests, seeing the Indian tribes in their own hunting-grounds, visiting the ruined shrines of the Jesuit Missions, and ultimately reaching that point whence I beheld the waters flowing down in opposite directions to the Amazon and the La Plata.

She recognised that her narratives had no literary merit as they were 'sketches of her travels and adventures in the countries between the Amazon and the Andes' written with the hope that they 'may call the attention of more learned travellers to a quarter of the world that so well repays the trouble of exploring'. Thus, the pastoral landscapes of Rio de Janeiro, which showed the Bay of Guanabara, contrasted with the exotic land of Mato Grosso, full of adventure. Her descriptions emphasised the natural beauty of the landscape, and despite the difficulties of the trip, 'the interest of exploring this terra incognita would not allow (her) to think of turning back'. She wrote:

It took twenty-four days from here to Cuyabá in canoes manned by tame Indians, the San Lorenzo being so shallow that they cannot row, but have to push up-stream with poles about thirty miles a day. If they come short of provisions they shoot monkeys, for the greater part of the voyage is through swamps and forest, destitute of human habitation. (192)

Marion's meeting with indigenous people reminds one of the paintings of João Maurício Rugendas, who depicts these meetings as being always peaceful, and lacking the tensions provoked by contact with wild nature itself, or by the unknown, and the cultural differences between Europeans and local natives. This mythical vision of Brazil-Paradise, with no history, is visible not only in Marion's narratives but in her drawings as well. When she found some canoes with Guatos Indians fishing in the river, she described them as a 'very pretty race, and neither men nor women have tattoos' – a symbol of primitivism or the demon, from a Eurocentric point of view:



Marion McMurrough, *Between the Amazon and Andes; or Ten Years of a Lady's Travels in the Pampas, Gran Chaco, Paraguay and Mato Grosso*
(London: E. Stanford, 1881).

Each canoe had a man and a woman and sometimes one or two children, the latter so fair that one might take them for English. The women managed the canoes, while the men fished. They were a fine-looking race, and neither men nor women were tattooed. (196)

The drawings show the Guatos in clothes that remind one of a European culture (see opening illustration), beautiful, tall, simple and innocent, always showing exuberant and idyllic nature as a background landscape, without the intrusion of natural vegetation or wild animals from the local environment. However, this elimination of conflicts that Mary Louise Pratt (1992) identified as a result of the asymmetries of power in the contact zones and which contrasted with the image of the pure state of Nature and the beings that inhabited it, became evident in the representation that Marion Mulhall made of the uncivilised and more violent Indians, carrying with it the prejudice of the white man – she described them as addicted to drink and characterised by the wilderness:

We were obliged to keep a good look-out all well armed, because the Coroados might be hid on the banks within arrow shot of us. What we feared most were poisoned arrows. Only a few months before, they surprised some men in a canoe and cut off their heads for trophies. This tribe is very numerous, fearfully addicted to drunkenness, and beyond hope of civilisation at several places we passed deserted huts, the inhabitants of which were killed by these savages.

Many other examples appear in these travel narratives at the turn of the nineteenth century. It will be interesting to analyse how these elements of the foundation myth are interpreted and rewritten, or contested, at the end of the twentieth century. In what way do they transform in the formation of a global imagery within the current context of economic migrations, or of transnational movements or displacements, when the image of a 'giant by its very nature' still remains? What is its impact on dominant global ideologies? How do they become constituent elements in the construction process of hybrid identities or of 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1996)? To answer these questions, this article will analyse the Irish poet Paul Durcan's book *Greetings to our Friends in Brazil* (1999).

Paul Durcan registers his impressions of Brazil as if they were from a travel diary, and portrays daily activities in his poems using colloquial and direct language, making an aesthetic journey to recover his own cultural tradition from a pluralistic perspective. According to Charlie Boland (2001), 'Durcan's poetry may be seen as both inward search and outward journey' (124). In this way, his poems always present a certain level of cultural introspection. On the other hand, however, in these displacements in space and time, Durcan makes use of icons and myths from various cultures to resignify them and to transform the global imaginary. The foundation myths of Brazil, which had been incorporated into the narratives of the travellers in the past, are deconstructed and demystified in his poems – not only the sacredness of nature but also the culture of so-called 'greenyellowism' (*verdeamarelismo*), [5] the sacredness of history and of rulers, and the respective effects that they have on the process of identification of a society, which had been clearly indicated already by Chauí.

Nature is present in several of his poems, as for example, in '*Brazilian Presbyterian*':

(...)
I sat on the dune
Under a coconut tree;
Diving in and out
Of the South Atlantic;
At fifty years of age
A nipper in excelsis.

However, when Nature appears as sublime, what really is really taking place is an internal corrosion of the paradisaical image constructed by the *persona*; for example, young Evandro's answer to the question of how he imagines heaven:

How would you – a young

Brazilian Presbyterian –
Imagine heaven?
(...)
'Heaven ... is a place ...
That ... would *surprise* you.' (32)

Nature is also an agent in the contexts of the poems 'The Geography of Elizabeth Bishop' and 'Samambaia', where Paul Durcan describes Brazil through the eyes and the voice of Elizabeth Bishop: geographic space is precisely 'life before birth on earth'. It is paradise, however, it is also the country of the painful discovery of the I:

*There is life before birth
On earth – oh yes, on earth –
And it is called Brazil.
Call it paradise, if you will. (23-24).*

This land is not bound up with the image of Eden, but with the pain of passion and with life. Nothing lasts forever: the location is sometimes Brazil, sometimes Ireland, '*Nothing stays the same. / Everything changes/ (...) Nothing should stay the same. / Everything should change*' (22); the choice between love and fame will make the difference: '*I, Elizabeth, / do take you, Lota, / For my lawful, wedded cloud*.' (22). Paradigms are dismantled in the repetitions and in the syncopated rhythm of samba, and cultural and sexual borders are transposed in the counter-rhythm of the metres of the verses:

Reared in New England, Nova Scotia,
I was orphaned in childhood.
...
Until aged forty on a voyage round Cape Horn
I stepped off in Rio, stayed, discovered
My mind in Brazil. Became again an *infanta!*
A thinking monkey's *companero!* (*sic*) (°)
Fed, cuddled, above all needed.
...
At forty I discovered that my voice –
That cuckoo hymen of mine, mine, mine –
Was a Darwinian tissue:
That in God's *cinema vérité*
I was an authentic *bocadinho*.

Back in Boston, a late-middle-aged lady,
I became again an orphan,
... (23)

(°) Misspelling of *companheiro*.

How is the belief that Brazil is a warm-hearted country constantly renewed? To answer this question the origin of the culture of 'green and yellow-ism' will be examined:

Green and yellow-ism (verdeamarelismo) was elaborated over a period of years by the Brazilian ruling classes as a commemorative image of an 'essentially agrarian country' and its elaboration coincided with a period during which the 'principle of nationality' was defined by the extension of the territory and demographic density of the country. (Chauí 32)

Representing as it does the ideology of an essentially agrarian country, and associated with the colonial system of mercantile capitalism as being a *colony for exploration/exploitation*, *verdeamarelismo* does not disappear with modernism and its attendant processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, as Chauí effectively delineates. It will remain throughout cultural developments and will represent the bridge between the ideology of national character and that of national identity: 'If in the past the culture of *'verdeamarelismo'* corresponded to the celebratory self-image of the dominant classes, now it operates as imaginary compensation for the peripheral and subordinate condition of the country' (36), in regard to the Brazilian people. Racial democracy is maintained on the basis of a new image of the 'people' who are 'overall, on one hand, the *bandeirante* [6] or taming *sertanista* [7] of the territory and, on the other hand, the poor, that is, 'the hard workers of Brazil'.' (38).

Durcan poetically represents these differences among the people, as in for example, the nine-year-old shoeshine boy, at Congonhas airport, wearing a t-shirt that reads 'Pacific Waves', or the popular wisdom of the native of São Paulo who says that: 'Life is a game of the hips' (*'A vida é um jogo de cintura'*). [8] The poet deconstructs the bridge between the 'national character' and the identity of the Brazilian people and questions the image that still lasts in relation to the devoted, honest, orderly and gentle family, where there are opportunities for all, as in the soccer myth.

In 'Recife Children's Project, 10 June 1995', the poet shows the determination of the governing social system that does not allow changes in the condition of marginalised people, when he mentions that the day care centre managed by Irish priest Frank Murphy was meant for children whose mothers worked on the streets as prostitutes because they had no other choice. Durcan ironically describes how the Irish priest from Wexford reproduced the Brazilian sign of 'everything's OK' with a thumbs-up gesture when he finished reciting the verses 'Rage for Order' by his fellow poet, Derek Mahon, and stated: 'This is what we do in Brazil.' The aesthetic power of the poetic discourse is completed when it crosses boundaries and associates religious work in the streets of Recife with Che Guevara:

Father Frank Murphy, Founder of the Recife Children's Project,
Thirty years working in the streets of Recife,
For whom poetry is reality, reality poetry,
Who does not carry a gun,
Who does not prattle about politics or religion,
Whose sign is the thumbs-up sign of Brazil,
Who puts his hand on your shoulder saying
'This is what we do in Brazil.'
Che? Frank!
No icon he –
Revolutionary hero of the twentieth century. (16)

Racism and discrimination continue to be erased in the present system as an effect of the foundation myth; and due to this, Marilena Chauí finishes her book, at a time when the country is to commemorate its 500 years of existence, with the question 'Celebrate?, is there in fact anything to celebrate?' She affirms that Brazilian society still retains the marks left by the era of the colonial slave society with its highly hierarchical structure, where 'social and inter-subjective relations always occur in relation to a superior person, who commands, and an inferior person, who obeys' (89). In the poem 'Fernando's Wheelbarrows, Copacabana', Durcan recovers the asymmetries of invisibility and rearranges them using the aesthetic power of irony:

Fernando's forebears were slaves from Senegal.
Fernando is a free man, proudest of the proud.

I have requested that Fernando
Be my guide in Copacabana:
My guide, my governor, my master. (20)

Nevertheless, such inverted hierarchy is just an illusion.

...
I rejoice in the remote way Fernando shakes my hand.
I rejoice in the comotose stars of Fernando's eyes.
I rejoice in the reticence of Fernando's laughter. (20)

All the naturalised portrayals of people as generous, happy and sensual, even in times of suffering, are nullified by the climax of the poem when the major 'silenced' differences feed a utopian desire to emigrate, to escape from misery, 'to make it in America', but the destiny is North America: Phoenix, Arizona.

The only time Fernando breaks his silence
Is at the midpoint of our giro;
Fernando reveals to me his dream
Of emigrating to Phoenix, Arizona.
Fernando has a young wife and children.
He explains by means of his hands
And by two words – Phoenix, Arizona.
His hands with rhetorical ebullience exhort:
Phoenix, Arizona is the good life! (21)

Sport, the third element of the *verdeamarelismo* cultural tripod, is deconstructed in the poem after which the book is named, 'Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil'. Durcan describes a certain Sunday that could be any ordinary Sunday were it not for an invitation received from his friend Father Patrick O'Brien to watch the Irish football finals between counties Mayo and Kerry. The iconic nature of sport as a symbol for the Brazilian people, unleashed a process of superimposition of two or more cultures when Durcan transcribes in a poetic way the comments made by the [Irish] reporter during the final minutes of the game, 'We haven't had time to send greetings to our friends in Brazil / Proinnsias O Murchu and Rugierio da Costa e Silva'. This greeting bears the hallmark of the popular Brazilian sport, here identified with the Gaelic football finals. The translational effect (Bhabha) of the greeting unites both sports transforming them into a global myth. Durcan, however, in the process of appropriating the myth, debases its intrinsic value and, ironically, the national sport that saves a subservient people from anonymity, is transformed into the last resource of someone in a state of psychological depression who confronts the meaning of life through the smile of an indigent woman, to whom he gives a lift on his way back home:

For the remaining nine miles I held on to the driving wheel
As if it were the microphone on the bridge of a ship going down;
Going over the tops of the crests of the blanket bogs;
Navigating Bunnacurry, Gowlawaum, Bogach Bawn;
Muttering as if my life depended on it:
Greetings to our friends in Brazil. (10)

The local routes taken on that Sunday intersect the paths of memory that give life to 'others' - to strangeness or the uncanny - throughout the poem; for example, the German soldier who used to live in a house on Achill Island, now his own home; or, George Steiner's autobiography read by the friend who lent him his book *Jerome*. The references to deserted places such as the Sahara, Siberia and Gobi appear side-by-side with the same landscapes of the West Coast of Ireland (Bunnacurry, Gowlawaum, Bogach Bawn), that open up other paths for his interior journey, evoking genocides, ethnic cleansings, improvidences, and exegesis of the word mercy that leads him to pray at the end of the poem 'Greetings to our friends in Brazil': ('Let me pray/*Greetings to our friends in Brazil*).

Boland analyses this poem and concludes that Durcan proposes a global human experience instead of an insular one when he writes about different cultures. He believes that this overlapping of experiences is the global vision of the poet that brings together diverse experiences 'through a shared history of conflict,

suffering, and, potentially, friendship' (126). However, I suggest that Durcan in fact transcends this polarity of the local and the global by means of an aesthetics of simultaneity of space and time, disrupting the paradigms of linearity and logical processes of thought. The centrifugal and centripetal movements of his creative mind reflect a process of expansion of the poetic consciousness, of a vision that goes beyond the global experience and promotes a surreal experience of the quotidian, of the daily life of the universe, of a journey through unknown geographic spaces that provoke the 'transcendence' of experiences of the place of origin, and the realisation of distant roots.

The geographic and intellectual displacements allow a person to better understand themselves, their own culture, their intrinsic differences and their inter-relations. Brazil is a country of immigrants, formed by miscegenation; it is exotic and sensual (in 'Jack Lynch', the father who comes from Ballinasloe, 'was devoured by a mulatto working-class goddess'), and in the overlapping of cultures and genders it is defined in the global and the local. These new hybrid identities that appear from the intersection of several regional and foreign cultural expressions are also a product of cultural diasporas, as expressed in 'The Daring Middle-Aged Man on the Flying Trapeze' where Dublin and São Paulo each intersect with the 'other' in the celebration of Bloomsday at Finnegans Pub in São Paulo:

However, when I heard that on June 16
In Finnegans Pub in São Paulo
A Japanese actor would be declaiming in Portuguese
Extracts from *Ulysses*
My wife persuaded me to fly with her to Dublin.
I remonstrated with her: 'Fly?'
She insisted: 'Dublin is a gas,
Dirty, ordinary, transcendental city – just like São Paulo!' (30)

In this poem, Durcan tries to give voice to the hybrid native in a process that the cultural critic Homi Bhabha (1995) calls *transnational* and *translational*. Brazil at the turn of the twenty-first century is a diaspora space, whose culture is transnational because it is anchored in specific stories of decolonisation and displacements: 'Myself, I am Brazilian Armenian Orthodox'. The poet narrates how Brazilian culture builds its own meanings from the perspective of the 'other'. Ireland and Brazil become one in the voice of the *persona*: the presence of a Brazilian couple in a garden of red, white and yellow roses at midnight in Dublin converges tangentially with the Japanese actor in São Paulo at Finnegans at nine in the evening; James Joyce is the intersection point. *Ulysses* revisited provokes the circularity of signs that are resignified or translated into different forms in contexts and systems of multiple cultural values, thus forming cultural hybridism. It must be questioned, then, as to how the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena reveal external socio-cultural references that incorporate and transform the 'original' alterity into new dislocated structures that allow *different* cultural practices:

I thought
James Joyce is the only man in the world who comprehends
women;
Who comprehends that a woman can never be adumbrated,
Properly praised
Except by a Japanese actor
In Finnegans Pub in São Paulo
Declaiming extracts from *Ulysses*. (31)

What happens then to the notion of 'authenticity' of a symbol when it appears in a new cultural context? How can one 'authenticate' hybridism in new cultural practices? The syncretic, creolised, translated and hybrid cultural forms represent the energy in the resignification of cultures in intersection, of identities in the process of decentralisation and reinvention/*construction* of themselves; they also represent the translational movement of symbols and myths of a culture, in signs that are expanded into new meanings, that always refer to the heterogeneity of their origins.

In my view, it is this transnational and translational process that is the high point of Paul Durcan's poetry: How does one 'authenticate' the multifarious cultural reality as seen through the various reflections of a prism? I believe that Durcan's poetry represents this value and multi-axial intrinsic power of cultures, by transforming and giving new meaning to its symbols, and attributing to poetry the function and meaning that Seamus Heaney (1995) has claimed of the poetic art. On receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, Heaney said that poetry was necessary as an order, 'true to the impact of external reality and [...] sensitive to the inner laws of the poet's being' (16). Heaney insists that a poem should surprise and that this surprise should be transitive; and that the representation of the external world should be 'a returning of the world itself' (16). Paul Durcan's poetry, inserted in the representation of the quotidian, suggests a 'new' means of constructing cultural identities that give life and meaning to the world itself through its multiple re-readings of the past.

Laura Izarra

Notes

[1] I appropriate Avtar Brah's concept of diaspora space. It is a site of immanence that marks the intersectionality of 'diaspora', 'border' and the 'politics of location'. Thus, it addresses the 'contemporary conditions of transmigration of people, capital, commodities and culture'; the effects of crossing/transgressing 'the construction and metaphorisation of territorial, political, cultural, economic and psychic borders'; the way 'contemporary forms of transcultural identities are constituted', and how 'belonging and otherness is appropriated and contested' (1996:242).

[2] The text of the lecture can be found at the National Library of Ireland. Angus Mitchell and Geraldo Cantarino published it in the form of a bilingual pamphlet entitled *Origins of Brazil: A search for the origins of the name Brazil, with the support of the Brazilian Embassy in London as part of the commemoration of the 'Festival Brazil 500'*. As a defender of the rights of subjected peoples, Roger Casement (1864-1916) was British consul in Africa (1895-1904), and *Brazil: Santos* (1906), *Belém do Pará* (1907) and *Rio de Janeiro* (1908). After many years of dedication to the British diplomatic service, he started to defend the cause of Irish nationalism. In 1916 he was condemned and hanged for high treason against the British Crown.

[3] Published in *The Anglo-Brazilian Times*, n° 41, Vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, 09 October 1866.

[4] The Mulhalls were of the Anglican religion and Anglo-Irish. They would not have identified with the Irish nationalist movement.

[5] Green and yellow are colours that represent the spirit of the country, as they are the colours of the Brazilian flag and represent its forests and its gold.

[6] Name given to the first explorers leaving from São Paulo in order to expand the country's territory westwards.

[7] Similar to *bandeirantes*: member of an armed band of early explorers in Brazil; person travelling into the hinterland of the country

[8] 'The Last Shuttle to Rio'. In *Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil*. 17-19.

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