

Irish Migration Studies in Latin America

Volume 8, Number 2, March 2013

Women: Decisions, Loyalties, Tragedies and Comparisons



ISSN 1661-6065

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Society for Irish Latin American Studies

Women: Decisions, Loyalties, Tragedies and Comparisons

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ISSN 1661-6065

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Cover art by Sabrina Ponce Clemenceau

Editor's Introduction

Cliona Murphy

California State University, Bakersfield

The thematic section of this issue concerns some real and fictional Irish women and their links to Mexico, Argentina, and Chile. It also includes a legendary Mexican female. Originally, the call was for a gender issue. However, the focus is clearly on women. While the articles published here are commendable, no articles were submitted on the theme of gender, or on the relatively new topics of masculinities and sexualities. Perhaps enough groundwork has not been carried out in the field of Irish Latin America Studies to get to this point. Perhaps gender will be the subject of a future issue under a future editor, when there is a wider scholarly base of publications to construct this area. Certainly in past issues there have been numerous articles on men and women; however, gender “as a useful category of analysis” (to use Joan Scott’s phrase¹) may reveal further insights and provide new perspectives not explored before in Irish Latin American studies.

In the meantime, some very interesting articles are published here, which should provide a foundation for future work by their authors and other scholars. Irish women who went to Mexico, Argentina and Chile are discussed in two of the articles. Indeed, the women in question wrote about their experiences at the time, or recounted their experiences to others later on. Andrea Anderson’s article discusses Rosalie Hart Priour and Annie Fagan Teal, women who went to Mexico in the early 1830s. Anderson draws attention to the interesting dilemma they faced, as they went to Texas when it was part of Mexico. When it broke away and later became part of the United States, they had to decide where their loyalties lay. Interestingly, and not surprisingly, self-interest played a large role in defining identity and determining loyalty of Irish Texans. A few decades later, Annie Finlay did not have to contend with such decisions as she travelled, and wrote about her experiences in Argentina and Chile. Her previously unpublished reflections are presented here for the first time and have been well annotated and put into historical context by Edward Walsh.

A woman (albeit fictional) who had to contend with the decision to go to Buenos Aires, or to remain in her dull life in Dublin, is James Joyce’s “Eveline” from his short story collection *Dubliners* (1914). In her article, Laura Barberán Reinares examines the broader historical context of female trafficking to Argentina in the early twentieth century and what Joyce may have known about it when he was writing the story. Two other

¹ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis”, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5, December 1986, pp1053-1075

women rooted in their homelands, Ireland and Mexico, are discussed in Domino Torres' comparative article on Mexico's legendary *La Llorona* and the Irish Hester from Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats*. Both were grief struck, haunted and tragic. Their stories have inspired the artwork of a young artist Sabrina Clemenceau from Argentina which appears on the cover of this issue.

In the non-thematic section, Moisés Hasson Camhi writes about the Blest brothers in his second article on their life in Chile (the first one appeared in the March, 2010 issue of this journal). Another Irish emigrant Father Anthony Dominic Fahy is discussed by John Emery whose tenacious archival work has resulted in a very interesting article on the Irish Hospital in Argentina. It was set up at first to care for Irish Potato Famine emigrants in Buenos Aires in the 1840s, and its history later on was overshadowed by the British Hospital. Lastly, Gabriela McEvoy's review of Silvia Miguén's novel *Eliza Brown la hija del Almirante* (2012) links us back to the opening theme of this journal, Irish women and Latin America.

The next issue will focus on the challenges of, and sources for, the growth of the field of Irish Latin American Studies. It is hoped articles will discuss available archival, literary and other sources, which aid scholars in diverse geographical and historical categories of the discipline. The issue will be jointly edited by this editor and guest-editor Dr Margaret Brehony.

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Rosalie Hart Priour and Annie Fagan Teal: Loyalty to the Land in the Irish Colonies of Mexican Texas

Andrea Anderson

Andrea Anderson received her BA in History from California State University Bakersfield. She received the J.R. Wonderly Award for best paper on "The Irish Colonists in Mexican Texas: Loyal Citizens or Land Hungry Emigrants?" She is currently enrolled in the Masters in Library and Information Science program at San Jose State University.

Abstract

With the opening of Mexico's northern border in the late 1820s, many foreign emigrants left their homelands for the wild Texan frontier. The offer of land and opportunity was especially appealing to many Irishmen. Consequently, a great many Irishwomen soon found themselves alongside their husbands and children struggling to survive in an unknown land. Rosalie Hart Priour and Annie Fagan Teal both accompanied their families into Texas in the early 1830s with the dream of owning land. Their experiences during the initial overseas journey, colonization, and through the Texas Revolution reveal not only the hardships they endured, but also give insight into the mind-set of frontier women, and a better understanding of what it was that drove them to leave their homelands for a wild, and unknown country. As disease, revolution, and disorder attempted to pull the people from their land, many men and women's loyalty and even identity changed in order to maintain a hold on the land first given to them by Mexico.

In the immediate aftermath of Mexican independence from Spain, Mexico was faced with the enormous task of securing its northern provinces from illegal colonizers, a task that had always proven elusive for Spain. The long and bloody war with Spain had left Mexico vulnerable, as it well knew, and anxious to secure, maintain, and populate the northern province state of Coahuila and Texas to not only prevent any possible aggression from the United States, but to make use of a land that was rich in natural resources. After failed attempts to relocate native Mexicans into the area, the Mexican government passed the Colonization Act of 1825, and began to open up great tracts of land to foreign emigrants for colonization. Using a system of *empresarios*, Mexico created contracts with twenty-five men of differing backgrounds who assured the government of their loyalty to Mexico, and ability to bring good, quality families into Texas.¹ Of these twenty-five, nine would fulfil their contracts by bringing in families, but "all the attempts made by European *empresarios* ended in

¹<http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/irishcolframe.htm>.

failure, with the exception of two pairs of Irishmen who were partially successful in founding colonies in south Texas” (Davis 2002: 72).

The Irish partnerships of James Hewetson and James Power, and John McMullen and James McGloin were responsible for relocating hundreds of men, women, and children directly from Ireland into the Texas frontier. For many Irishmen, this offer of land was worth the certain hardship that came with settling new land. Irishwomen, however, were far less likely to have made the journey had they not been accompanying their husband or family. Annie Fagan Teal and Rosalie Hart Priour were two such women who accompanied their families into Texas in the 1830s. Teal and Priour both left writings that give great insight into the specific hardships of colonizing south Texas, as well as giving an idea of how gender played a role in the different ways that men and women perceived themselves and those around them at different moments in early Texan history.

The Irish colonies of San Patricio and Refugio have often been viewed as indicative of Mexico’s preference for the Irish as colonists when in all reality this was not the case. While the presence of the Irish in south Texas was a part of the Mexican government’s decision to colonize and populate Texas with foreign emigrants, it was not, as some historians put forth, a direct attempt to specifically and purposefully bring in an Irish population. In order to create a Texan population that was loyal to Mexico, the federal government placed stipulations in its colonization acts that allowed them to determine who would be allowed to colonize and where. By all accounts, the Irish should have been perfect candidates for Mexican colonization because of their shared Catholic religion, their history of oppression, and their seeming loyalty to a country that was offering land in what many viewed as paradise. The Irish, however, were very similar to many other frontier groups who lived in “a world of exceedingly fluid identities” (Reséndez 2004: 3). The Irish colonists and *empresarios* entering Texas moulded their identities in different ways to most benefit themselves and the land they had acquired. Irish *empresarios* adapted to and immersed themselves into the Mexican culture, while promoting the rich and vast Texan territory to land hungry Irish families. Irish women not only interacted with Indians and Mexicans to survive in an unknown land, but many who were widowed also went to great lengths to retain possession of the land contracted to them through their husbands. Likewise, though most Irish colonists arrived while Texas was a part of Mexico, they soon became immersed in the Texan culture, sharing in the Texan struggle for independence. *Empresario* James Power, who had once promoted his Irish identity as proof that he would remain loyal to Mexico, was politically active in Texas’ next step towards U.S. annexation. Although Mexico and Ireland had many shared characteristics, the lure of land proved more important than a shared religion or history of oppression. The Irish colonists’ loyalty lay with the land they had acquired, their identities

bending to accommodate those who would support them. With their eyes firmly set on the land they had acquired, the Irish colonists of San Patricio and Refugio were instrumental in not only colonizing south Texas, but in securing Texan independence and eventual annexation to the United States.

Irish history is often identified by three distinct types of historical writing on immigration patterns, which Graham Davis, a leading historian in Irish and Mexican connections, very effectively applies to the historical writing on the Irish in Texas. These patterns encompass oppression, compensation, and contribution history. Oppression history regards the Irish as victims of involuntary emigration due to English brutality and laws (Flannery 1980: 13). Compensation history builds on the oppression angle, but tends to create more of a heroic view of Irish history, treating Irish emigrants to Texas as “masters of their own destiny” who chose to find a way out of their misery and seek new opportunities (Davis 2002: 47). The last way that historians have written about Irish emigration to Mexico is through contribution history, which highlights the ways in which a previously held back Irish population was able to make veritable contributions in building communities and nations. Davis, in his book *Land! Irish Pioneers in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas*, attempts to “overcome the traps” of both oppression history and contribution history (Davis 2002: 5). Davis incorporates a more inclusive history, which focuses on the Irish in Texas while at the same time placing them in the context of the larger world around them.

Though stories of specific women are retold throughout the scholarship, few historians have developed upon the specific experience of women in the Irish colonies. Their experiences during the initial overseas journey, colonization, and through the Texas Revolution reveal not only the hardships they endured, but also give insight into the mind-set of frontier women, and a better understanding of what it was that drove them to leave their homelands for a wild, and unknown country. Irish emigrant Rosalie Hart Priour vividly recounts her and her mother’s experiences in the Irish colony of Refugio in southern Texas (Priour).² Her account, along with many other women’s, shows an incredible ability to adapt, survive, protect, and eventually thrive. Despite death, disease, and war many women were able to hold on to their land grants, create thriving stores, and become teachers or nurses. There is also evidence to show that women relied heavily on a spiritual understanding of their sufferings and successes.

Much of the scholarship surrounding the Irish colonies of San Patricio and Refugio also include reasons why Mexico would have preferred Irish

² Priour’s autobiography was part of a manuscript generously provided by Keith Petrus.

emigrants as colonizers. Although there are indications that Mexico may have believed it would benefit from Irish settlers, “it soon became evident that far from being a bulwark against American penetration, as some Latinos may have hoped, these Irish quickly became an integral part of the Texan community...their [Irish] identity was soon discarded; they became Texan in every sense.” (Murphy 1952: 46) The Irish pioneers’ desire to obtain, hold onto, and expand on the land given to them by Mexico is evident throughout most of the scholarship and primary sources that surround the Irish colonies.

In the article, “Texas as Viewed from Mexico,” historian of Mexican and Latin American studies, Nettie Lee Benson puts forth compelling evidence as to why Mexico would have specifically preferred Irish settlers in Texas. According to Benson, the “Mexican empire would suffer an irreparable loss if through misfortune, that beautiful province should be removed from its control. Texas needed to be preserved because of its importance and no other means for accomplishing this remained than populating it” (Benson 1987: 227). Established in 1821, Mexico’s Committee on Foreign Relations quickly developed methods in which to introduce foreigners to Texas. According to Benson, “the matter upon which they worked primarily was an agrarian and colonization law for the provinces of Texas and California” (Benson 1987: 225). In a report made by the committee, it was recommended “that settlers should come first from New Orleans” (Benson 1987: 225). New Orleans at this time was a hub of cultural diversity filled with American traders and merchants, various groups of Europeans emigrants, Mexicans, and Native Americans (Oberste 1953: 22). The report’s second proposal for population into Texas was to be from the Mexican empire itself. The Mexican government believed that “Mexico had many poor people, who, by gaining some land, would be converted from idleness to usefulness, something to their own advantage and to that of the State” (Benson 1987: 226). The last source of population that the report puts forth was to be from Europe. Benson argues, “The United States owed its great growth to this [European] spirit of emigration. If, however, the door should be opened to the European nations to populate Texas...[families] would abandon the idea of going to the U.S. and would fix their eyes only upon Texas” (Benson 1987: 226). From this initial report, Benson further asserts “among the European nations, the Irish would be the most desirable settlers...they were loyal Catholics, had suffered the most cruel persecutions without hesitating in their perseverance...[had] outstanding moral virtues; their industry and love of work had no limits; they were not friend to England or the United States” (Benson 1987: 227). Though this initial report raises reasonable evidence that Mexico desired Irish colonizers, further research into the Mexican Colonization Law of 1825, as well as the land grants that were given out in later years, reveal that no clear plan for implementing this was ever developed. Instead, it was the desire for land that created urgency in

those who would petition Mexico for the right to colonize within Texas. Included in those petitioners, were the partnerships of Irish entrepreneurs James Power and James Hewetson, and John McMullen and James McGloin.

Though little is known about the early lives of the Irish *Empresarios*, it has been established that “through marriage, political association, and language ties, the Irish *empresarios* were incorporated into the rich Hispanic culture of Mexico” (Davis 2002: 75). John McMullen, after arriving from Ireland in 1810, married a Mexican widow named Dona Esther Espadas. It was not uncommon for European men to marry Mexican women, especially those with wealth and influence. For the Irish *empresarios* this was not only beneficial politically, financially, and socially, but it also allowed them to begin to identify more as Mexicans than as Irishmen. In the 1820s, “[McMullen] moved to Matamoros, Mexico, on the border of the province of Texas, where he continued to make a living as a merchant” (Davis 2002: 73). According to San Patricio memoirs, collected by Rachel Hebert Bluntzer, McMullen “could now speak and read the Spanish language, and had made influential Mexican friends; this would be an asset to him in any enterprise which he might undertake in Mexico” (Bluntzer 1981: 15). Upon introduction to James McGloin, the two began a partnership, and in 1828, sought permission to introduce Irish families into Texas for colonization.

The Power and Hewetson relationship began in the years after Hewetson left Ireland for Philadelphia. He later relocated to Saltillo and Monclova, Mexico where “he was engaged in mercantile, manufacturing, and mining enterprises and became an influential figure in government circles in the province of Coahuila and Texas” (Davis 2002: 74). Hewetson became a Mexican citizen in 1827, about a year after partnering with James Power to start the Refugio Colony, and in 1833 “married a wealthy widow, Josepha Guajardo” (Davis 2002: 74). Similarly, James Power, native of County Wexford, Ireland, first emigrated to Philadelphia before moving on to New Orleans, and eventually to Saltillo and Matamoros, Mexico where he met and married the daughter of a Mexican captain. Davis makes the compelling argument that “it surely [was] not a coincidence that both Power and Hewetson married into high-ranking Mexican families. This was not only politically astute in recommending themselves to government officials in Mexico, but also represented something of greater significance” (Davis 2002: 75). In order to secure a strong population “the plain intent of the colonization law was to...merge foreign elements with the Mexican nationality by rewarding immigrants who married the native born with an additional premium of land” (McBeath 1953:11). Hewetson and Power were seen as loyal Mexican citizens, well adjusted into their adopted country, and as long as land was the reward, they would continue to act so.

On 18 August 1824, the central government of Mexico passed the national colonization law, which authorized all of its states to enact colonization laws in accordance with the new national law (McBeath 1953: 6). The 1825 State Colonization Laws of Coahuila and Texas, thus called “All foreigners, who in virtue of the general law, of the 18th August, 1824, which guarantees the security of their persons and property, in the territory of the Mexican Nation, wish to remove to any of the settlements of the State of Coahuila and Texas, are at liberty to do so; and the said State invites and calls them.”³ Contracts were made between the State and the *empresarios* with provisions for fulfilling each contract. Nearly each contract gave the same conditions, which included: a statement of the boundaries of the proposed colony, the introduction of at least one hundred families for colonization, the promise that all families introduced would be of Catholic religion and have good moral character, all communication with the government to be written in Spanish, the ejection of any criminals found to be within the colony, and finally the stipulation that all *empresarios* should fulfil their contractual requirements within six years of signing their contract with the government (McBeath 1953: 9). Within the contracts, the specific instruction to include families as opposed to single males bears great significance. Mexico’s plan to populate Texas was dependent upon colonists bringing and creating families to set down roots in the land. This was a significant part of Mexico’s plan to create a thriving population in Texas. When Mexico made known that it was offering land grants, both Irish partnerships were quick to realize the potential opportunity. As compensation for their labour in bringing in colonists, *empresarios* also “received about 23,000 acres of land for each one hundred families actually brought to Coahuila and Texas as settlers” (McBeath 1953: ii). The provisions set forth in the contracts were nearly uniform, with the exception of the contract of Power and Hewetson.

In her masters dissertation, Sister James Joseph McBeath states, “The two Texas Irish colonies of Refugio and San Patricio...were unique in so far that they were the only two colonies officially sanctioned during the colonial period for the introduction of settlers from Europe” (McBeath 1953: iii). Her assertions are not clearly delineated, however, as comparison of the two contracts actually show that it was only the contract of Power and Hewetson that made the explicit demand for Irish emigrants. Under Article 2 of the Power and Hewetson contract, it states, “The *Empresarios* are obliged to introduce and establish as their own charge two hundred families in lieu of the four hundred which they offered to do. It being an express condition that one half of this enterprise must be Mexican families and the remainder foreigners from Ireland” (Oberste

³ <http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/irishcolframe.htm>.

1953: 12). The contract of McMullen and McGloin similarly states in Article 4 “the *Empresarios* John McMullen and James McGloin are bound to introduce the two hundred families they offer, within the term of six years from this date, under the penalty of forfeiting the rights and privileges granted to them by said law” (Oberste 1953: 19). The next article goes on to demand Catholic families of good character, but in no other place does the contract ask specifically for Irish to be introduced.

The Mexican government, as well as the Irish *Empresarios*, would have been well aware of the many shared characteristics between the Irish and Mexican people. The introduction of native Irish in the Power and Hewetson petition was thus most likely a way “to gain the trust and confidence of Mexican government officials and to secure the contract in the face of a powerful suspicion of all foreigners” (Davis 2002: 72). By reassuring the Mexican government that they would not be bringing in American colonizers, Power and Hewetson not only showed their loyalty to Mexico, but also maintained that their colonizers had no previous loyalties to the bordering United States. Davis argues, “Their Irish identity was important in persuading the Mexican government that Irish migrants would make good settlers and act as a buffer against the potential aggression of the United States” (Davis 2002: 73).

By 1828, both Irish partnerships had received contracts from the Mexican government allowing them to introduce foreign colonists into Texas. McMullen and McGloin’s petition was quickly approved and in order to fulfil their contract, they immediately began recruiting Irish families who had immigrated into the United States. They recruited the majority of their families from New York “through newspaper advertisements and in interviews with prospective settlers” (Davis 2002: 83). Other families made their way independently to Texas.

Annie Fagan Teal was one such colonist to make the journey with her family, arriving in Texas in 1829 when she was fifteen years old. Originally published in “By the Way” magazine in 1897, the “Reminiscences of Mrs. Annie Fagan Teal later appeared in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* in 1931. Teal’s account had been collected and written down by Mrs Thomas O’Connor of Victoria, Texas. Teal’s narrative begins with her parents’ decision to leave Ireland for New York. Within a few years they were settled near St. Louis, Missouri; however, the country was “thinly settled by whites, Sioux Indians forming the greater part of the population, the climate cold and no Catholic church near” (Teal 1931: 317). The lack of a Catholic community appeared to have weighed heavily on Teal’s mother who “was anxious to leave and find a home where her children could be brought up under the influences of her own church. New Orleans was selected” (Teal 1931: 317). Although Teal’s mother reached New Orleans, she died soon after, and in 1829, the Fagan family relocated to Texas.

Teal's reminiscences describe the early colonists as being "surrounded by Mexicans and Indians, they learned to fear neither, as they were never harmed during all the long years they lived among them. Women and children went from house to house, or roamed over the broad prairie without accident or harm" (Teal 1931: 320). Other colonists' descriptions of interactions with the Indians and Mexicans reveal that though Teal "was familiar with many of the customs of the different tribes around them," actual relationships between colonists and natives were somewhat more complicated (Teal 1931: 323). Teal and her family would eventually become colonists in Refugio.

Because McMullen and McGloin aimed their recruiting at Irish immigrants already resident in New York, they were able to more quickly bring in settlers to the San Patricio colony. In contrast, according to Davis, "recruitment for the Power-Hewetson colony in Refugio was undertaken under the severe pressure of the deadline for the fulfilment of the contract, due to expire in June, 1834" (Davis 2002: 88). Since 1826, two years prior to signing their contract, Power and Hewetson had gone up against powerful opposition regarding the area of land allocated to their colony. According to historian Andrés Reséndez, the *Tejano* colony of Goliad "vigorously protested the decision of the state government to give Irish *empresario* James Power...lands in the extinguished mission of Refugio. Members objected to a land policy that so blatantly favoured Anglo-American developers while impinging on the rights of Mexican Texans who had owned these lands 'from time immemorial'" (Resendez 2004: 72). Although Power and Hewetson secured their contract in 1828, all attempts to extend the terms of the contract met without success. Power then decided to embark for Ireland himself, in October of 1833, in order to gain enough colonists to meet the provisions of the contract (McBeath 1953: 40).

By January of 1834, Power's charismatic recruitment, no doubt made all the more convincing because of his desperate situation, had met with success. He and 350 other colonists soon set sail on a journey fraught with tragedy to a land that had been hailed as a paradise on earth. Irish emigrant Rosalie Hart Priour, from County Wexford, Ireland, recalls not only the voyage to Texas, but also the way in which Power enticed the Irish to Texas with stories of beautiful terrain and abundant riches. Priour recalls that Power described Texas as one of the "richest countries in the world...with gold so plentiful you could pick it up under the trees" (Davis 2002: 89). Priour's father, Thomas Hart, was especially inclined to try his luck in Texas. In the few years prior to Power's visit, Thomas Hart had gone from a being a relatively well-off Water Guard, to a down and out farmer in County Wexford (Priour 17). Commissioned in a lighthouse in Roches Point, Cork, Thomas Hart had made a significant amount of money from the English government by turning in smuggled goods.

Despite his success, his wife, Elizabeth Hart, begged him to leave his post and take up fifty acres of land, given to her by her father, in County Wexford (Priour 16). According to Priour, her “father began farming, but knew no more about it than a baby, [and] consequently did not succeed very well” (Priour 19). She goes on to describe her father as one who “was very generous, and knew nothing of the value of money...he was often applied to for assistance...But the result of his generosity was that in three years the twenty-five thousand dollars we had in the bank in Wexford was all gone and nothing left except the farm” (Priour 20). Priour and her family were one of the first families that sailed from Ireland to the Mexican province of Texas in order to join the colony of Refugio. Power’s assurance that Texas was a land of opportunity surely influenced Thomas Hart’s decision to bring his family to Texas.

Priour describes the first part of the colonists’ journey as going “on splendidly. Nothing occurred to disturb the equanimity of the passengers for about six weeks. However, they had arrived at a time when the cholera was raging in New Orleans. People were dying so fast it was impossible to dig graves and the dead were buried in trenches” (Priour 27). Some historians estimate that up to 120 of these first colonists died from cholera, shipwreck, and Indian attacks before reaching their colony of Refugio (Davis 2002: 96). Priour’s autobiography also sheds light on the specific hardships that some women endured as colonists in south Texas. Priour’s mother, Elizabeth Hart, left Ireland with her husband and three daughters after contracting with Power for land in south Texas. Before even setting foot on their land in Refugio, Hart lost her five-year-old daughter to heatstroke, and her husband to cholera. Priour writes,

Oh! The horror of our situation, my dear good mother must have been a woman of iron nerve to bear up against such trouble as she had to go through. We were in a strange country, thousands of miles from our friends and relations, on a sand beach exposed to the burning heat of summer or drenched by rain through the day and at night surrounded by wild animals, not knowing the minute we would be drowned. Then there were thousands of naked savages even more to be dreaded than the wild beasts, and a company of Mexican soldiers on guard for the purpose of preventing us from moving from that place under two weeks time, for fear we would spread the cholera (Priour 36).

While in the midst of the chaos and tragedy, Priour maintained a spiritual belief in all that she did. Priour writes that as a child she did not fear death, but when spoken to about it would comment, “we have to die once and we may as well die now as at any other time. God can protect us from

danger if it is His Will to do so, if not, it is our place to submit” (Priour 24). Priour went on to Refugio with her mother and youngest sister, and though only seven years old, her “share of work was to cook, and keep the house clean, take care of my sister and carry mother's dinner to her” (Priour 38). Their arrival in Refugio coincided with the spread of dysentery, and Elizabeth Hart spent the first several weeks attempting to nurse many colonists back to health. Priour comments, “With all our exertions we could not save all, a great many died. It was dreadful to look at them after death” (Priour 38). Though the colonists could never have anticipated the tragic end of this initial journey, they were willing and able to sacrifice what they had in Ireland for the opportunity to own large areas of land in Texas.

Despite initial losses, Power was able secure passage for three more ships of Irish colonists. Upon arrival in Refugio, and with less than the 200 colonists contractually required, the *empresarios* became aware that many travellers were passing through Refugio searching for desirable lands to settle. According to McBeath, “Power and Hewetson prevailed upon these strangers to remain in the Refugio colony” (McBeath 1953: 66). Petitions were swiftly drawn up and presented to Governor Vidaurri of the State of Coahuila and Texas, and quickly granted so long as the new settlers “did not belong to a nation at war with Mexico, and that such colonists would have to be introduced to the colony before June 12, at which time the contract...would have expired” (McBeath 1953: 67). As a result, settlers from the United States, Scotland, England, Germany, Canada, Italy, and Greece all came to reside in Refugio. McBeath argues, “The inclusion of these settlers effectively changed the character of a colony originally intended for Irish and Mexicans exclusively” (McBeath 1953: 67). In his 1953 MA thesis, Edward Carew Murphy argues that instead of solely adopting Mexican customs and traditions, the “Irish quickly became an integral part of the Texan community. A love of freedom and hatred of military oppression were the heritage of centuries of British despotism and these qualities made them just as ready to espouse the cause of liberty as any colonists of other national origins...they would share in every step of the struggle for independence” (Murphy 1953: 46).

Mexican historian, Andrés Reséndez puts forth the argument that life on the Mexican border consisted of different groups of people who lived in a “world of exceedingly fluid identities” (Reséndez 2004: 1). Reséndez writes about the changing national identities on the frontier of Mexico’s northern border, while “[grappling] with the extraordinarily slippery question of how Spanish speaking frontier inhabitants, nomadic and sedentary Native American communities, and Anglo Americans who had recently moved to the area came to think of themselves as Mexicans, Americans, or Texans” (Reséndez 2004: 1). Reséndez gives strong evidence that at any given time on the frontier “choosing one’s identity could constitute an

exciting business opportunity, a bold political statement, and at times was quite simply a matter of survival” (Reséndez 2004: 2). This argument can readily be applied to the colonists in San Patricio and Refugio at the onset of the Texas Revolution.

After the initial hardships that came with beginning a new colony, in “1835 colonies at Refugio and San Patricio were beginning to grow and to become established...colonists in possession of their lands...proudly pointed out their leagues of land...satisfying the Irish love of land, because over the centuries this right had been denied them” (Oberste 1953: 147). Concerned with improving and settling into the new lands they had acquired, many of the colonists were unaware that Texas “had long been in a state of unrest because of many irreconcilable differences with the Supreme Government” (Oberste 1953: 151). In September of 1835, Refugio was occupied with Mexican troops, and “Power’s colonists [who] had already experienced the opposition of and disputes with the officials... were therefore not too favourably inclined towards the Mexicans” (Oberste 1953: 153). Similarly, historian Edmund Murphy argues that the chaotic nature of the Mexican government “did little to inspire loyalty among the Texan settlers” (Murphy 1953: 47). At the start of the Texas Revolution, the Irish, *Tejanos*, and Anglo-Americans “all employed the language of freedom...though their meanings varied according to circumstances and cultural values” (Davis 2002: 108). For the Irish colonists recently settled on their new lands, “the freedom to preserve life and their newly won land grants was a central concern” (Davis 2002:108). With the desire for land no doubt weighing heavily on their minds, many of the Irish colonists became fixated on independence for Texas.

Historian John Brendan Flannery utilizes the concept of contribution history of the Irish in Texas, especially during the time of the Texas Revolution. Flannery argues that although many “Irish...at first hesitated to take up arms against Mexico...[feeling] a loyalty to a government that had given them land and freedom and economic opportunity...with the outbreak of hostilities, they were to discover that the solid values of their Mexican neighbours were not reflected in the tyrannical government of Santa Anna. They then threw themselves wholeheartedly behind the Texan cause” (Flannery 1980: 68). Flannery details the contributions of San Patricio and Refugio colonists during the battles and skirmishes that became the fight for Texan independence. According to Flannery, “in terms of lives sacrificed, property lost and land despoiled, none gave more to Texas independence than the Irish colonists of San Patricio, and Refugio...sending wives and children to safety...most men joined the Texan volunteers and regular army units that took the field against Santa Anna” (Flannery 1980: 79).

Indeed, Priour comments on her own flight out of Texas stating, “Everybody had to leave their homes as if they were only to be gone a couple of days, as we were told. It was a sorrowful sight to see so many women and children driven from their homes, and not one in the crowd ever recovered anything that was left behind” (Priour 51). Priour and many of the Refugio colonists initially fled to Victoria, Texas, but were quickly warned that Santa Anna “had sent out a decree to his officers that everything in human shape over ten years of age were to suffer death...It was a perfect reign of terror. None knew the moment that they would be called to their last account, and their little children left to starve” (Priour 56). Priour’s account of the exodus out of Texas details how women and children walked through “swamp water nearly up to our knees and the weeds and grass were higher than our heads so that we were completely concealed” (Priour 59). Priour and her mother eventually made their way to safety in Mobile, Alabama.

In contrast to Priour, Teal reserves her anger and fear during this time towards the United States, rather than towards Mexico. In her reminiscences, “Mrs. Teal says that during and just after the war with Mexico there was more distress and trouble of every kind in the country than ever before, caused by robbers and followers of the American army” (Teal 1931: 324). Teal gives a scathing description of the day before Santa Anna was taken prisoner stating,

Men mounted on fine horses rode through the country, crying; ‘Run, run for your lives; Mexicans and Indians are coming’ ...a panic ensued; men, women and children on foot, on horses, with or without saddles, fled the country. Many sickened and died on the road. They were met on the road by a small band who took their guns from them. The alarm given the settlers proved to be a plan concocted to rob and pillage the country, which was done on a magnificent scale (Teal 1931:325).

Teal’s deference to the Mexicans, despite her family’s support of Texan independence, can likely be attributed to her father’s escape during the Fannin massacre in 1836, in which an estimated three hundred and fifty-nine Texan supporters were “on direct orders from Santa Anna...marched out of the fort in three groups and shot down on the open prairie” (Flannery 1980: 78). According to Teal, and authenticated by several historians, “on the day of the massacre a boy came up to Mr. Fagan and told him he had orders to go into a certain orchard and remain until sent for...Mr. F., without understanding the strange command, did as he was told and had barely reached the designed place when he heard the heart rending cries of his comrades. Shot after shot followed in quick succession. Mr. Fagan’s Mexican friends had used this device to save his

life” (Teal 1931: 325). Teal later on in her narrative again describes the early years in Texas as being “a beautiful country – a land flowing with milk and honey; at peace with ourselves and all the world...until robbers came into the country, it was a happy, glorious time” (Teal 1931: 327). Teal died in 1897, having lived out her life with her family in Victoria, Texas.

At the end of the war, Texas had won independence, but at the cost of many lives, including those of the colonists. Though initially taking away the authority and privileges of the *empresarios*, eventually “The Republic of Texas honoured and validated all legal titles issued by the former State of Coahuila and Texas” (Oberste 1953: 256). The Irish colonists’ fight was not the ideological pursuit of freedom, but the fight to secure and hold on to the land that had been given to them. According to family record, Elizabeth Hart made “several trips between Mobile, New Orleans, and Refugio between the years of 1836 and 1840,” despite the chaos within the newly independent Texas⁴ (Robeau 1966: 19). Her reasons for making these trips undeniably surrounded her desire to retain her lands in Refugio. In 1844, Elizabeth Hart returned to Texas, and established a permanent residence in Corpus Christi. Rosalie Hart Priour followed with her husband and family in 1851. Oberste argues, “Mexico could but take only a dismal view of its experiment in introducing colonists from abroad. The war of independence found the Irish aligned with the long-feared immigrants from the United States” (Oberste 1953: 228). The Mexican government believed that “the recruitment of foreign migrants who could bring their skills, enterprise, and capital to this land might help to restore the country and populate the northern territories” (Davis 2002: 19). With the constant threat of United States aggression looming over, “the Mexican government looked to European migrants to populate Texas to establish a safeguard against further ‘Americanization’ for the province” (Davis 2002: 20). While some historians have argued the Irish were the obvious candidates for invitation into Texas because of their religion and history, research has shown that land proved to be the motivating factor for the Irish, and was reflected in their changing identities as Irish, Mexicans, *Tejanos*, and United States citizens.

Within ten years the Republic of Texas would be annexed into the United States as the twenty-eighth state. James Power, who had signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, was the delegate sent from Refugio to the annexation convention in Austin on 4 July 1845 (Oberste 1953: 270). He was also one of the signers of the Texas State Constitution, newly adopted as a part of the United States. With Texas loyalty firmly aligned with the United States, the colonies of San Patricio and Refugio were able to once

⁴ Robeau is a descendant of Rosalie Hart Priour. Her manuscript is a part of the rare book collection in Watson Memorial Library in Natchitoches at the Northwestern State University of Louisiana. The library has no account of a publisher, but has publication dates between 1966 and 1985.

again take up their land with the promise of military support should Mexico ever try to encroach upon their lands again. It is of great interest that upon Elizabeth Hart's death, her last will and testament left forty-two hundred acres of land (roughly equivalent to the league and labour of land originally contracted with *Empresario* Power) to her grandchildren with "the balance of the land [left] to my daughter, Mrs. R.B. Priour, to use in the payment of my debts. My cattle and hogs and property in Corpus Christi and the Mission [Refugio] for my daughter" (Robeau 1966: 26). Despite the tragedy and chaos that enveloped so many of the Irish colonists in Texas, Elizabeth Hart had maintained control of the land originally contracted to her until her death in 1863. Mexico's call for foreign colonizers was designed to create a population that was deeply loyal to Mexico. However, it instead generated an overwhelming loyalty to the land that Mexico had extended to them.

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From the Mexican Borderlands to the Irish Bogland: *Atravesando* Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*

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Abstract

This article presents a reading of Marina Carr's Hester Swane in *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) that moves away from standard comparisons to the European Medea storyline and situates her more closely in relation to *La Llorona* (the "Crying Woman"), a ghost figure in Mexican/Mexican-American folk stories who wanders near bodies of waters, wailing as she searches for her missing children. *La Llorona*, like Hester, is an exile, banished from her local community, and while both narratives have been considered in relation to Medea, reading Hester beyond the Greek story and aligning her with *La Llorona* offers the possibility of locating her within a different cultural context and expanding conventional interpretations. The article traces a brief history of *La Llorona* and her role within Mexican and Mexican-American border storytelling, researching Irish and Chicana religious iconography and its relation to cultural identity, and establishes transnational connections between the two characters.

Xavier You're a dangerous witch, Swane.

Hester (*laughs at him*) You're sweatin'. Always knew ya were yella to the bone. Don't worry, I'll be lavin' this place tonight, though not the way you or anywan else expects. Ya call me a witch, Cassidy? This is nothin', you just wait and see the real—

(Carr, *By the Bog of Cats...*68)

In 1929, theatre scholar Lisa Fitzpatrick writes, W.B. Yeats wrote a letter to the director of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin Ireland, suggesting an

alternate conclusion to Margaret O’Leary’s *The Woman*.¹ Yeats intervened to advise changing the ending of the play, insisting that the heroine be killed off rather than allow her to ambiguously leave on her own after the man she loves spurned her. Fitzpatrick writes:

According to a letter written by W.B. Yeats to Lennox Robinson in April 1929, the original ending of the play had Ellen leaving to wander the roads. In his letter to Robinson, Yeats insists that ‘the heroine must die and we must know she dies; all that has been built up is scattered, and degraded, if she does not come to the understanding that she seeks something life, or her life, can never give.’ (2007: 75)

O’Leary changes the play to accommodate Yeats, a move Fitzpatrick critiques, arguing that, “By changing the resolution, O’Leary allows her character to be safely contained within the mythos of the woman who was beautiful and made, and tragically killed herself. Ellen’s despair thus becomes an individual tragedy, rather than the tragedy of women as a class” (77). This process singles out Ellen, and while Yeats’s letter may reveal an astute understanding of her predicament, it places her in the role of sacrificial victim to personal circumstances and doomed by forces that eventually overwhelm her. This direction by Yeats could also be read as indicative of an anxiety about wild women of inauspicious parentage running around the Irish stage and, by extension, the national landscape since, as Fitzpatrick points out, Ellen’s father might have been a Tinker.² Her dual heritage, and especially the insinuation of her Traveller blood, marks her and her body as a site of difference. She must be reined in and accounted for; her irrefutable death, as opposed to the open-ended final scene where she takes to the road (like Ibsen’s or Synge’s Nora, she notes) offers stability for the nation while also revealing how representations of women and, as some critics suggest, works by women, have been managed on the Irish stage.

¹ Fitzpatrick notes that *The Woman* was never published. She refers to the manuscript held at the National Library of Ireland. On the revised ending she notes: “Revisions to the original draft include that the heroine is now clearly understood to kill herself by drowning. However, this is never confirmed either mimetically or in the diegesis, and no body of the dead woman appears on stage” (2007: 75). She adds that, “It is significant, however, that O’Leary does not confirm the death of the protagonist: the audience is denied the final satisfaction of the elimination of the threatening element and a safe conclusion” (77).

² In *Tinkers*, the first extensive academic study of the Irish Traveller community, Irish scholar Mary Burke writes: “The Travellers, or to most Irish sedentary people before the 1960s, the ‘tinkers’, are members of a historically nomadic minority community defined by anthropologists as an ethnic group that has existed on the margins of Irish society for perhaps centuries” (2009: 2).

Nearly seventy years later, in 1998, the Abbey Theatre premiered Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...*, a play about Hester Swane, an Irish Traveller also spurned by the man she loves who is preparing to marry a younger woman from a wealthy, land-owning family and who seeks to evict her from the land she has lived on her whole life. Forty-year old Hester lives in a caravan on the outskirts of the bog with her seven-year old daughter Josie, her child with Carthage Kilbride who plans to take their daughter to live with him and his new bride in a 'proper' home. The play opens on the snowy bogland with Hester dragging a dead black swan³ behind her when she encounters the Ghost Fancier, a merchant of death who has mistaken the morning for sunset, the time set to claim her. Realizing the error, the Ghost Fancier leaves but returns at the end of the play under gruesome circumstances after Hester sets fire to the land, killing the livestock and slicing Josie's throat to spare her a lifetime of waiting for her mother to return, just as Hester awaits the return of the mother who abandoned her on the Bog of Cats as a child. Wailing in agony, Hester then cuts out her own heart and falls dead on stage.

With the introduction of Hester, Carr's play pushes at the boundaries of identity and belonging with its multiple layers of meaning and symbolic invocations, offering several avenues for critical interpretation. Most immediately, as Irish theatre academics writing on the play have noted,⁴ Carr invokes a variation of the Medea legend by resurrecting a similar premise for her heroine, suggesting a timelessness to Hester's plight that situates her within the pantheon of mythical feminine suffering and violent retribution for betrayal. Other academics also draw parallels to *Bog* with culturally specific modern plays with a similar plot and cast of characters.⁵ And while critics have noted the influence and relevance of particular Greek plays to Irish playwrights—and Irish playwrights continue to produce adaptations of Greek works—this article situates Hester away

³ Swans appear often in Irish cultural texts and have tended to be the bird of choice in Irish literature, from the ancient Irish text "The Children of Lir" to Yeats's collection *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) to Oliver St. Gogarty's *An Offering of Swans* (1924) to more recently Marina Carr's dead black swan in the first scene of *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998).

⁴ See Helen Heusner Lojek in *The Spaces of Irish Drama: Stage and Place in Contemporary Plays* (2011); Mary Trotter in *Modern Irish Theatre* (2008); Melissa Sihra's "The House of Woman and the Plays of Marina Carr" where she refers to the play as "a loose re-working of *Medea*" (2007: 212) and Cathy Leeney where she calls Hester a "quasi-Medea figure" (160) in "Ireland's exiled women playwrights: Teresa Deevy and Marina Carr" in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (2004). See also M.K. Martinovich's "The Mythical and the Macabre: The Study of Greeks and Ghosts in the Shaping of the American premiere of *By the Bog of Cats...*" in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: "before rules was made"* (2003).

⁵ See "Two Contemporary Medeas" by Zoraide Rodrigues Carrasco de Mesquita in *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* 7.2 (July 2009): 195-203.

from classical Greek mythology and presents her in a different framework. While the invocation of a Greek cosmology connects Hester with the tradition of ancient tragedy readily accessible through Euripides's *Medea*, and in employing an iconic name in American literary history Carr conjures Nathaniel Hawthorne's Hester Prynne (whose relationship and out-of-wedlock pregnancy also brand her an outsider in *The Scarlet Letter* as Lojek notes),⁶ by placing the discarded and tormented mother in a haunted, liminal space where she searches nightly for her missing bloodlines, Carr establishes a trajectory beyond Greek and American literary traditions and moves into the realm of Mexican and Mexican-American folk legend.

Extending the transnational reach of Carr's play, Hester can be read as a counterpart of the Mexican legend of *La Llorona* (the "Crying Woman") who wanders near rivers and small bodies of water—similarly liminal spaces to the bog—in search of her dead or missing children as she wails into the night with her haunting grief, inspiring deep-rooted terror in the community as a deathly figure children learn to fear and whose tragic fate women seek to avoid. In most versions, she drowns her children as an act of retribution against her husband for betrayal before committing suicide and wandering as a ghost in search of her children. Perhaps most frightening to patriarchal structures of power, however, she stands as a model of lapsed maternity that haunts the future of men because she "symbolically destroys the familial basis for patriarchy" (Limón 1990: 416). Elements of class also haunt the foundation of her narrative since "she teaches people not to transgress the limits of their social class, and keeps wayward husbands and children in their place" (Oliver-Rotger 2003: 121). Read often as a Mexican *Medea*, she inspires descriptions such as "ghostly," "witchy," "monstrous" and "savage" (all terms used to describe Hester) in both the storytellers who pass on the local variations of the tale and the academics who study the genealogy and cultural relevance of the narrative.

While some academics trace origin points of *La Llorona's* narrative to the European *Medea* legend,⁷ like variations of the Greek story, *La Llorona*

⁶ Lojek notes that, "Carr's use of Hawthorne's novel has no other precedent in Irish drama that I know of and adds additional layers to a remapping of Irish geography and stage space" (2011: 79). Clare Wallace also establishes a connection between the women, making an observation about Carr's protagonist: "Hester's scarlet letter will ultimately take the shape of her own heart, cut out of her chest in the play's final scene" (2003: 61).

⁷ Limón quotes Américo Paredes who points out "that it is basically a European narrative...emphasizing a Europeanized milieu and European values" (quoted in Limón 1990: 407).

versions vary in detail and scope⁸ and, like most oral accounts, inevitably manifest traces of a gradual narrative evolution.⁹ For example, Sonia Saldivar-Hull points out the presence of water in the stories she heard:

The variant of the *Llorona* legend I grew up with in Brownsville was emphatically aimed at frightening boys and men. In the stories I heard from grandmothers and the many women who crossed the bridge to Brownsville from Matamoros to labor as domestics in Mexican American and Anglo homes, *La Llorona's* appearances were always near a body of water: a lake, an arroyo, the resacas of Brownsville, or the levee on the banks of the Rio Grande. (Saldivar-Hull 2000: 119)

José Limón notes that “the indigenous peoples add an *Indian* woman, sometimes in a flowing white dress, crying *in the night*, near a body of water (an important element in Aztec mythology), and confronting people, mostly men who are terrified when they see her” (Limón 1990: 408, italics in original). The appearance of water in these border-crossing versions tailors the narrative to the local geography and signals a departure from the European storyline, but in versions outlined in more detail later, the story of *La Llorona* returns to Europe when the basic framework of the plot merges with the story of betrayal by *La Malinche*, Cortés’s translator in some accounts and his slave in others, introducing elements of colonialism, identity politics and cultural nationalism that complicate the domestic storyline. Yet regardless of the account, most Mexican narratives typically describe *La Llorona* as a grieving spirit force in search of her missing children, portrayed sometimes as a desperate though benign mother-figure dressed in white with a solitary purpose, or more often, as a vengeful phantom seeking retribution and, like the Irish equivalent of the banshee, committed to screeching death’s call through the lonesome landscape. However, regardless of her intention, she is always depicted as a woman who, in ghostly form, haunts the spectral of the borderlands between the living and the dead.

⁸ Jacqueline Doyle notes: “A folktale told for centuries in Mexico and the Southwest, ‘*La Llorona*’ survives today in many forms. In one common version, a proud young girl marries above her station and is so enraged when her husband takes a mistress of his own class that she drowns their children in the river. Stricken by grief when she is unable to retrieve them, *la Llorona* dies on the river’s edge. But to this day the villagers hear a voice in the wind and the water—‘Aaaaiiii. . .my children. Where are my children?’—and see a wailing apparition in white walking up and down the riverbank after dark” (1996: 56).

⁹ Oliver-Rotger cites Limón on this: “*La Llorona* is a fluid tale with constant shifts and changes depending on who tells it. Women cooperate to change this narrative, which prevents it from becoming a bounded text and makes it liable to constant redefinition. (Limón 78)” [quoted in Oliver-Rotger 2003: 122].

Against this backdrop, Hester Swane inhabits a similar subaltern position as *La Llorona*. Her “unnatural” ways are read as symptomatic of her Traveller blood, manifested both in her inclination to wander along the bog and her subsequent refusal to settle down in a home, though she is semi-settled in a caravan, putting her at odds with fully transient Travellers and highlighting the irony of her status as “a Traveller who does not travel” (Lojek 70). Her rage is understood not as a form of resistance to her re/displacement, but as part of her genetic or biochemical makeup resulting from her mixed parentage and questionable upbringing. It would be best for the community, those around her argue, if she just quietly went away and allowed them to get on with their lives without the nervous distraction she creates. She, like *La Llorona*, is relegated to borderland spaces where she exists as a disposable relic that threatens hegemonic conditions of power with her refusal to submit into oblivion and yield her man to another woman, instead foreclosing the possibility of men’s blood legacy, interfering with the allocation of inheritance rights including ancestral claims for land and, most importantly, assurances of ties to the future that protect the continued distribution of familial power.

This article then, will examine Carr’s play by using *La Llorona*’s story based on cultural interpretations of her transmorphing into *Malinche* to refract how ethnic difference and gender predetermine Hester’s narrative arc, illuminating transnational connections between the two exiled, embattled figures and opening up both stories beyond the limiting interpretations often imposed upon these complicated narratives. In using *La Llorona* to read Hester, the intent is to move away from the usual center base of interpretation—analyses of her rooted in relation to the classical Greek Medea myth—and offer an alternative framework and interpretive model from where to read and understand her narrative. And while Hester’s story bears resemblance to the similarly exiled *La Llorona*—both suffering humiliations that dictate the forces they fight against—perhaps most important for this study here is an examination of the influences that mark them as “other” from the community they inhabit and how justifications of their initial banishment and subsequent erasure is centered not on the violent acts they commit, but on the basis of their difference.

Reading Hester in a Transnational Context

Soy hija de la mujer que transnocha
 I am the daughter of *La Llorona*
 and I am *La Llorona* herself,
 I am the monster’s child and monstrous.

(Gloria Anzaldúa, excerpt from “*Llorona Coyolxauhqui*”)¹⁰

If *La Llorona* has been called the Mexican Medea, then *La Malinche* has been labeled the Mexican Eve (Oliver-Rotger 2003: 113) and her story been read as a version of downfall and betrayal against her people. The conquest of Mexico by Spanish forces led by Cortés occurred in 1521 and the birth of a male child resulting from the union between Cortés and the indigenous *La Malinche* is often located as the inaugural moment of *mestizaje* in Mexican cultural history. The children of Mexico then, are *mestizos*, the product of both European blood and indigenous Mexican ancestry. In *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*, Sonia Saldivar-Hull notes how Américo Paredes situates the story of *La Llorona* as an allegory for the conquest of Mexico and its indigenous people: “The legend of *La Llorona* contains such a story of *mestizaje*, of miscegenation, which Paredes locates within Hernán Cortés’s conquest of Mexico” (2000: 118). Explaining the narratives she herself heard as a child, Saldivar-Hull points out that:

That history, I now understand, was the history of the conquest of Mexico by Spanish forces. While I understand that, technically, these two legends are distinct, in the variants I heard as a child, *Llorona* and *La Malinche* were the same figure. *La Malinche* was the indigenous woman who was sold into slavery, and, as a slave, was given to Hernán Cortés. Male historiography has it that she was Cortés’s mistress. As his slave, she used her proficiency at languages and became his translator and eventually bore him a child. As a result the woman popularly known as *Malinche*, Malintzín Tenépal, has been blamed for the Spaniards’ conquest of Mexico. To be a *malinchista* is to be a traitor to Mexico or to Mexican customs. *La Llorona* murdered her children because she was betrayed by a Spanish “gentleman”; *La Malinche* symbolically murdered her “children,” the Indian tribes that Cortés and the Spanish conquistadores massacred. (2000: 120)

The notion of miscegenation figures largely in this reading of the story and serves as the basis for the origin myth of non-indigenous Mexicans. While origin myths are often mobilized as a form of cultural nationalism,

¹⁰ Two previously unpublished poems about *La Llorona* by Anzaldúa appeared in the *Anzaldúa Reader* (2009). In the following excerpt from the same poem, she provides a description on point for Hester when she writes about exile and loss, explaining how she finds herself “...in a dark wood/between home and the world/I feel alienated, feel as though I’m outside and apart from the world, homeless, lost/I’ve lost the sense of being alive,/I have become a ghost,/set apart from other beings” (294).

especially against the backdrop of imperialism as a nation forges its identity in contradistinction to colonial impositions of power, they also serve as reference point of difference, marking the boundaries between insider and outsider. These interpretations place heavy emphasis on the class distinctions between *La Malinche* / *La Llorona* and the Spanish male in the narrative, locating power differentials within an economy of race, class and gender.

In his study of *La Llorona*, José Limón traces the cultural and political significance of her story and offers her as the “third legend of Greater Mexico” after *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and *Malinche* (1990: 399-400). He argues that the first two symbols have been used to establish a framework where power over women is naturalized and notes the limitations these figures impose on modern women while also focusing on class as a central feature embedded in the narrative. Limón is critical of writers like Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes who do not “critically deconstruct the legend” (1990: 406). He offers his own reading that posits *La Llorona* as a figure with the potential to transcend the limiting binary often imposed upon *Malinche* and *La Virgen*:

Ironically, these two major female symbols do not clearly serve female interests. Further, at another level they may ideologically ratify, not only the particular domination of women, but also the continuing exploitation of the Greater Mexican folk masses by a bi-national structure of power. Is there no major, popular female symbolic discourse that clearly speaks to the interests of these folk masses at both of these levels? I submit there is, and we may find it in the legend of the woman whom we left crying in (sic) the streets of Mexico City... (1990: 407)

Limón notes that while efforts by Mexican and Chicana writers to offer “revisionist interpretations of Doña Marina’s¹¹ biography to show she was a real, sensitive, intelligent woman who had to deal with Cortés under specific personal and political constraints”¹² (1990: 404) exist, no such revisionist attempts appear in relation to *La Virgen*.¹³ Limón attributes this to her pervasive presence in the culture and the devotional reach she inspires. Appearing ten years after the conquest of Mexico, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* materializes as an indigenous woman to Juan Diego in 1531 and

¹¹ “Doña” is a feminine address of respect typically reserved for elders and precedes a woman’s formal name. The male equivalent is “Don.”

¹² Limón includes an endnote [16] here that appears on page 429.

¹³ This appears to have changed in the twenty-two years since the publication of Limón’s article.

becomes an important symbol of Mexican solidarity and cultural nationalism. Her emergence and subsequent prevalence in the culture can also be read as an attempt to offer an alternative and “redemptive symbol for both indigenous and *mestizo* Mexicans” (Limón 1990: 403) to the narrative of colonization and imperial violence enabled a decade earlier. As Oliver-Rotger writes, “the symbolic figure of Guadalupe, the Mexican native version of the Virgin Mary, is identified with transcendentalizing power, silence and maternal self-sacrifice” (2003: 113), characteristics of an idealized femininity tied to nation-formation.

Conquered lands are often configured as feminine and in need of protection by strong male citizen-subjects; Catherine Nash traces this trope in Ireland, noting that, “the gendering of Ireland has been used to define cultural identity and political status of the society and the identities and roles of men and women in Ireland (1997: 111). She argues that “the gendering of Ireland and the construction of Irish femininity have been supported by the traditional associations between nature, land, fertility and femininity” (1997: 110).

This move to connect the idealized female maternal body with nationalist discourse in Ireland employs the concept of ‘woman as nation’ and supports a partnership with Catholicism in the construction of the national mythos:

In the specific context of Irish cultural history, symbolic identification of women has been intensified both by the influence of Catholicism and by association with images of Nationalism. For examples, Yeats’ provocative play (1902) fuses such images of Ireland as the beautiful, young Cathleen Ni Houlihan with the suffering Poor Old Woman, the *Sean Bhean Voch*. (Llewellyn-Jones 2002: 67)

Yeats uses Cathleen Ni Houlihan—who appears as an old woman before turning into a “young girl with the walk of a queen” (11) when young Michael follows her out to the house and into the battlefield—as a way to represent Mother Ireland in the Irish cultural imagination. As Fitzpatrick notes, “as the foundation stone of modern Irish theatre, this dramatic representation of Woman-Nation might seem to reinforce the symbolic consonance between woman and land in a public and definitive act of representation” (2007: 69). In a strange coupling, this symbolic representation is particularly resonant when examined as part of a discourse on sacrifice and devotion. Cathleen, as the old woman, bewitches men into service of the state, luring them onto the battlefield in her name and transforming them into soldiers for the nation, reconfiguring their service as part of their loyalty and dedication to the young beautiful Cathleen who emerges only when they heed the call to action. Rewarded

with Cathleen's youthful beauty and approval, the men risk death for following her out the door as they do. The *Llorona / Malinche* narrative is also tied to feminine representations of land and death, but here, it functions as a cautionary tale for men who are often warned about her power to kill. Against this operational ethics of violence and destruction, the Virgin Mary becomes a redeeming force of feminine devotion.

As in Mexican Catholicism where "Guadalupe has served as a rallying point for Mexican nationalism" (Limón 1990: 405) the Virgin Mary provides the model image of femininity in Irish religious worship and her grace provides a path to salvation. In the past, the Catholic Church actively promoted Marian worship by cultivating Mary's iconography in both rituals during devotional services and within the local community through statues and emblems.^{14/15} In "Irish Feminism" Siobhán Kilfeather notes, "The cult of Mary had a deep influence on the lives and imaginations of Catholic Irish women" (2005: 106). For Chicanas, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes, *La Virgen* retains a vibrant and enduring presence that continues to pervade the cultural landscape:

Today, *la Virgen de Guadalupe* is the single most potent religious, political and cultural image of the Chicano / *mexicano*. She, like my race, is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered. She is the symbol of the *mestiza* true to his or her Indian values. *La cultura chicana* identifies with the mother (Indian) rather than with the father (Spanish). (1987: 30)

For Anzaldúa, *La Virgen* is a racialized hybrid figure and this identification with the mother privileges the indigenous aspect of Chicana identity, while in *Gender, Ireland and Cultural Change* (2010), Gerardine Meaney writes that in Ireland images of the Virgin Mary have been mobilized as an emblem of "whiteness":

The conflation of images of Mother Ireland and Virgin Mary in Irish populist Catholic nationalism deployed the

¹⁴ Kilfeather notes, "The cult of the Virgin Mary was reinvigorated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by way of the Marian apparitions at Lourdes, Fatima and Knock, Co. Mayo, and recruited to the church's anti-communist crusade" (2005: 106). Nash also mentions the role of the cult of the Virgin Mary in regulating gender relations. (1997: 115).

¹⁵ Cullingford writes: "In early 1985 statues of the Virgin in Kerry and elsewhere were reported to be moving, and attracted enormous crowds of believers. Conservative religious commentators argued that this phenomenon proved that Our Lady was grieved and angered by the terrible events of 1984, as well she might have been, but on what score?" (2001: 238-239).

Virgin Mother's status as epitome of whiteness as a guarantee of Irish (racial) purity. This function could only be performed if the maternal body was idealized out of existence, or at least out of representation. (2010: 7)

While the racial identification shifts, the importance of Guadalupe/Mary prevails in both cultures. The conflation of Mother Ireland with the idealized maternity of the Virgin Mary mirrors the attempt to redeem *La Malinche's* narrative with the appearance of *La Virgen* a decade after the conquest.

Viewed in this context, Hester the Traveller who births a hybrid child out of wedlock and refuses eviction and exile in silence does not conform to idealized maternity tied to either framework of nation building, racial purity or religious dictates on appropriate forms of maternity. She—returning to Yeats's letter to Lennox Robinson—"must die and we must know she dies" because she actually does "come to the understanding that she seeks something life, or her life, can never give" (quoted in Fitzpatrick 2007: 75). Using Yeats's framework, however, it is worth noting that both heroines—O'Leary's Ellen and Carr's Hester—wind up dead in the end.

By the Bog of Cats and Other Borderland Spaces

The Bog of Cats may lie geographically near the center of Ireland, but it represents above all marginal territory, a border area determinedly beyond the confines of 'rational' control. (Lojek 2011: 95)

Hester Ah, how can I lave the Bog of Cats, everythin' I'm connected to is here. I'd rather die. (11)

Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) centers on Hester Swane as she reacts to the bulk of devastating news she deals with over the course of Carthage's wedding day, including the community's collective rejection of her lifestyle that does not cohere with normative patterns of domesticity: she does not have a proper 'home', she wanders the bog in search of her long-missing mother and she communes with nature on her walks at night. Carr infuses the text with supernatural references and conjures a Celtic paganism that aligns Hester with the land but also puts her at odds with the traditional settled society around her, including the properly ritualized Catholicism of the community, represented in the figure of eighty-year old Father Willow, a peculiar character busy flirting with the Catwoman who eats mice and drinks milk from bowls. Here, Carr takes on sacred Irish cultural iconography and contrasts them with blunt images of social decay

and moral degeneracy, from the dead swan in the first scene to the unapologetic departure from pious representations of priests. Hester herself is ruled to varying degrees by cosmic and rural inclinations that mediate her response to the community's expectations of her behavior, and whether she "feels" her missing mother's presence or carefully articulates her connection to the bog,¹⁶ she is constantly moving between the living and the dead. This mixing of worlds is part of Carr's aesthetic, as Melissa Sihra notes: "One of the defining characteristics of Carr's dramaturgy is her evocative mingling of the everyday with the other-worlds of myth, folk-tales, ghosts and fairies" (2007: 19). The notion of crossing over from the spirit to the "real" world is another form of border-crossing the play embraces, moving from haunted liminal spaces and encounters with dead brothers to communal public celebrations to private interactions with missing mothers. The provocative juxtaposition of Hester's "witchy" ways with the community's fractured attempts at a normalized bourgeoisie existence is rendered visible in the ways the characters either actively distance themselves from her or attempt to describe the impulse to do so when they encounter her, acting as though her presence itself is uncanny.

A public outcast, Hester's only source of social currency comes from her child but as Carthage prepares to take Josie away, Hester makes one final play for him. She shows up on his wedding day in her own white bridal dress, accusing him of having made promises back when he was in love with her and marrying Caroline as a selfish act of greed. Carthage meanwhile aligns himself with a legacy of male privilege, social entitlement and material success when, like Medea's Jason, he seeks to marry Caroline for both her youth, thus ensuring the possibility of producing future male heirs, and the consolidation of wealth the match ensures, though he argues he is motivated by a desire to protect his existing family. When this wedding scene ends in Hester's complete rejection, she sets the house on fire—and all the animals in the barn—before coming to terms with the realization that her daughter would in fact be better off living with her father. However, it is little Josie who begs her to not send her away:

Josie Mam, I'd be watchin' for ya all the time 'long the Bog of Cats. I'd be hopin' and waitin' and prayin' for ya to return" (59).

Seeking to spare her child the pain of a lifetime of waiting—just as she has waited for her own mother Big Josie to return for her—Hester slits Josie's throat as she lies in her arms after the wedding celebration and offers an explanation for her actions:

¹⁶ Carr's play has inspired a burgeoning body of ecocriticism.

Hester Yees thought I was just goin' to walk away and lave her at yeer mercy. I almost did. But she's mine and I wouldn't have her waste her life dreamin' about me and yees thwartin' her with black stories against me.

Carthage You're a savage! (76-77)

While mired in horror over the loss of his child, Carthage calls Hester a savage, reducing her and her actions down to something he can name. It also functions as a reminder that the community has already labeled her a savage, reinforcing the discourse of colonization, domination and eviction that began long before her act of infanticide. Her blood origins, her counter-hegemonic lifestyle and the disruption she poses for normative patterns of domesticity marked her as an outsider from the beginning and form the basis of the collective communal rejection she faces. She inhabits the space of those who must, to quote Gloria Anzaldúa, “cross over, pass over or go through the confines of the ‘normal’” (quoted in Saldivar-Hull 2000: 67). In *Borderlands: La Frontera* Chicana writer Anzaldúa articulates a theoretical framework of the border/borderlands that transcends literal borders and moves into the realm of other contested spaces. Saldivar-Hull summarizes Anzaldúa's ideology:

Anzaldúa's feminism exists in a borderland grounded in but not limited to geographic space; it resides in a space not acknowledged by dominant culture. She uses the border as an organizing metaphor for Chicanas living in multiple worlds, multiple cultures, and employs border discourse to describe the borderlands' inhabitants: “*Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over or go through the confines of the ‘normal’ (3). (Saldivar-Hull 2000: 67)

Using Anzaldúa's framework, Hester, *La Llorona* and Medea represent examples of “*los atravesados*”—those who cross over—and who occupy borderland spaces. Oliver-Rotger writes that, “Medea inhabits the realm of those qualified as the abject and the psychotic, the other, those ‘*atravesados*’ whom Gloria Anzaldúa situates in the epistemological and geographical terrain of the borderlands” (2003: 282). Here, the setting of the play, the Irish Midlands, itself functions as a border space caught in a nexus of multiple meaning. Lojek notes that Marina Carr “has repeatedly described the Midlands as a ‘crossroads’ and landscape as ‘another character in the work’” (2011: 68).

The notion of crossing and crossing over is key in Carr's play where characters inhabit liminal spaces and where Hester traverses several subject positions, but is always ultimately relegated to the fringe. Hester *atraviesa*—crosses—several subject positions and continually negotiates space and identity as she makes her way in the community. She is also accused of being wicked and prone to misbehaving; she is in essence a *traviesa*—the Spanish word that means mischievous—showing up in a white dress on Carthage's wedding day. And like *Malinche* and Medea, Hester also bears progeny with a foot in two worlds: Little Josie Swane is a hybrid child, part Irish and part Traveller.

Hester is an Irish Traveller, a distinct non-settled ethnic group in Ireland. As Mary Burke points out, Irish Travellers have their own cultural traditions and a distinct language, Cant (or Shelta as it is also referred to) that mark them as outsiders to the settled Irish community (2009).¹⁷ She is clear, however, to note a distinction between Travellers and Gypsies: “Despite apparent similarities to British Romanies, Irish Travellers do not classify themselves as Gypsies, nor are they defined as such by anthropologists” (2009: 3). Lojek notes that, “Long-standing conflicts between the Traveller settled communities have regularly raised questions of rights and assimilation, of what it means to be ‘at home’ in Ireland” (2011: 93).

In an interview, Carr explained that she chose to make Hester a Traveller because “travellers are our national outsiders, aren't they?” (quoted in Cerquoni 2003: 178; Lojek 2011: 69). This notion of national outsiders is a key component to Anzaldúa's configuration of the borderlands and one that demands a consideration of what exactly comprises a desirable citizenry—who is an insider/outsider and on what basis—and who produces such a population. This question haunts the core of the play as the locals use Hester's Traveller origins as reason to ostracize and cast aspersions upon her even though she (like Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* who faces similar treatment at times) has lived on the land her entire life and has interacted with the people in the community on a daily basis. Carthage's mother, Mrs. Kilbride, is actively hostile towards Hester and her daughter over their lineage: “A waste of time givin' chances to a tinker. All tinkers understand is the open road and where the next bottle of

¹⁷ In the introduction to *Tinkers* Burke explains the origins and cultural traits of the Traveller community: “Contemporary Travellers in Ireland share common descent and history and possess discrete cultural practices: boundary rules against outsiders, rigid gender roles, an aspiration to be mobile, an adaptive tradition of self-employment and involvement in marginal trades, a preference for flexibility of occupation over job security, a pattern of providing short-term labour in accordance with market demands, adherence to Catholicism involving public displays of religiosity, early marriage and substantial dowry payments when families are affluent, a unique material culture, and district ritual of death and cleansing” (2009: 2).

whiskey is comin' from" (51). Xavier even uses it as a license to molest Hester on his daughter Caroline's wedding day:

Hester ...ya'll take nothin' from me I don't choose to give ya.

Xavier (*puts gun to her throat*) Won't I now? Think ya'll outwit me with your tinker ways and –

Hester Let go of me!

Xavier (*a tighter grip*) Now let's see the leftovers of Carthage Kilbride.

Uses gun to look down her dress.

Hester I'm warnin' ya, let go!

A struggle, a few blows, he wins this bout.

Xavier Now you are stronger than me? I could do what I wanted with you right here and now and no wan would believe ya. Now what I'd really like to know is when are ya plannin' on lavin'? (67)

Xavier violates Hester on the basis of his ability to treat her as subhuman and further isolates her from the community when he taunts her with the standard threat that “no wan would believe ya”, consolidating his power over her silence too. Desperate and in face of this abuse, Hester nonetheless bargains with Carthage for the opportunity to at least remain on the land in the caravan:

Hester If ya just let me stay I'll cause no more trouble. I'll move into the caravan with Josie. In time ya may be glad to have me around. I've been your greatest friend around here, Carthage, doesn't that count for nothin' now? (69)

Unlike Medea, who attempts to negotiate with Kreon for the opportunity to remain one more day—ostensibly to more carefully plan the murders of Jason, his bride, Kreon and her children—Hester wants only to remain on the land and raise her child. Carthage however will not abide this, and offers her money to leave. Hester reminds him that the land he owns was purchased with blood money; he played a role in the murder of her brother Joseph who Hester later reveals she killed not for money but over jealousy. Hester could not deal with sharing her mother, even with her

brother, and kills him, slicing his throat and throwing his body overboard with Carthage's help. Carthage rejects her version of events and, unable to convince him, it becomes clear that while Hester's child with Carthage allows her entry into the community, it will never guarantee her social or cultural acceptance. She will remain an outsider, and with Carthage's refusal to marry her, any chance she has for integration into bourgeoisie society is lost. And while little Josie is partially accepted within the family unit, her grandmother insists on reminding her where she came from:

Mrs. Kilbride Ya got some of it right. Ya got the 'Josie' part right, but ya got the 'Kilbride part wrong, because you're not a Kilbride. You're a Swane. Can ya spell Swane? Of course ya can't. You're Hester Swane's little bastard. You're not a Kilbride and never will be.

Josie I'm tellin' Daddy what ya said.

Mrs. Kilbride Tell him! Ya won't be tellin' him anythin' I haven't tould him meself. He's an eegit, your daddy. I warned him about that wan, Hester Swane, that she'd get her claws in, and she did, the tinker. That's what yees are, tinkers. And your poor daddy, all he's had to put up with. Well, at least that's all changin' now... (17)

Mrs. Kilbride's comments to Josie point out that some members of the community are viewed as more valuable than others. However, as Mrs. Kilbride reveals, perhaps that can be remedied to some extent by altering the circumstances of little Josie's life, and situating her in opposition to her mother.

Hester's "wild" existence, meanwhile, is relegated to the absolute fringes of the bogland. She resists this placement to the bitter end, yet cannot transcend the social rejection that manifests itself in her current banishment from "proper" society, confronting Caroline on her wedding day and issuing a warning:

Hester You're takin' me husband, you're takin' me house, ya even want me daughter. Over my dead body. (21)

Functioning on an ethics of pure resistance, Hester refuses to internalize the public criticism, opting instead to loudly proclaim her right to live where and how she chooses:

Hester I was born on the Bog of Cats and on the Bog of Cats I'll end me days. I've as much right to this place as any of yees, more for it holds me to it in ways it has never held yees. And as for me tinker blood, I'm proud of it. It gives me an edge over all of yees around here, allows me see yees for the inbred, underbred, bog-brained shower yees are. I'm warnin' ya now, Carthage, you go through with this sham weddin' and you'll never see Josie again. (27)

Hester is proud of her “tinker blood” and uses it as a badge of authenticity, insisting she has access to a kind of truth unavailable to the rest. For Hester, being outside of the ‘normal’ means she must learn to strategically survive in a zone that does not want to acknowledge her right to exist and this requires the mobilization of multiple mechanisms of survival. Here, as an act of rebellion for her dis/replacement, she burns down the house. Yet, Hester does not ascribe actual value to the house, demonstrated in the ruthless destruction of it:

Hester Would ya calm down, Monica, only an auld house, it should never have been built in the first place. Let the bog have it back. Never liked that house much anyway.

Monica That's what the tinkers do, isn't it, burn everythin' after them? (59)

Monica reiterates the community's prejudice against Travellers,¹⁸ linking Hester with an ethics of annihilation and waste, and later reveals that the community can only articulate Hester's rage in terms of “black-art”:

Monica Well, I don't know how ya'll swing to stay now, your house in ashes, ya after appearin' in that dress. They're sayin' it's a black-art thing ya picked up somewhere. (61)

Monica's statement is key, linking her as it does with a legacy of dangerous wandering witches—akin to descriptions of *La Llorona*—and attributes the damage she causes to supernatural acts of magic and sorcery, not one rooted in resistance against displacement. Xavier is quick to remind her of

¹⁸ Lojek notes that “Though Hester's community is now commonly termed the ‘Travelling’ community, other characters invariably refer to her as a ‘tinker,’ a term that is generally regarded (and that these characters clearly regard) as pejorative and largely dismissive of the value of Traveller culture” (2011: 69).

history's treatment of "witchy" women: "A hundred years we'd strap ya to a stake and roast ya till your guts exploded" (68). Painting Hester as a witch is a convenient mechanism for Xavier, whose threats register as an attempt to assert his control over her, and functions as a reminder that the community already believes she possesses "black art" capabilities and as such poses a threat beyond the corporeal realm.¹⁹ It also aligns Hester with *La Llorona*, whose metamorphosis from woman to ghost in the cultural imaginary often involves painting her as a witch. Hester herself tells her dead brother she thinks she is already a ghost:

Hester Oh I think I know, Joseph, for a long time now I
 been thinkin' I'm already a ghost. (58)

This assertion connects the two figures because though Hester is alive through most of the narrative—unlike depictions of *La Llorona*—she is forced to nonetheless negotiate the positions of witch and ghost. Here, Hester and *La Llorona*'s fate intersect in the collective treatment they receive at the hands of those around them. Some read Hester as an icon of feminine rage who is attempting to manage multiple rejections from several social forces—much like the treatment *La Llorona* faces. Hester is continually angry throughout the play: she is angry at Carthage for the betrayal on his part; she is angry at her absentee mother who has never returned for her and for whom she nightly searches, enacting her own *Llorona* performance; and she is angry at the intrusive members of the local community who would deny her access to the community because of her "tinker blood." And while she is proud of her Traveller origins and tied to the Bog of Cats by way of personal history and affection, in fact she yearns for the convention of settled, domestic life and wants Carthage to marry her so they can raise their child together on the bog.

Here the bog—like the bodies of water *La Llorona* wanders near—becomes transformed into a mystical space with cosmic pull that lures people in and disappears them from material existence, like Big Josie Swane who never returns for Hester, at once feeding into notions of the Irish landscape as a supernatural force that traps and paralyzes movement forward towards modernity while simultaneously mythologizing the bogland as the final bastion of Irish authenticity working to impede the force of cultural erosion. The bog then, a space of energy (peat) and labor also becomes a place that itself consumes and cannibalizes, and is ultimately rendered complicit in the disappearance of Big Josie Swane whose absence haunts Hester, "further compounding the association of woman with displacement, exile and historical erasure" (Sihra 2007: 212). Hester

¹⁹ In another connection to Hawthorne, Melissa Sihra notes that, "Similar to the plight of Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* the accusations of black magic are based on a distrust of the extra-ordinary" (2009: 583).

however, does not conform to the community's demand that she "migrate," challenging and resisting the push into exile. In doing so, she refuses to partake in a narrative that moves certain women out of view—like those in Magdalen Asylums²⁰ or who emigrate for a variety of social or economic reasons and are not heard from again. Hester does not leave, unlike the two sisters in Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990),²¹ and sees it as an affirmation of her birthright to remain. She tells her dead brother's ghost she senses her mother nearby:

Joseph Death's a big country, Hester. She could be anywhere in it.

Hester No, she's alive. I can smell her. She's comin' towards me. I know it. Why doesn't she come and be done with it! If ya see her tell her I won't be hard on her, will ya?
(55)

She also reveals to Monica that: "All them years I was in the Industrial School I swore to meself that wan day I'm comin' back to the Bog of Cats to wait for her and I'm never lavin' again" (61). After enduring separation from both her mother and the bog, Hester is resolute in her conviction to stay and wait.

In a noteworthy departure from the *La Llorona* narrative, Hester searches for her mother instead of her children. Leeney notes the importance of this point:

It is significant that Hester's child is a girl, since this establishes the line of female connection as the issue. In this way the play is radical in the Irish canon. It is an enactment of mourning for the absent mother; this is not only Hester's mother, but, theatrically speaking, the mother absent from so many important Irish plays. (2004: 160)

²⁰ Magdalen Asylums, also known as Magdalen Laundries where women had to work without pay washing the laundry of the local community, were residential institutions for "fallen" women such as unmarried mothers. Writes Francis Finnegan: "Confinement, forced labour and senseless atonement, obsessively urged was but part of their penance. Often the separation from a child was an added torment, and some, without hope and resigned to that unnatural existence, remained in the Homes until they died" (2004: 242). Her book *Do Penance or Perish* researches the history of Magdalen Asylums and their existence in Ireland.

²¹ In Friel's play (1990), sisters Agnes and Rose emigrate and despite efforts to find them, they are not heard from again until twenty-five years later when Michael finally finds Rose in London soon before she dies. He discovers Agnes died some time before and learns they moved frequently during their time abroad where they worked as cleaning women until they could not find work anymore and eventually became homeless and died destitute.

Hester's search for the maternal then, is a search for the missing mothers Leeney identifies. If modern and contemporary Irish drama is populated with ineffectual fathers, then mothers or mother figures are virtually absent in most plays, with notable exceptions.²² Here the ghost of Hester's mother continually drives the foundational energy of *Bog* and reminds the spectator that the persistence of failed maternity and stunted reproduction haunt the core of this play. The layering of past narratives place Hester in a long line of suffering, maligned mothers whose actions leave her story in the hands of those who would deny her right to remain on the land she is connected to through personal devotion and maternal history. The question of who will tell her story emerges at this juncture. By reading Hester beyond the Greek plotline and more closely aligning her with *La Llorona*, the focus shifts and offers the possibility of situating her narrative not exclusively in relation to an established classic about a princess with supernatural powers, but alongside a similarly marginalized character whose folk story endures and belongs to those who retell it along the borderlands.

Conclusion

In the last twenty-five years, Chicana feminists have recuperated *La Llorona* narratives with modern interpretations rooted in sympathetic and more expansive readings,²³ as they have done with images of the *Virgen de*

²² See, for example, the long-suffering Maurya in Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904) or Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire* (1985) where Mommo presents a forceful maternal presence, though she is incomprehensible and in need of constant care. See also Marina Carr's *The Mai* (2003).

²³ Sandra Cisneros, Maria Helena Viramontes and Cherrie Moraga have all written works dealing with the story of *La Llorona*. Oliver-Rotger notes: "...the reference to other popular figures like *Malinche* and *La Llorona* is also present in Cisneros' and Viramontes' fiction, as well as in Moraga's drama and essays. These references have been viewed as a return to the indigenous essentialism that prevailed during the Chicano movement and as a romanticization of an unknown history" (Cooper Alacrón 6, 141) [Oliver-Rotger 2003: 57]. The title story in Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991) reinterprets the legend and offers its own contemporary retelling, as does Viramontes in her urban story "Tears on my Pillow" in the collection *The Moths and Other Stories* (1985). Oliver-Rotger writes that Moraga's "*Hungry Woman* is a dystopian tragedy that draws on the Mexican and European legend and myth of *La Llorona* and *Medea*, both of which relate the tragic fate of women who dare cross borders" (377). Also, many major Chicana/o academics have written extensively on the subject.

Guadalupe.²⁴ As Saldivar-Hull notes: “In border feminist art, the *Llorona* of Chicana feminists no longer figures as enemy or as victim...Feminist writers on the border forge complex narratives that bring to bear the nuances of the theories of intersectionality” (2000: 126). These theories of intersectionality open up the possibility of reading Hester as a transnational, cross-cultural border figure like *La Llorona*. These mothers represent the site of cultural collision and challenge a designated identity. Their defiance also repudiates the kind of historical erasure that Medea’s Jason promulgates: “We need another way to get us sons. No women then —That way all human misery would end” (19). This desire to erase the female body out of existence is rendered clear not only in Jason’s lament but in the ghostly form of *La Llorona*’s body and in the physical banishment of Hester from the community in *By the Bog of Cats*. Yet, Hester’s final words to Carthage reveal her strategy of resistance against the demands she slip quietly into oblivion from communal memory:

Hester: Ya won’t forget me now, Carthage, and when all of this is over or half remembered and you think you’ve almost forgotten me again, take a walk along the Bog of Cats and wait for a purlin’ wind through your hair or a soft breath be your ear or a rustle behind ya. That’ll be me and Josie ghostin’ ya. (77)

Hester, like *La Llorona*, will not go away, “ghostin’” both the landscape she is connected to and the community that banished her. The fact that these figures continue to reappear in contemporary forums may reveal a deep anxiety their stories provoke in hegemonic structures of powers, and rather than follow Jason’s decree to alleviate that tension, the continued persistence of their narratives can also be read as a powerful form of resistance against these kinds of forces as they withstand dispossession by refusing complete exile, ultimately returning to assert their presence.

²⁴ Elizabeth Butler Cullingford links Irish singer Sinéad O’Connor’s move to recuperate the image of the Virgin Mary with similar work by Chicana artists: “Instead of rejecting the traditionally pure and submissive Virgin as an unrealistic and psychologically damaging ideal, O’Connor resituates her in opposition to the patriarchy. This is not an original move (it is more closely related to the ‘goddess’ feminism of the early eighties), but nor is it necessarily ineffective. It may be compared to the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe among Chicana women in Texas, who erect domestic shrines that are both monuments of kitsch and sources of power and consolation” (2001: 251-252).

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Frankly Speaking, “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you”: Migration and White Slavery in Argentina in Joyce’s “Eveline”

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Abstract

In this article James Joyce’s “Eveline” (1904) is analysed, looking at the moral panic about “white slavery” in Europe and South America. The article especially focuses on Argentina, the foremost recipient of trafficked women between 1880 and 1930 (and, of course, Joyce’s destination choice for Eveline). By looking at Frank, the sailor who intends to take Eveline to Buenos Aires, the article explores the possible links between Joyce’s story and the sex trafficking industry thriving in Buenos Aires through the Jewish criminal association *Zwi Migdal*. Frank’s representation allows us to draw this connection because his behaviour with Eveline coincides with the seduction and recruiting methods employed by *Zwi Migdal* procurers. This work adds to Hugh Kenner’s sceptical reading of the sailor and Katherine Mullin’s analysis of Joyce and white slavery discourses by suggesting that, in light of the historical situation in Argentina and Joyce’s hyper-analyzed ambiguities, Frank could be a *Zwi Migdal* recruiter and Eveline a potential sex slave.

*La luz de este prostíbulo apuñala
las sombras de la calle.*

*Paso delante suyo y se me enciende
un pensamiento cruel en la cabeza:
¿Terminaré mi vida en un prostíbulo?
Clara Beter, “Presentimiento”¹*

1

*The light of this brothel stabs
the shadows of the street.*

*I walk in front of it and a cruel thought
ignites in my head:
Would I end up my life in a brothel?*

Clara Beter, “Premonition” [my translation]

Joyce's "Eveline" has traditionally been interpreted as the story in *Dubliners* (1914) that best exemplifies Ireland's "paralysis," a key term for most critics, with the word generally functioning "as a metaphor for the plight of the characters caught up in situations that they can neither completely comprehend nor control, and from which they cannot escape" (Doherty 1992: 35). Eveline's everyday life is haunted by a promise to her dying mother, an abusive alcoholic father who takes her money, a monotonous job, and the children who have been left to her charge. In such a bleak context, Frank, an enigmatic but charming sailor, appears with promises of marriage and a new life in Buenos Aires. Despite her dismal situation in Dublin, Eveline refuses to board a ship with the sailor and stays in Ireland. Many critics have agreed that the oppression in which she lives perversely grants her the only security she has ever known, and thus she fails to move forward and become herself.

Yet the latest new historicist scholarship has illuminated a possibly more optimistic reading of "Eveline" once we consider the white slavery discourses circulating at the time the story was conceived.² This scholarship suggests that Eveline may have comprehended more than readers assumed, controlled her destiny in ways unsuspected by audiences, and escaped an ominous future in Argentina. Some clues in the story hint that Joyce knew more about white slavery than earlier scholars initially thought and that he, as Katherine Mullin contends, slyly incorporated such discourse in his tale. Historians like Ivette Trochón and Gerardo Bra confirm that early in the twentieth century Buenos Aires was the centre of the white slave trade between Europe and South America. Indeed, Joyce's choice of Buenos Aires as Eveline's destination is semantically charged.

In "Don't Cry for Me Argentina: 'Eveline' and the Seductions of Emigration Propaganda" (2000), Mullin compellingly analyzes the ideological perception of sexual danger in foreign lands disseminated by the European media. According to the critic, such discourse was adopted in Ireland to discourage emigration. Continuing with this observation, in *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity* (2003), Mullin persuasively examines the nuanced ways in which Joyce weaves a white slavery subtext (among other "offensive" discourses) into his narrative in order to provoke censors. This article will describe the historical context of white slavery in Argentina at the time "Eveline" takes place in order to provide further

² New Historicism is an American school of criticism that emerged in the 1980s, especially through the work of Stephen Greenblatt. New Historicism's basic tenant is that, in order to interpret a literary text, it is essential to take into account the historical context in which the narrative was conceived. New Historicism privileges the political, cultural, social, and economic circumstances in which a work of literature was created, while it treats literary and non-literary texts in the same way. This type of analysis has allowed scholars to argue that Joyce incorporated a white slavery subtext into his story, which may not have been initially obvious in the study of the text itself.

evidence supporting Mullin's reading of the story, but, while Mullin focuses on the historical context in Europe, this work will explore the situation in South America. This analysis will then concentrate on the possible links between "Eveline" and the sex trafficking industry thriving in Buenos Aires through the Jewish criminal association *Zwi Migdal*. Frank's representation allows us to draw this connection because his behaviour with Eveline reflects the seduction and recruiting tactics employed by *Zwi Migdal* procurers, who travelled regularly to Europe in order to entice poor women with courtship and promises of marriage to later prostitute them in Buenos Aires. This work adds to Hugh Kenner's sceptical reading of the sailor and Mullin's analysis of Joyce and white slavery discourses by suggesting that, in light of Frank's courtship method and Joyce's hyper-analyzed ambiguities, Joyce could have modelled the mysterious sailor after the stereotypical (*Zwi Migdal*?) recruiters so prevalent in social purity propaganda.

In her 2006 book *Las Rutas de Eros*, the Uruguayan historian Ivette Trochón documents sex trafficking patterns during the early twentieth century, concluding that between 1860 and 1930 sex trafficking of women took place predominantly from Europe to the new continent (2006: 21). With painstaking detail, Trochón explains that, in this period, the trafficking of white women originated in countries such as Poland, Russia, France, and Italy and disembarked primarily in Argentina, Brazil, and, on a smaller scale, the United States. The main ports of departure were Marseille, Genova, Bourdeaux, Le Havre, Liverpool, Vigo, and Lisboa (2006: 23). This emergent wave of international sex trafficking depended on several factors: new technologies such as the steamship and the telegraph facilitated transatlantic movements; high indices of male immigrants in the new continent created a demand for "imported" women; the disruption of family dynamics generated by the movement to urban centres because of industrialization; the pervasive poverty, especially in eastern Europe, persuading members of the more exploited populations to search for fortunes abroad--all valid motives that, in turn, opened a space for women to attempt some independence in foreign lands (2006: 21).³ In this respect, the Argentinean government certainly encouraged European female immigration in the hopes of "improving" the local gene pool.⁴ Yet one should note that only educated (read 'middle-class') European women were openly welcomed; "the female immigrant from the

³ Ivette Trochón is paraphrased here (2006: 21).

⁴ On a related note, Jewish immigration was encouraged because the Argentinean government desperately needed to enlarge the agricultural workforce in order to compete in the international market. Jewish communities in the fertile Pampas region greatly contributed to increase the productivity and wealth of the Argentinean nation, which enjoyed unparalleled prosperity in the years before WWI through the end of WWII. The Jewish "gauchos," as they were called, were allowed to purchase land and settle in La Pampa, Santa Fe, and the countryside of Buenos Aires.

lower-classes of southern Europe,” on the other hand, was invoked to symbolize “a failure in the Argentine program of enhancing the race,” especially if she was (willingly or unwillingly) involved in prostitution (Masiello 1992: 6).

Inevitably, the promising economic prospects enticed both legitimate and criminal immigration. The hopes for material advancement of impoverished Europeans and the constant demand for female prostitutes in Argentina turned Buenos Aires into a desirable destination, thus many women saw the opportunity to emigrate. Historians like Donna J. Guy document that only a small percentage of these emigrant women were deceived and later enslaved in brothels; the majority of trafficked women knew that they would be working as prostitutes in Buenos Aires. In fact, the expression “going to Buenos Ayres,” Mullin notes, was turn-of-the-century slang for “taking up a life of prostitution, especially by way of a procurer’s offices” (2000: 189).

The city’s ill fame was not just an exaggerated myth. Trochón corroborates that Argentina was then the headquarters of the biggest global Jewish criminal organization fully dedicated to sex trafficking: the *Varsovia* [Warsaw], better known later as the *Zwi Migdal*.⁵ This association’s modus operandi consisted in sending procurers to Europe to lure potential victims (mainly Jewish girls, who were experiencing extreme discrimination and consequent pauperization) through promises of marriage and a better future in Argentina in order to traffic them and, once in Buenos Aires, sell them as prostitutes. Even though *Zwi Migdal* members constituted a clear minority of the Jewish community in Argentina—and Jewish society considered these traffickers and their prostitutes virtual pariahs—the organization became extremely successful. One compelling reason accounting for its power was that the *Zwi Migdal* was legally registered in Buenos Aires as a society of mutual help, the *Varsovia Jewish Mutual Help Society*, which allowed the traffickers to operate with relative ease. Trochón points out that there were other sex trafficking groups active in Argentina, such as the French *Le Milieu*, which was almost as lucrative as the *Zwi Migdal*, yet far more tolerated because of Argentina’s infatuation with French culture at the time. Another difference is that, unlike the *Zwi*

⁵ Ivette Trochón explains that Jewish sex trafficking into Argentina started around the 1870s and was loosely organized until 1906, when the first Jewish society of mutual help was legally registered and officially recognized under the name of *Varsovia* (2006: 334). Gerardo Bra notes that this was only a façade, as the association was fully dedicated to sex trafficking and all its members were criminals (1982: 29). This organization will be referred to by its most familiar name, *Zwi Migdal*, even though it was effectively called this for only one year before it was dismantled in 1930. In 1929, the Polish consul in Argentina, Ladislao Mazurkiewicz, complained to the Argentinean government that this criminal organization shared the name of Poland’s capital, therefore prompting the name change (Trochón 2006: 341).

Migdal, the French criminal organization was not legally registered. Overall, the Argentinean sex trafficking business was roughly split between these two criminal groups: the *Zwi Migdal* imported poor Jewish women mainly from Warsaw, and *Le Milieu* trafficked women mostly from Marseilles (Bristow 1983: 53).⁶ In any case, what is undeniable is the fact that, because of the great demand for white prostitutes from Europe, Argentina was a favoured destination for trafficked women who ended up working under highly structured sex trafficking organizations (Trochón 2006: 22).

Frank in Joyce's Nicely Polished Looking-Glass

“Eveline” was first published in *The Irish Homestead* on September 10, 1904. Almost exactly one month later, Joyce moved to Pola, Austria and later Trieste, Italy, where he began his permanent exile.⁷ As documented by Richard Ellmann and other biographers, Joyce’s emigration initiated his arduous struggle for the publication of his short story collection, *Dubliners*, which lasted ten years. During this time, Joyce revised the story making considerable alterations. In the final version published in 1914, for example, Joyce suggestively omitted Eveline’s wondering whether her decision to go with Frank to Buenos Aires would be “honourable” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 216).⁸ Eveline’s closing rejection of the sailor, nonetheless, always stayed the same. Many have argued that her panic attack at the docks offers the ultimate proof of Eveline’s (ergo Dubliners’) paralysis. Several critics concur that Eveline cannot help but remain comfortably numb in her familiar routine, thus failing to evolve.⁹

⁶ There was also a smaller French association trafficking women from Paris, a small group of Italian procurers, and local prostitution, but those groups were not as strong and organized as the *Zwi Migdal* and *Le Milieu*.

⁷ John McCourt observes that Trieste was the “world’s seventh busiest port, the second in the Mediterranean after Marseilles” (2000: 29). In such a context, one can speculate that stories of white slave traffic in Buenos Aires would have been heard by Joyce, especially since much of the policing against white slavery occurred at the ports.

⁸ The original version of “Eveline” published in *The Irish Homestead* reads: “She had consented to go away—to leave her home. Was it wise—was it honourable?” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 216). For the final version, Joyce changed the punctuation and deleted the second part of the question: “She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise?” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 28).

⁹ Critics frequently point to “Eveline” as the story that most evidently shows paralysis. As Trevor L. Williams asserts, “[i]n story after story one petite-bourgeois character after another is brought to the mirror to apprehend his or her situation, but (and Eveline is the *prime example*) they see no way to act, no way to transcend the limits of their present consciousness or class position” [my emphasis] (1997: 54). Peter De Voogd summarizes the traditional critical reception of “Eveline” in his essay “Imaging Eveline, Visualized Focalizations in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*,” explaining that this story has generally been interpreted as “the most obvious story in *Dubliners* to express the sterile paralysis that Joyce thought of as typical of Dublin life” (2000: 48).

Yet such received wisdom changed when Hugh Kenner began to suspect Frank's intentions in his book *The Pound Era* (1971). He later suggested that Frank was a liar by analyzing a couple of commas in his "Molly's Masterstroke" (1972) and by highlighting Joyce's use of "pastiche and parody" in his *Joyce's Voices* (1978) (1978: 81). Kenner challenged traditional readings of "Eveline" that present this (anti)heroine as paralyzed in the end, unable to embrace a promising future with Frank in Buenos Aires (1971: 38). Instead, Kenner questions the sailor's frankness (now a seducer?). Other scholars have offered provocative responses to Kenner's reading. The most extreme position is best exemplified by Sidney Freshbach, who, comparing Kenner's interpretation of Frank to house of cards, confesses his desire to "collapse [Kenner's] argument [suggesting that] Frank changes from being a character in a short story by Joyce to an invention of [Kenner's] own" (1983: 223). Katherine Mullin, on the other hand, persuasively argues that Frank could actually be a procurer by analyzing the ideological atmosphere of Victorian England (2003: 69). Other critics, such as Garry Leonard and Suzette Henke, "see the menacing and abusive father as a potentially greater threat to Eveline's safety and welfare than the risk of a possible seduction and abandonment by a lying sailor" (Norris 2003: 59). Margot Norris, for her part, focuses on Joyce's narrative omissions, while she opens the possibility of yet another interpretation of Eveline's "decision by indecision" at the end of the story (2003: 57). Norris explains that "the point of the story may be less the adjudication of the correct choice than to have the reader experience the [. . .] desperate uncertainty of such a life-altering choice," but she shares Kenner's apprehensive view of Frank (2003: 59). As for the most recent scholarship, Sean Latham's Longman edition of *Dubliners* specifically addresses the possibility of Frank being "a 'white slaver' who intends to lure Eveline into a life of prostitution" (2011: 264).

We should pause for a moment on Katherine Mullin's analysis because she develops the existing scholarship by proving through carefully documented archival evidence that, during the time Joyce was writing and revising "Eveline" for publication, the social purity movement in England and Ireland had ignited a moral pandemonium around stories of unscrupulous pimps suspiciously akin to Frank and sexual enslavement of innocent white girls uncannily similar to Eveline. William T. Stead's 1885 sensationalist article about white slavery, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,"

epitomizes such discourses.¹⁰ Joyce actually mentions Stead in passing in Part V of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and therefore we know that Joyce was aware of the journalist's existence.¹¹ We also know that Joyce was conscious of the flourishing white-slave traffic from Europe to Buenos Aires, not only from Stead's article and the international scandal it generated but from a copy he possessed and annotated of *The White Slave Market* (1912). Mullin notes that "the extent to which Frank's courtship uncannily suggests that of a villain in white slave tracts is probably most strikingly demonstrated" in the following excerpt from that book:

Some pimps take months and months to gain proper control over their victims. . . . For a long time, one fiend incarnate contented himself with merely "walking out" with the girl, taking her to cheap picture shows, buying her little presents, meeting her as she came home from work and doing everything that would take her mind off his villainy. Once he had taught her to trust him, to love him, he ruined her and ruthlessly "dumped" her into the inferno at Buenos Ayres. (quoted in Mullin 2003: 70)

Frank does fit the pattern: we know little about when the affair started, but Eveline remembers

well [. . .] the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. [. . .] Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her at the stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see the *Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. [. . .] People knew that they were courting and when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor she always felt pleasantly confused. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29)

¹⁰ In 1885, the journalist and editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, William T. Stead, devised a plan to prove that sexual slavery existed in England. With only five pounds, Stead purchased a young girl and then wrote an article he called "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon." As Stead had calculated, this piece of news spawned a literal scandal that quickly spread beyond England. Judith Walkowitz notes that "[t]elegraphic services rapidly transformed the 'Maiden Tribute' into an international event" (1992: 82). Quoting Stead, Walkowitz observes that "Stead proudly boasted that his 'revelations' were printed in every capital of the Continent as well as by the 'purest journals in the great American republic.' Unauthorized reprints were said to have surpassed the one and half million mark" (1992: 82).

¹¹ In Part V, Joyce refers to Stead: "MacCann began to speak with fluent energy of the Czar's rescript of Stead, of general disarmament [. . .]" (Joyce, *Portrait*, 2006: 176).

When describing Frank's courtship, Joyce emphasizes the uncertainty of Eveline's predicament pairing words such as "pleasantly confused" to refer to her state of mind (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29). But when thinking about her possible emigration with the sailor, Eveline at times is less ambivalent as she wonders if that was "wise" and anticipates being judged "a fool," a puzzling reaction that could imply her awareness about the potentially negative consequences of her decision and explain her subsequent panic attack at the docks (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 28). As for Eveline's suitor, while Joyce gives us more ellipsis than concrete data, "the sailor who calls himself Frank" makes at least three suspicious claims (Kenner 1972: 20): he tells the girl stories about the "terrible Patagonians"; he says that he has a "home" waiting for her; and, of all places in the world, he wants to take her to "Buenos Ayres" (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29-30). As Kenner contends, "[c]aught up as we are in the pathos of [Eveline's] final refusal, we may not reflect on the extreme improbability of these postulates, that a Dublin sailor-boy has grown affluent in South America, and bought a house and sailed back to Ireland to find him a bride to fill it" (1972: 20-21).

Much has been written about Frank's dubious stories about the "terrible Patagonians" (long extinct by the time of Frank's travels and not nearly as "terrible" as he describes them) or his alleged "home" in Argentina (extremely difficult to afford in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires with only a sailor's salary).¹² Let us remember that Frank claims to have "started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allen line"—a footnote in Norris's Norton edition of *Dubliners* defines this position as that of an "inexperienced worker hired to help the crew on a ship with menial tasks and errands" (2006: 29-30). According to David Rock, "in 1914 it was estimated that four-fifths of [immigrant Buenos Aires] lived in one-room households" in what used to be called "conventillos": crowded, unsanitary urban dwellings with shared bathrooms and limited access to drinking water (1985: 175). These "conventillos" were typically the kind of lodging a working-class immigrant would have been able to afford because of the high real estate prices of Buenos Aires, probably not the type of "home" Eveline would look forward to inhabiting.

In contrast with the situation of most uneducated immigrants, sex traffickers enjoyed an enviable economic position in Argentina that would have allowed them to purchase real estate with ease, since they earned considerable amounts of money from the prostituted women and were therefore constantly searching for new recruits. French prostitution, for

¹² These aborigines constituted small clans of nomad hunters. In Victorian times, their attributes were highly exaggerated as they were said to be extremely tall and fierce, a story that Frank could have used to dazzle Eveline. The Patagonians were wiped out by 1879, when General Julio A. Roca finished his "conquest of the desert" military campaign and practically exterminated them. See Barberán Reinares's "Like a 'Helpless Animal' (D 41)? Like a Cautious Woman: Joyce's 'Eveline,' Immigration, and the *Zwi Migdal* in Argentina in the Early 1900s."

instance, was directly linked to Argentina's oligarchy, as wealthier men preferred (and paid substantially more for) a French prostitute or "cocotte," which accounts for the clear favour that *Le Milieu* members enjoyed. As for Jewish traffickers, even though they were stigmatized, the affluence they acquired was certainly conspicuous: the headquarters of the *Zwi Migdal* society of mutual help in Buenos Aires was a luxurious mansion in Calle Córdoba 3280. It contained a synagogue, an ample party hall, a bar, a room to perform wakes, another room for business meetings, and a garden with tall palm trees. Trochón describes marble and bronze plaques in some of its rooms commemorating the memory of presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries of the association (2006: 92). These facilities, among others the *Zwi Migdal* possessed, allowed Jewish traffickers and prostitutes to continue practicing their faith and their rituals, as the respectable Jewish community expelled them from their temples and cemeteries. In *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas*, Isabel Vincent notes that, during its heyday, *Zwi Migdal* members and their recruited prostitutes were "completely banned by the respectable Jewish community" and "ostracized [as] the unclean ones," but that did not prevent their ultra lucrative business from prospering until its dismantling in 1930 (Vincent 2005: 12; Bristow 1983: 5). Unlike sailors, sex traffickers in Argentina were undoubtedly wealthy.

According to Mullin, "Frank closely matches the stereotype of the itinerant international procurer, 'bully' or 'cadet', charming the gullible with tales and rash promises" (2003: 69). The critic notes that "[p]rocurers in social purity propaganda were almost always 'of foreign parentage, probably a Jew, a Frenchman, an Italian, or perhaps a Greek'" (2003: 69). In her analysis, Mullin highlights Frank's foreignness without specifying any particular nationality, but a look at the most common methods of recruitment can shed more light on the sailor. French recruiters, for example, offered the women jobs as prostitutes and did not resort to courtship or marriage (Carretero 1995: 114). *Zwi Migdal* procurers, on the other hand, often seduced the women and promised them marriage in order to traffic them from Europe to Argentina (114).¹³ Such a strategy would lead us to connect Frank with Jewish recruiters: of those Jewish girls who were deceived, a majority reported that it was through tactics of courtship similar to the ones Frank seems to be employing with Eveline.¹⁴ While, arguably, the story paints Frank with an air of foreignness (we know he has a darker complexion, for example), nowhere do we get hints of a foreign accent (French, Italian, or Greek, if we go along with the

¹³ Here Andrés Carretero is paraphrased (1995: 114). Also, see Gerardo Bra (1982: 116-117).

¹⁴ Raquel Liberman, the woman who denounced the *Zwi Migdal* in 1929 and eventually caused its downfall, was seduced through methods strikingly similar to those Frank seems to employ with Eveline (Bra 1982: 116-117).

stereotypical procurer of social purity propaganda). Could we assume that Frank may have been, like Leopold Bloom, and Irish Jew? Joyce's destination choice (the infamous turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires) and his own interest in Jewish themes (as evidenced in *Ulysses*) invite speculation.

Several critics, Kenner among them, have pointed out that *Dubliners* offers an embryonic version of Joyce's oeuvre. In it, the author began the experiments both with form and content that would recur in his later masterpieces. In fact, Joyce initially conceived the germ of the story that flourished into *Ulysses* as one for the *Dubliners* compilation. It does seem pertinent, then, to read his collection of short stories in light of *Ulysses*, where the author explicitly references white slavery and the atmosphere of moral reform surrounding it. In "Circe," for example, the discourses of white slavery, prostitution, and Jewishness become intertwined. During Bloom's nightmarish trial, the City Recorder vows "to put an end to this white slave traffic and rid Dublin of this odious pest. Scandalous!" (Joyce 1986: 384). As for the ideological links between "vice" and Jewishness, Celia Marshik observes that, "Zoe [the prostitute Bloom encounters outside Bella Cohen's brothel,] [l]ike Bloom, [. . .] has a complicated ethnic and national identity: when Bloom asks her if she is Irish, Zoe responds that she is English but then murmurs Hebrew under her breath" (2008: 154). Marshik further points out that Bella Cohen "again links the (racially) Jewish Bloom with fallen women" (2008: 154). The critic remarks that "Cohen's name implies that she is, or has married someone, of Jewish descent, and Bloom refers to 'our mutual faith' in an attempt to placate her" (2008: 154). But, to complicate Joyce's ambiguous treatment of the subject, later in the trial Bloom himself becomes the target of anti-Semitic racist accusations, as Alexander J Dowie summons his "Fellowchristians and antiBloomites" to proclaim the Jewish ad salesman "a disgrace to christian men," a Caliban "bronzed with infamy" (1986: 401). In such a context, the adjective "bronzed" suggests Jewishness and foreignness. Noticeably, in *Dubliners* Joyce describes Frank's complexion with the same word: Eveline remembers how "[h]e was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze" (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29). We don't know much about Frank or Bloom's physical appearance (in Bloom's case, it differs according to the speaker, while we only know Frank through Eveline's eyes), yet the chosen term and its associations with Jewishness in *Ulysses* are suggestive.

While it is not intended to imply that Joyce was suspicious of Jews in Dublin (Joyce's representation of Leopold Bloom becomes a prime example of his sympathetic treatment of Jewish people), in "Eveline," the author could have incorporated the orientalized discourse of the time in order to play with the pervasive fears about Jewish men preying on

Christian virgins.¹⁵ If Joyce had in mind such a stereotyped individual, on the surface, Frank's portrayal would appear to contradict the author's sympathetic image of Leopold Bloom (a character who, despite his ambiguities, resists stereotypes and shows signs of generosity and compassion throughout *Ulysses*). Yet, as mentioned above, Joyce's incorporation of the white slavery subtext in a clichéd, superficial manner may have little to do with perpetuating existing stereotypes and more with highlighting Frank's unreliability by playing with the ubiquitous fear of Jewish procurers seducing Christian virgins, thus keeping the girl seemingly paralyzed within the narrative. Indeed, readers get the impression that, by staying in Ireland, Eveline will probably become as stagnant as the other characters in the collection, as the girl's life seems to follow her mother's (like Joyce's own mother's) overworked future.

Akin to the situation of pauperized Jewish populations in Eastern Europe, Ireland's colonial status contributed to the pervasive poverty and lack of opportunities experienced by its citizens, which in turn propelled continuous migration into the Americas after the 1845 potato famine. Eveline's social class plays a crucial part in her contemplating the prospect of emigration with Frank. Readers never perceive Eveline having feelings of love towards Frank; at the most, she hints at some anticipation about abandoning a life of poverty and oppression in Dublin. But if Frank has "immoral" intentions, what awaits Eveline in a city full of immigrants speaking languages she does not know, with the ghost of prostitution lurking in the shadows, does not look attractive.¹⁶ Donna J. Guy explains that "[b]y the 1860s the Continental press reported frightening stories of women lured away by strangers with false promises of marriage or work, only to be trapped in some sordid house of ill repute," yet the author suggests that such reports "were cautionary tales for independent European females" (1991: 6). Guy observes that white trafficking stories achieved a mythological proportion, when, in fact, "verifiable cases of white slavery were infrequent [and] highly exaggerated," as most of the women knew they would be working in prostitution (1991: 6). When deceit did occur, however, it involved "a system of forced recruitment by lovers, fiancées, husbands and professional procurers" (1991: 6).

Leaving myths aside, Trochón, Bra, and Carretero confirm that there were powerful global sex trafficking associations operating in Argentina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which commanded a vastly profitable business. The most well-known and best-organized association, the *Žwi Migdal*, had international ramifications (with connections in places as diverse as Rio de Janeiro, New York, Bombay, Johannesburg), but found

¹⁵ See Edward Bristow's *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery 1870-1930*.

¹⁶ The overwhelming majority of immigrants came from Spain and Italy.

a central outpost in Buenos Aires, where the government condoned the presence of their 2,000 brothels and their prostitutes (Trochón 2006: 96; Bra 1982: 70, 114). *Zwi Migdal* members' treatment of their recruited women illustrates cases of literal slavery, as the prostitutes were sold from one owner to another and often endured brutal threats, punishments, and ongoing exploitation (Bra 1982: 37; Carretero 1995: 120). *Zwi Migdal* today is considered a disgrace by the Jewish society in Argentina. It is a name no one wants to remember because it brings about a collective feeling of anxiety since the activities of a minority group of Jewish criminals were used as an ideological weapon to disseminate anti-Semitic propaganda. As Bristow notes, "[i]n Buenos Aires[,] every Russian or Polish Jew was believed to be a trafficker, no matter how respectable he might be" (1983: 215).¹⁷

Let us finally consider that Joyce wrote "Eveline" at the height of social purity campaigns in Dublin. At the time, its port visibly displayed anti-white slavery propaganda which Eveline could have seen at the North Wall while giving Frank "no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 32). Looking at "Eveline" in a broader historical context necessarily changes conventional readings of Joyce's story. Contrary to the way most critics have traditionally interpreted it, as a story demonstrating the most conspicuous case of paralysis in *Dubliners*, "Eveline" may have a less depressing ending if the girl could be saving herself from a future of sexual exploitation in a foreign land. It is not intended to suggest, however, that "Eveline" defies the notion of a paralyzed Ireland (a conspicuous trope throughout this short story), but that this particular character should not be assumed to embody that "paralysis" all by herself. Her situation remains, no doubt about it, hopeless. Eveline lacks opportunities and her position is clearly deplorable. But after considering the very real risks involved in this adventure with a mysterious sailor (who, regardless of the supposed love he has professed, boards the ship and leaves her), staying in Ireland may not have turned out to be "a wholly undesirable life" after all (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29). Once we add the ideological atmosphere and

¹⁷ Of course, not every Jewish immigrant in Argentina was a trafficker, although that was the prevailing ideological assumption, which tended to stigmatize the Jewish community (traditionally discriminated against) even more. Interestingly, Jorge Luis Borges's ancestors have Jewish connections. His grandmother's sister, the British Caroline Haslam, married in England a Jewish man from Livorno, Girogio Soares (Hadis 2006: 298). Because of Soares's Jewish connections in Argentina, the couple traveled and settled there in order to start a legitimate business. That was actually the reason why Borges's future grandmother, Frances Haslam (featured in Borges's story "Historia del Guerrero y de la Cautiva"), came to Argentina around 1870, at the height of Jewish immigration into the country. Once in the new country, Frances Haslam met the Argentinean Colonel Francisco Borges Lafinur and married him (2006: 298). Clearly, there were separate Jewish communities in Argentina, and the *Zwi Migdal* does not represent the totality.

the historical context in which the story was conceived, the journey begins to look suspicious.

In “Eveline,” Joyce incorporates a subtext of sexual slavery and plays with the prevalent fears disseminated by social purity propaganda in an (arguably) obvious way. He sprinkles such stereotypical discourse throughout the pseudo-romance between the “innocent” girl and the “charming” sailor. But these characters’ representations must have resonated with audiences who soon demanded an end to such uncomfortable depictions of Irish virtue. When reading the story through the lens of Frank’s unreliability, this character becomes one more of the many betrayers that abound in *Dubliners*, “all palaver” with no substance (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 154).¹⁸ From this perspective, it may be Frank who best embodies Ireland’s maladies, rather than the maybe-not-so-passive Eveline herself.

Fredric Jameson reminds us in “Magical Narratives” that the text provides “clues [. . .] which lead us back to the concrete historical situation of the individual text itself, and allow us to read its structure as ideology, as a socially symbolic act, as a prototypical response to a historical dilemma” (1975: 157). Admittedly, Joyce’s story leaves ample room for ambiguity, and thus we can understand why Sidney Freshbach has deemed Kenner’s “interpretation of Frank” as “clearly one of the weakest moments in Joyce criticism” because “there are simply not enough clues in the text to justify [Kenner’s] judgments about Frank” (1983: 226). And Freshbach is right, for Joyce’s short story does not offer enough clues in the text itself. Instead, it relies on a net of intertextual and cultural associations existing beyond the narrative. To fully convey Eveline’s predicament, Joyce may have pointed readers *outside* the text. Knowing that white slavery was “one of the leading social issues of the age,” information that Joyce withholds from the narrative, but that we can assume Eveline (and Joyce’s original readers) must have been aware of, Eveline’s choice becomes far more nuanced (Bristow 1983: 157). With his acknowledged scrupulous meanness, Joyce forces readers to debate with her, to decide with her. In the end, choosing between misery in her native country and potential enslavement in a foreign land, Eveline opts for the first (and sure) option. Yet let us not judge her too hastily because, although the story closes with Eveline visibly “passive” at the port, we know that the mere name of Buenos Aires would have conjured up enough ideological demons to make her feel that emigrating with the sailor, perhaps after all, is not such a good idea.

¹⁸ Betrayal is a sustained trope throughout *Dubliners*. The word “palaver” is uttered by Lily, the caretaker’s daughter in Joyce’s “The Dead.” A footnote in Margot Norris’s edition of *Dubliners* defines this term as “flattering but idle talk” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 154).

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Sister Annie Finlay, from Ireland to Latin America: Two Documents on her travel to Argentina and Chile in the late Nineteenth Century, with annotated introduction.

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Abstract

Nineteenth century travelogues written by religious sisters are not well known, are a unique *genre* of literature and a very unexplored area of historical research. Two unpublished documents from the pen of Sister Annie Finlay (1854-1934 - a member of the Society of the Sacred Heart) provide vivid accounts of her voyage in 1884 from Bordeaux to Buenos Aires and subsequently in 1896 from Buenos Aires over the Andes to Santiago, Chile.

Nano Nagle, Frances Mary Teresa Ball, Catherine McAuley, Mary Aikenhead and Mary Martin were five significant women of their time and all of them were well known. Each one of these women would found a religious congregation, Nano Nagle the Presentation Sisters, Frances Ball the Loreto Sisters, Catherine McAuley the Mercy Sisters, Mary Aikenhead the Irish Sisters of Charity, Mary Martin the Medical Missionaries of Mary. When vocations to religious life were many, these Congregations prospered and in response to episcopal requests quite rapidly established themselves on a worldwide basis. The sisters founded convents, schools and hospitals and dedicated themselves to the service of the poor with energy and generosity of spirit. However, it was not just the Irish congregations which attracted those who sought and found their vocation in religious life as many Irish women entered other congregations of European origin such as the Ursulines, Dominicans or the Society of the Sacred Heart; the

¹ The writer is indebted to Sister Margaret Phelan, General Archivist of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome, for giving me access to the two documents used in this article. Thanks are also due to Basile Appadoure, as well as Archivists Chantal Koebal and Evelyn McAuley of Mount Anville, Dublin.

latter sometimes referred to as “Sacré Coeur” as members used the suffix “RSCJ” which stands for *Religieuses de Sacré Coeur de Jésus*.

Annie Finlay (1854-1934) was one such Irish woman who entered the Society of the Sacred Heart. Born 1854 at Kilmore, Co. Cavan, she was one of the seven children of Sir William Finlay, a Scottish Presbyterian from Fifeshire and Maria Magan of Killeshee, Co. Longford. William Finlay would convert and become a Catholic. Her father was a government civil engineer employed working on one of the River Shannon schemes. The marriage was produced seven children, two of whom would become well known Jesuit priests (Thomas A. Finlay S.J.² and Peter Finlay S.J.³) and three who would enter the Society of the Sacred Heart. Annie was described as “perhaps the most academic of a gifted family. She was also fired with enthusiasm for the mission of education, for which she had exceptional gifts: love of study; an extraordinary gift for teaching; a profound commitment; courage in the face of every difficulty; a great love of young people, and an exceptional ability to relate to people of every type. Her soul dwelt in high places, but she never lost touch with the practical.”⁴

Annie Finlay and her sisters went to school with the Clarissian Sisters in Kilmore and subsequently as boarders in the Sacred Heart Convent in Armagh. There she achieved academic success and on completing her education in 1871 would have entered the Society immediately were it not for her mother demanding a delay. A year later Finlay went to undertake her novitiate at Conflans, Paris. Near the end of the second year, she was sent to Roehampton (London) and here together with her elder sister Mary made her first profession on 27 December 1874. According to Joan Stevenson, “On the day when it was announced in the Finlay household that Mary also was to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart an old family servant gave a cry of lament: ‘Sure, it will be a sad day for all when Miss Mary is gone. As for Miss Annie, she might just as well enter a convent. She’s no good for anything – always a book under her arm. MY DARLING MISS MARY!’”⁵ She helped and assisted her brothers Tom and Peter with their translations of Caesar and Sallust on the promise of payment of sixpence and more often than not non-payment was the order of the day.

² See Thomas J. Morrissey S.J., *Thomas A. Finlay S.J. 1848-1940*, Four Courts Press, Dublin 2008.

³ Peter Finlay S.J. 1851-1929.

⁴ Joan Stevenson, unpublished MS, Mount Anville Archive, I, The People, MAV/487 (9), p.4. Sister Joan Stevenson was a member of the Society of the Sacred Heart and attended boarding school at Mount Anville during the period 1927-31.

⁵ Joan Stevenson, unpublished MS, Mount Anville Archive, “The Affair,” SA/4.

Finlay was assigned to Mount Anville Convent, and she was engaged in teaching at the secondary school up to 1884. It was at Mount Anville that she would meet the remarkable Augusta Fitzgerald,⁶ with whom she would work in Buenos Aires for eight years before going to Chile. Fitzgerald was described by an Italian religious who knew her as “intelligent, noble hearted, renowned for virtue, with a marvellous harmony of natural ability and supernatural gifts. She had the power to live above self and in her there was a blend of gentleness and energy, a readiness for any sacrifice at the call of duty.”⁷

In 1880, the community at Mount Anville (numbered some 36 sisters) was in some turmoil. There was much debate regarding the status of the four Irish convents as at the time they were part of an English-Irish Vicariate under the authority of a Mother Provincial based at Roehampton. A radical solution was proposed - set up a separate Vicariate directly answerable to the Superior General resident in Paris. Within the Society this became known as the *Affair of 1880*. And there were political overtones – those with Irish nationalist sentiments and feelings, others with English sympathies. Archbishop McCabe undertook a canonical visitation of the community in March 1880 and would become an enthusiastic supporter of the idea of a separate Vicariate. This was followed by a visitation by the superior general Mother Lehon who spoke very little English. The desire of the Irish sisters to have their own Vicariate was regarded as anti-English, a kind of Home Rule Movement within the Society. It would not be allowed, and when archbishop McCabe indicated that he was prepared to take up the matter with Rome, Mother Lehon called his bluff, and indicated her steely determination by declaring her intention to withdraw the Society from Ireland rather than permit an Irish vicariate. The fallout was inevitable. Annie Finlay, exhausted by years of teaching, left for some months rest at Roehampton and in October 1880 went to Paris (with her sister Mary) until 1884 when assigned to Buenos Aires. Augusta Fitzgerald received an obedience to establish a house in Buenos Aires and left Mount Anville on 27 May 1880.

Nineteenth century travelogues written by religious sisters are not well known, are a unique genre of literature and a very unexplored area of

⁶ August Bridget Fitzgerald (1829-1916) fourth of the six children of St James Fitzgerald of Castle Ishen, Co. Cork and Lady Augusta Henrietta Fremantle. Educated principally in England. Entered the Society of the Sacred Heart in Rome 1852; professed 1861 in Paris. Spent a short time at Roehampton before coming to Roscrea, then to Armagh and in 1878 to Mount Anville, Dublin as Superior. She worked in Argentina from 1880 to 1892 from where she went to Chile before returning to Rome. She left a journal account of her trip from Paris to Argentina in July 1890 kept at the General Archive of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome.

⁷ Joan Stevenson, Mount Anville Archive, unpublished MS, “The People,” MAV/487 (8), MAV/487 (9), pp. 3-4.

historical research. The six Ursuline sisters who left their convent in Sligo, travelled to Cork and then were accompanied by Dr John Thomas Hynes O.P.⁸ to Demerara, Guyana, in 1847, left an account of their journey.⁹ The Mercy Sisters left Buenos Aires in 1880 to sail for Adelaide via London. It is known that Evangelista Fitzpatrick¹⁰ wrote poetry – “literary societies were formed by the passengers, and the captain, forgetting that all poets have not the gift of rhyme, insisted that every member should write a poem. Mother M. Evangelista, usually so bright was on that occasion unaccountably depressed, yet her lines were the best received, though she bewails the dreariness of life, and confesses that the companions of her lonely hours are often the faded ghosts of former joys.”¹¹ *From Dublin to New Orleans* tells the story of two young Kerry women who leave the security of their boarding school at Cabra to begin life in religion as Dominican Sisters in New Orleans.¹²

Annie Finlay would spend twelve years working in Buenos Aires, eight of them under the aegis of August Fitzgerald. In February 1889, Fitzgerald was responsible for Finlay’s involvement with the 1,800 destitute Irish immigrants who arrived from Cobh on the *Dresden* and who would ultimately go to the ill-fated Irish colony at Nepostá near Bahía Blanca. The emigrants (mainly from Limerick city) had been deceived by Emigration Agents into believing that the Argentine was a land *flowing with milk and honey*. Their passage to Buenos Aires was freed. This particular kind of group emigration was loudly condemned by bishop Edward O’Dwyer of Limerick and archbishop Thomas Croke of Cashel.¹³

In 1896, Finlay left Argentina to work in Chile and wrote a unique descriptive account of crossing the Andes. Shortly after arriving in Santiago, she sent to Valparaiso and spent the next fourteen years mostly engaged in teaching. She was recognised as being a superb teacher. But it

⁸ John Thomas Hynes O.P., Apostolic Administrator Diocese of Demerara, Guyana, 1843-1858.

⁹ Unpublished MS, Archive of the Ursuline Sisters, Sligo.

¹⁰ Cristina Fitzpatrick known in religious life as María Evangelista (1822-1885). She said of herself “Dublin – Buenos Aires – Adelaide – with many happy happenings between – that’s my story. I enjoyed my school days with the Loreto Sisters and entered Baggot Street in 1845.”

¹¹ See Mother Austin Carroll, “Twenty Four Years in Buenos Ayres,” *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, Vol.13, 1888, pp.478-492.

¹² See Suellen Hoy and Margaret MacCurtain, *From Dublin to New Orleans, The Journey of Nora and Alice*, Attic Press, Dublin, 1994.

¹³ Croke’s letter was published in *The Freeman’s Journal* of 26 January 1889.

was not just in the classroom where she was the recipient of respect. Many children aspired to be in her class and as “her relationships spread to their parents, numbers of whom came to visit this religious of whom their children spoke so enthusiastically. For hundreds of past pupils she remained a lifelong friend. When she travelled, people even managed to meet her for a chat between trains.... When she left Valparaiso in the 1910 the bishop publicly expressed his grief at the departure of so great an apostle.”¹⁴

Annie Finlay would work in Santiago for the next twenty-four years. In that busy city she took special care of young English and Irish women who came to work as governesses with affluent families. Her biographer notes that “the very prestige of her name covered them with a sort of protection and won them special consideration with the families in which they worked.”

Annie Finlay was possessed of a wonderful equitable temperament. She was open minded and no way a Luddite. According to those who knew her best, her religious sisters, she was always “a good community person.” She celebrated her Golden Jubilee on 27 February 1931 after fifty years in South America and the themed greeting of the day revolved around the four great loves of her life – young people, the poor, books and flowers. The months before the Presidential election of October 1932 were a period of political strife, industrial unrest and economic instability. Such was the preoccupation with the unstable and volatile situation, that her superior thought it best for Annie to live at the home of one of her former pupils until the crisis passed.

The two documents which Annie Finlay wrote are unique. Her letter of 30 September 1884 to Mother Angeles Alentado, originally written in French, describes the journey from Bordeaux to Buenos Aires. Her 17 January 1896 account of travelling from Buenos Aires to Mensoza and then over the Andes to Santiago, Chile, is an epic tale written originally in English, of which only a French translation is still extant.

Document 1

Finlay to Mother Angeles Alentado¹⁵
30 September 1884

Maison de Sacré Coeur
Riobamba
(Buenos Aires)

¹⁴ Joan Stevenson unpublished MS, Mount Anville Archive, “The Affair,” SA/6.

¹⁵ Original document written on A5 size paper (12 pp) in Annie Finlay’s own handwriting is in the General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome.

My Dear Reverend Mother,

I am impatient to write to you our happy arrival¹⁶ after four weeks spent travelling. My Sister Calmette¹⁷ must have told you that we have left the *Valparaiso*¹⁸ for the island of Flores¹⁹ with Mr and Mrs. Serantes both of whom have been so attendant on us during the voyage and also during quarantine and of extreme goodness to your daughters. Mr is Argentine, and the first of his country with whom we had the honour to make acquaintance and one must recognise that he made a very favourable impression. Madame, who is Austrian, has spent most of her life in Paris and comes for the first time to visit her husband's family. When we arrived on the island we found that passengers from the *Béarn*,²⁰ a French ship hadn't left and we all had to wait in a lounge for three hours before Mr. could find rooms. Finally someone allowed him to go and find us the best room in the Lazaretto. It was on the first floor facing the sea at the end of the corridor, next to that of Mr & Mrs. Serantes. All the other rooms were occupied by friends who came on the *Valparaiso* and who never walked by our door except to offer us some service with the greatest respect. I would like Very Rev. Mother, to have a pen to tell you like I should, of the kindness of which we were the object during the voyage and also during quarantine. There certainly was privation to bear during the three days, what cost us most was the hygiene, but how not accept those joyful prohibitions while we thought what the Rule said about Holy Poverty, our Mother, and especially when we remembered the sufferings of those poor emigrants. They had their meal in the yard even when it rained, and only

¹⁶ The "Editor's Table" column of *The Standard*, Sunday 19 September 1886 (No.7262) noted that "several Sacred Heart Sisters arrived yesterday from Montevideo and were met among other by E. T. Mulhall and who accompanied them to the Irish Convent in the Calle Río Bamba. The Port Captain very kindly lent his falúa to bring the nuns ashore." A falúa was a small boat used by port and/or maritime officials.

¹⁷ Sr Victoria Calmette (1856-1904) b. Santiago, Chile, of a French father and Chilean mother. She and her sister Ma.Mercedes Avelina were orphaned very young and raised initially by their grandfather and then by an uncle. They completed their education at the Sacred Heart school in Santiago and both entered the Society there. Victoria was a renowned educator who served in Callao and Buenos Aires before returning to Santiago.

¹⁸ *Valparaiso*, 2,284 tons, built 1873 by James Elder & Co., Glasgow, for the Steam Navigation Company of James Street, Liverpool; a screw barque, Liverpool home port. See *Lloyds Register*, 1884, No.30 – V.

¹⁹ Isla de Flores – a small island in the Rio de la Plata, 21 miles SE of Punta Carretas, Montevideo. Construction of a Lazaretto on the island commenced in 1865 and was used a Quarantine Station 1869-1970. Quarantine times could last from a week to forty days.

²⁰ *Béarn*, 2,616 tons, built 1881 by the Barrow Ship Building Co., Barrow, for the Société Générale de Transport Maritimes a Vapeur of Marseilles; a screw brig. See *Lloyds Register*, 1884 No.161-B.

twice a day. Sometimes we were obliged to go around the tables to enter the living room which always seemed to please them. They salute us with so much respect and there were always those who came to request a scapular for themselves and their family. When leaving the island we had no medals or scapulars left – we had distributed hundreds and were obliged to refuse a lot. The Cook to whom Reverend Mother Alentado²¹ had promised one, has come to claim it; we also gave a scapular and a chaplet to the domestic who has been very good to us.

At table we had a small party of seven and Mr Serantes had the pleasure to serve himself. There was Mr Margano, Spanish Consul for Montevideo, Mr Todd²² a banker from Buenos Aires, Mr Bridgett²³ the new British Consul for this country and Mr & Mrs. Serantes. These last would sometimes get us fruit and eggs, and almost at each meal the other passengers from the *Valparaiso* would send us biscuits or jam or wine that we sometimes had to accept to make them happy. There were three meals a day for first class passengers, but we came down only for lunch and dinner. The domestic would bring black coffee in the morning. The other meals were ordinarily an hour late and often the bell didn't ring. However some good friends warned us after dinner; Mr & Mrs. Serantes would always accompany us to our rooms which were far away. A day before our departure, dinner was very late and we had a laborious morning. During three hours we had to stand on the wet lawn to air the contents of our trunks. Mr Serantes and a Scotsman had them close to them, and they had them mended quickly because the locks had been broken and we also had them wrapped with rope in such a way that Mother Kavanagh²⁴ and I had nothing to do. The same evening the Scotsman who occupied a room on

²¹ Reverend Mother Angeles Alentado (1839-1888) b. Havana, Cuba; entered the Sacred Heart Congregation at "Manhattanville" New York 1857, professed 1860 and returned immediately to Havana. In 1870 called briefly to Paris and then sent to Madrid as Assistant, then Barcelona as Superior and subsequently Zaragoza. In September 1879 arrived in Valparaiso, then to Santiago and finally Talca as Superior. In 1881 she was named Superior Vicar of Chile, Peru and Argentina.

²² John Todd, Manager of the London & River Plate Bank, Reconquista & Piedad, Buenos Aires. See Mulhall's "1885 City of Buenos Aires Directory" in Jeremy Howat's website www.argbrit.org accessed 04/06.2012.

²³ Ronald Bridgett (1839-1899). Acting British Consul Bs. As. 1873-74; Vice Consul 1875 and in different capacities up to 1881. Promoted Consul to the State of Texas, to reside in Galveston 1882. Appointed Consul to the Argentine Republic 1884; Acting Consul General at Bs.As. 1885. Retired on pension January 1899 living at Martinez (FCCA); death due to drowning 16 February 1899. RIP 1899. See *Foreign Office List, 1900*, Harrison, London, 1900, p.235c. and Jeremy Howat website www.argbrit.org "Anglican Burials at the British Cemetery, Chacarita, 1898 to 1900" accessed 24/07/2012.

²⁴ At the time she arrived in Riobamba with Annie Finlay, Mary Kavanagh had not made her final vows.

the third floor lobby came to our door to ask us to go and have a cup of tea with an American lady, a protestant, who had been good to us. Mr Anderson made us tea himself, and he and the Spanish Consul brought it to us with biscuits. We stayed an hour with Mrs. Peck. She showed us a beautiful collection of photographs [3v] from Rome which she had just visited and with her was one of the Trinité.²⁵ Again, a small detail that will show you how they have been good to us. The day after our arrival a gentleman came asking for us, and he realised that we only had one chair though there were three beds; he went right away and got his chair and gave it to us. There will be other details of this kind to tell, but we must stop.

Quarantine lasted only forty eight hours and it was decided that we would go to Montevideo this Thursday evening with Mr & Mrs. Serantes, and the Spanish Consul who had the goodness to offer us seats in his little steam boat. But the boat arrived too late and we decided to wait until the following day to leave as Our Lord had desired to keep us. There was a poor old man among the emigrants who was a prisoner during the voyage because he had stolen clothing from other emigrants. He felt very sick, but the doctors on board let him off the ship without saying anything, fearing that if they had declared him, Quarantine would have been prolonged for all; everybody was worried because if the sick man had died they would not have let us go. Fortunately we declared on the second day that the sick man was not contagious. Madame Kavanagh and I wanted to obtain permission to visit the old man, but it was only on the Friday morning that we managed to see the doctor. We were allowed permission as volunteers and we used it. The poor man recognised us straight away and seemed to be happy to see us. Madame Kavanagh talked with him in Spanish and read some prayers to him which he repeated after her with a sign of devotion. Finally, he made a long act of contrition without any help and in a heartfelt manner. We gave him a rosary and Madame Kavanagh made in his favour the sacrifice of the crucifix that his father and mother held with their hands at the time of death. We also gave him some scapulars and medals and before leaving we hung an image of the Sacred Heart on the walls near his bed and another of St Joseph. The [4v] domestic who cared for him told us that he was a member of the Sacred Heart Confraternity, and we offered him a scapular and a medal which he accepted with great recognition.

Several times when speaking with Madame Kavanagh the poor sick man showed compassion and he kissed his rosary and crucifix and promised that if he recovered he would lead a better life. A few hours later, the Lazaretto doctor, again told Madame Kavanagh that she had won a soul for heaven. She at least succeeded in getting him to make a fervent act of

²⁵ The L' Église de la Trinité-des-Mons, Piazza di Spagna, Rome.

contrition and this has been a consolation for us which compensated for all our fatigue and all the worries of the voyage.

At one thirty we left Flores in a small steamer with Mr & Mrs. Serantes and three maids. The other passengers numbering 500 left a few hours later and for them there was only one steamer. Madame Peck had left the previous day, and the other ladies and gentlemen who Madame Serantes said would be our companions after Quarantine to our arrival in Buenos Aires. On arrival at Montevideo, Monsieur had our luggage moved on board the *Rividavia* and also gave us the chance to spend a few hours with the Sisters of Charity, one of whom is a religious and a cousin of Madame Kavanagh. The good sisters received us with open arms like their sisters in Rio [de Janeiro]. The Superior had us served a sumptuous meal, to make us forget as she put it, the privation of Flores Island; all the community gathered to say farewell, the Commissionaire also; and students accompanied us to board the steamer *Rividavia* where Mr & Mrs. Serantes were already awaiting us. They had arranged everything for us and we only had to rest. It was difficult to sleep that last night at sea, but nevertheless we went to bed for the whole duration of the trip. By six o'clock in the morning we arrived and one hour later the Port Captain came to fetch us, but before leaving our good friends, Mr & Mrs Serantes promised to come to see us at Riobamba and meet with Mother Augusta. Several friends came to see us when we arrived – Mr Mulhall²⁶ and his two daughters,²⁷ old students of ours at Mount Anville;²⁸ Mrs Galbraith²⁹ and her niece, her brother and grandfather as well as a great number of cousins of Madame Kavanagh.

Due to the kindness of Mr Mulhall who took us through Customs, we were soon at the door in Riobamba and it was as if all hearts were open to receive us. My Mother and all the community were there, and never in my

²⁶ Edward Thomas Mulhall (1832-1899) founder of the first English language newspaper *The Standard*, Buenos Aires, 1861, and co-edited with his brother Michael George Mulhall. See Eduardo Coghlan, *Los Irlandeses en la Argentina – su Actuación y Descendencia*, Buenos Aires, 1987, pp.687-690.

²⁷ E. T .Mulhall was married to Sarah Eliza 'Eloisa' Eborall Redding a native of Litchfield and they had eleven children – three girls and eight boys; María Beatriz Mulhall Eborall, Elisa Dora Mulhall Eborall (second and third eldest respectively) and Catalina Mulhall Eborall, (b. 1877) ninth eldest. A search of the Mount Anville secondary school registers has found no mention of evidence of any pupils with the surname Mulhall Eborall

²⁸ Mount Anville secondary school, Goatstown, Dublin 14, established 1853 by sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart in the former residence of William Dargan a powerful railway tycoon.

²⁹ Possibly the wife of William G. Galbraith, a lawyer, practising at 36 San Martin, Buenos Aires. See Mulhall's "1885 City of Buenos Aires Directory" in Jeremy Howat website www.argbrit.org accessed 04/06.2012.

life will I forget that moment of joy and sorrow. It was impossible to talk to each other, but we didn't need to - our hearts understood so well! With her usual courtesy, my Mother had arranged for second Mass to be said at nine o'clock and we arrived on time to attend. The morning went by quickly. Someone had prepared the best room, and there, like in the refectory were bouquets and words of "welcome" – we went from surprise to surprise that all showed that we had arrived at this side of the ocean, to mothers [5r] and sisters as tender and devoted as those that we had left forever by love for the one who is the link of all our hearts. Tonight, a lady who is a great friend of the house came and took us by car to Almagro³⁰ where we spent time, a great evening, with my Mother Augusta.³¹ Our arrival seemed to be a great event for all. Here, like at Riobamba, the greatest happiness was to have news from the Mother House. If we could see our dear Reverend Mother, the joy with which we learned all the smallest details of this dear centre; we are so happy to know that you are in good health, to learn that our Reverend Mothers are doing well and also that Mother Désoudin³² has been able to visit Nancy. All that concerns the Mother House interests us and it seems that the further we are away the more we are united and the greater we love her, this house where we received nearly all our graces.

My Mother Augusta seemed to have lost weight, but she follows the common life and I often asked myself how could she carry out all the duties that overwhelm her? She doesn't seem to have a moment to rest and despite the added work load she is always serene, and always with a smile on her lips. The Mulhalls told me that it would be difficult to have an idea of her influence because it is so felt so widespread. Protestants as well as Catholics respect and love her and come from everywhere to see and consult her, and with all this she directs everything inside and is the heart and soul of all recreations that are as joyful as possible. What struck me right away on arrival, is the joy, and the unity that is in the house and the entire devotion of each sister.

She becomes your consolation as I would like and hope; I only have to follow the examples that I constantly have under my eyes, and I don't need to tell you my dear Reverend Mother that it is here that I will concentrate. My Mother Augusta told me to rest this week, but next week I hope to

³⁰ Almagro - today a mostly middle-class suburb of Buenos Aires. In the early 19th century it changed from being a centre for dairy farming and became an industrial centre and at the turn of the 20th century expanded rapidly with the influx of Basque and Italian immigrants.

³¹ Mother Augusta Fitzgerald.

³² Mother Juliette Desoudin, a French national and one of the Assistants of the Superior General at this time.

begin looking after a class of little ones. I have already started to study Spanish and in my next letter I hope to tell you that I understand the reading in the community and in the refectory. I probably will have some difficulties getting used to the little ones, because they don't resemble Normalists, but I am decided to accept the difficulty and the problem that without a doubt may come, and to immerse myself in that new life, to find and to love everything about my new country and my new children. Yesterday I made the acquaintance of the Angers Congregation³³ and all the companions resembled each other, and it must be said that the 'pensione' motto is one of charming simplicity. It was a day off and they have asked me to see them. We have discussed, together with our houses in England, Ireland and Paris and they have prayed to ask me for a special blessing and for teacher Madame Collins and this is what I happily promised. Also requesting my dear Reverend Mother to bless me and to remember me in front of Our Lord. More than ever I feel like your child and the grand and unique desire of my heart is to show myself humble and entirely devoted to Our Lord and my mothers.

Your obedient and humble child,
Annie Finlay RSCJ.

Document 2

Santiago, Chile³⁴

17 January 1896

Very Reverend Mother,

What ever I wrote lately I dare doing again in the hope that I some details of our journey across the Andes interest you. Five of us left Buenos Aires on Friday evening, the 3 January at half past ten, three religious and two postulants. The [railway] sleeper coaches are like those in Europe – we had two compartments and our co-travellers were good and like us had no complaints. From Buenos Aires to San Luis where we arrived on Saturday evening, the countryside which we crossed was a vast plain without a tree, a hill or even a little bush except in the neighbourhood except vacant houses separated from one another by wire; from time to time we saw large herds of wild horses, cattle and sheep. Men are rarely seen on foot but normally one or two on horseback; nothing else was seen, only the emptiness of uncultivated land and a few lagoons; and not even a piece of cultivated land.

In the other part of the Republic there are vineyards and farms cultivating oats and other grains, but we only saw farms with sheep. In general the

³³ La Congrégation de Angers – the Good Shepherd Sisters.

³⁴ The original document written on A5 size paper (32 pp) is in the General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome.

railway stations are small and the houses are single story and in that location a house invariable is a kind of boutique used like a multi functional post office but I didn't see a parish church or chapel. At Mercedes Station we hoped to stay half an hour with four of the sisters coming back from Buenos Aires who had been postulants in our small convent of Santa Fé, but we were an hour late and the two trains stopped only for a few minutes and we looked at each other and reciprocated greetings. When I heard my name behind me, it was Rev. Fr Reverten, a Jesuit and first Rector of Salvador College in Buenos Aires, since he was Rector at Santiago who used to return to the Argentine Republic. He gave us the news of our Mothers and amicably promised to tell Buenos Aires that up until then our journey was going well. From San Luis to Mendoza where we had to stop for 24 hours the landscape is varied, but we were not aware as the five of us were asleep.

We got up at 4.30 the following Sunday morning and started our meditation with the view of the snow covered Andes. The surroundings of Mendoza are occupied with vineyards, wine being the principal commercial business. Due to frequent earthquakes (the town was destroyed in 1861) the houses are all very low, built of adobe brick and one floor high. At the station we met Señor Cornere and a servant of the Good Shepherds³⁵ who were waiting for us since 4.30. We were at their monastery in twenty minutes and were very affectionately received as if we belonged to their order. The Mother Provincial who lives in Buenos Aires did write to tell them that we would be stopping here and telegraphed to tell the time. Mother Superior was in Buenos Aires, but the old student Mother Assistant of Santiago literally did not know what to do with us. It seems to me as if I was seeing old teachers. Mass was delayed for an hour, we began and we had a touching sermon on the gospel of the day – the Flight into Egypt – then beautiful music was played in our honour, our Sister played the harmonium and another the violin and all sang admirably. I have never before been cloistered or confined with so many grills, the Mother said the office was entirely new for her. The Sisters took us into the choir and gave us their cells because the convent is small and not commodious. Mother Assistant had breakfast and also dined with us while I noticed that the whole community was around to serve us. We visited various categories of penitents, some together, children of 11 to 12 and none older than 20; there are about 80 in total. A class had prepared a celebration which touched us and wished us the blessing of the child Jesus on our journey as well as wishing us a Happy New Year. Some of the children sang admirably but in an instance we recognised those who had been in the convent for some time.

³⁵ The Good Shepherd Sisters have had a foundation in Mendoza since 1886; their work has been for the marginalised, and the poor with priority given to the rehabilitation and re-education of women prisoners.

The mother of two previous students, including one Elise Alvarez were brought up in Brighton and at Marmontiers,³⁶ came to see us, and I received her behind the grill; this seemed so pleasant because I didn't know how to shake her hand. Nothing would describe the beauty of those religious. The day after tomorrow, Epiphany Day, they had the community Mass at five o'clock with music and this was for our intention. Fortified by communion, responsible for the substantial proof of the goodness of those religious, accompanied by Señor Cornere and the servant we left again at six o'clock. The railway station is a good distance from the monastery. The first class coach was like those third class we have at home, except they had padded seats. All the travellers were together but we managed to be at one end and turning our back we were like exactly at home. This contrasted with the scenery of the first part of our journey. It would be impossible to describe the magnificence and grandeur of the panorama that unfolded before our eyes; the snow covered the summits of the mountains, and further down there were rocks of all varied colours. Streams descending from the mountain formed cascades that entered the Mendoza river and displaced the railway track. Enormous layers of rock seem ready to come tumbling down. All this spectacle filled us with admiration for God's sublime creation; one of the travellers told us it is impossible to cross the Andes without having the feeling of God's presence and power. The railway track doesn't go to Punta de Vacas, and it is proposed to dig a tunnel through the mountain; this would remove the necessity of using mules and coaches. The opening of the tunnel is made on each side, but the work is interrupted as none of the Governments seem to want to continue. Chile especially fears losing a lot of Valparaiso commerce. Up until now our journey didn't have any difficulties as our very good friends prepared everything for us from Buenos Aires and it was the same at Mendoza. But here at Punta de Vacas we were entirely alone. This station like all others in the Cordillera consists of two or three refuges with roofs made of zinc to prevent them being destroyed during winter where nobody lives there. On one side there were bedrooms whereas on the other side there was the living room, the kitchen and a few of the poorest apartments. While we were asking ourselves how to get a car, the boss (jefe) came to greet us in an amicable manner and asked us for news of Mother Fitzgerald. I recognised in him the Foreman supervisor who five years ago had arranged our transfer from Rio Bamba to Santa Fé. Reverend Mother had been very good to him as well as the other employees and we benefited of this memory which she left. He gave us orders so that we could sleep in a car – it's a kind of open tank, which I think people call a "break" in Ireland; and he decided that the caravan guide a very handsome Chilean will accompany us. As all the other travellers were men, we were very content with the arrangement. Our Foreman friend

³⁶ Marmontier les Tours on the banks of the Loire.

recommended us as well to the employee, so that we could help. The car was pulled by three mules, the track just five metres wide and generally zigzagged on the flank of the mountain, with deep precipices on one side and a wall of rock on the other. I would often close my eyes so that I did not see the horrible things that scared us, which the mules had to go through, but they were very sure footed, going slowly with one foot forward and firmly. Our good guide said the names of the places in front of which we were passing, are Mount Cactus because of the variety of those plants that grow there, and the Mount of Penitents,³⁷ which from afar looks like a church with some effigies, windows and a porch; all of this being the result of water action. Another hill is shaped like a truncated cone. From some distance, Punta de Vacas is a natural bridge, the Inca bridge³⁸ forming part of a rock that the water has eroded from below and is covered with stalactites of various colours. Finally we saw the bridge itself even though we were scared after crossing it because there were extra inches to spare. Nearby there were Inca sulphur springs and we were disturbed by the poor surroundings. Our car climbed up for four hours and as we were getting close to the summit of the mountain, all traces of vegetation disappeared. Finally we arrived at the Posada de Las Cuevas³⁹ where we spent the night. There the landscape had enormous masses of black stone rising up on either side and covered with snow which we could touch by hand. The Argentine postulant had never seen snow. I hadn't seen it for twelve years. The cold was intense, we were wrapped up in our shawls and because our provisions hadn't yet arrived and we had to go to table d'hote, our caravan had seventeen people (excepting us) all men, very polite and respectful. The service certainly wasn't the best, but we were happy to have a cup of hot tea with condensed milk, the one and only we could find in those mountains. We were offered the best room but we preferred the worst in the neighbourhood so we could be entirely alone. The host gave us the key. There was a pious old Chilean woman to sleep in the room next to ours. An earthen floor, four bare walls, a zinc roof with a small hole for light, four steel beds and palliasses and two wash hand basins made from old boxes – such is the entire description of our bedroom, but like we were saying it was better than the stable in Bethlehem. But we were happy to spend the night. Because of the intense cold we stayed half dressed putting on all we had. At three o'clock we heard the muleteers starting to prepare the mules, putting on blinkers, then

³⁷ Mt Penitentes (4350m) is near Aconcagua; the name comes from the curious forms which ice on the side of the mountain has and which reminds viewers of "penitents" climbing the mountains or praying on their knees.

³⁸ The Inca's Bridge is a natural arch that forms a bridge over the Vacas river near Las Cuevas.

³⁹ Las Cuevas (3,151m) in the Departamento Las Heras, Mendoza is close the Argentine/Chilean border.

they left without a guide and they must know the track very well as they are always on time with the baggage. At four o'clock we got up, washed and it didn't take long. There was a special recommendation - that crossing La Cumbre, it was advisable not to wash your hands or face and to carefully cover your hands. Despite all those precautions one of ours arrived with her face like a ripe apple and all her skin was frozen. Some hot tea was served to us after a short and fervent prayer, then came the terrible moment to mount the mules. Three of my companions were good equestrians. The fourth, before having tried, did not show too much fear; we were told that there was a kind of chair instead of the ordinary saddle and a muleteer guided those so who didn't know how to ride a mule.⁴⁰ The mules were as tall as the horses with an ordinary woman's saddle, and each traveller had to ride for herself; it was simply horrendous to take my first riding lesson to cross the Andes at five o'clock in the morning and at my age, and this seems impossible; but obedience makes miracles. I mounted and what is more marvellous is that I kept my seat for five hours during the journey. Our attire was most amusing, and so too was our religious clothing together with all our winter clothes. But how much was added! Like Amazons I had a big quilt wrapped around me and held together with safety pins; our thick blue veils were topped with a large straw hat attached under a coat with black ribbons; we were funny caricatures but nobody made fun of the one next to me. It seemed that we struggled going up along the wall for half an hour, I will never forget this. We had to keep our mule, and I simply held the mule with both hands always looking ahead of me and never stopping for an instant to pray. We halted for a few minutes at La Cumbre and again I was flabbergasted seeing no road in front of us. Now we were entering Chilean territory and someone shouted at us that the position was too critical to show enthusiasm, the descent is considered like the most tiring and the most perilous part of the journey lasting three and a half hours and from time to time there is a marked path but most often there is no trace, and the ground is covered with sand and stones. I didn't see the landscape during that perilous journey except that which was just in front of my mule. I didn't dare look on my right nor to the left especially in the descent because the path zigzagged and there was always a precipitous drop on one side. Near the summit we constantly came across snow cuttings, half frozen streams, torrents, and further down the mules had to cross rivers – there were no precipices and we had less to fear. About eleven o'clock we reached Jumeal Station, very miserable but we were immensely happy because the worst of the journey was finished. And we heard one of those men saying to another what a happy journey we've done! No accident, no falling off and however they knew how to ride a horse; but there was one who evidently didn't know more than me, because he held his mule by both hands as I myself did.

⁴⁰ The text says "horse" rather than mule which is what is meant.

He seemed worried all the time, and I couldn't stop myself watching all the time as he was the last one and consequently near me. In passing by a valley his colleague asked him why he didn't speak like the others? Each one has his own serious way of answering. At Jumeal we stayed about two hours and we had lunch. There everything was perfectly clean and well served.⁴¹ Our journey from Juncal to Salto del Soldado once again zigzagged around the mountain and close to the Aconcagua River, this was very enjoyable. This time, we were in a covered car pulled by four mules. The landscape is magnificent perhaps less extended, but quite varied, and we saw some very beautiful flowers with vivid colours, after which I thought of Wordsworth and how much botany teachers and natural historians would have been pleased. At the Customs all travellers, except us, had their suitcases opened and examined. All that belonged to us went through and we were the first to arrive at Salto del Soldado. That station takes its name from a deep ravine into which the soldier, it is said, during the War of Independence jumped from the top of the mountain to another and managed to save his life. Then we took the train going through several tunnels but it doesn't change until Rosa de los Andes. From there to Santiago the railway follows the course of the river which crosses a fertile valley bordering the mountains. What is stunning in this landscape, is that each bit of land is cultivated; I was stunned to see fields of corn and barren rock above. The people of Chile seem polite and cordial. We played with two small boys who asked us "Madrecita do you need anything?" "Madrecita please give us a medal?" At Buenos Aires the affectionate form is less used, but here it is prodigious. At the station Lai-Lai we changed for the last time and at half past ten we reached Santiago. The station was lit by electric light, so that it looked as if we were in daylight. The domestics were waiting with two cars and after half an hour we were at home safe and sound and hopefully happy to be there. Our Reverend Mother Vicar who was worried about our journey and wanted to wait for us but fortunately Mother Assistant prevented her and we were glad because otherwise we would have regretted that our Reverend Mother should have seen us so fatigued. We only looked at the good things that had been prepared for us and thanked Mother Assistant for her kindness. We were unable to sleep as we were so tired, but in a few moments we felt perfectly reunited, and I think nevertheless that our journey through the Andes did us good though we didn't have any envy to recount for the moment. As a consolation awaiting us we were on the third day of the Forty Hours Adoration "the Jubilee" we call it here. We were able to attend High Mass and in the evening the Blessed Sacrament procession. The 66 Normalists retreat took place at that time. They were quite edifying and kept a rigorous silence the eight days. The pious Spanish tradition is to wear long black sleeves that cover the head and body is still in use in Santiago. We don't see a hat or bonnet in church.

⁴¹ Here the calligraphy changes, and the text continues in another hand.

The third day after our arrival our Rev. Mother Vicar had the goodness to invite Rev. Mother Fitzgerald to spend the day with us. It was a great joy for us to see this Rev. Mother, but she was considerably diminished; we found her so tense and so aged, more or less the same way as we saw her previously, except her sanctity was more visible than ever. On the contrary I never saw Rev. Mother Vicar so well. From 5.30 in the morning to 8.30 in the evening she presides over community exercises, never missing a meeting except when we go out; she coughs and moves his right arm with difficulty, but she has eyes on everything, and is the life and soul of our recreations. We can't find a better account of a happier community and where there is an atmosphere of peace and fervour that elevates hearts towards God. I fell like a spoilt child and rejoice to stay here for a few more weeks to make my retreat before going to Valparaiso, my last destination. Counting the postulants there are two in the Novitiate and another will soon come from Buenos Aires. The house is like the community, very simple, enjoyable and very religious. There are nine yards surrounded by houses but do not have more than two stories probably because of earthquakes and it is for the same reason that they are built of wood, and the roof covered in zinc. The ceiling⁴² and walls painted in light blue. The doors and windows and gallery columns in white. Instead of curtains to keep out the sun there are quantities of plants covered with leaves that prevent and light rays getting in.

In the vegetable garden there are two small beautiful chapels – one dedicated to St Joseph and the other to Our Lady of Sorrows under which is the crypt. It was a great consolation for me to visit the tomb of our Rev. Mother du Reousier, Rev. Mother Alentado and several other Mothers that I got to know and live in South America. Among them Mother Kavanagh one of my companions on the voyage twelve years ago. The climate here is delightful, never too hot, and always fresh in the evening and in the morning. If sometimes there are few earthquakes there is however no torrential rain, nor flies nor coloured insects, which are nearly invisible and abundant in the Argentine Republic, especially in summer in plants. They introduce themselves under the skin and form a small inflamed lump that becomes a sore. There is only one way for them which is to keep away from the garden and plants. I now understand what a tremendous sacrifice this must be for our Mothers and Chilean sisters to come to Buenos Aires.

My letter has become quite long. I wrote in the hope to interest you and Rev. Mother and perhaps also my dear Mothers and Sisters of England and Ireland that I always remind myself with recognition and affection.

In C[hrist] Jesus my very Rev. Mother.

⁴² The word ceiling is deleted in the text.

I am your humble and obedient daughter
A. Finlay RSCJ.

*“Traduction del Anglais.”*⁴³

⁴³ This note at the end of the text indicates that the original document (no longer extant) was written in English.

Viaje y Migración de los Blest en los Albores de la Independencia

Moisés Hasson Camhi

Investigador independiente, labor que desarrolla en paralelo con su trabajo de Ingeniero en IT, Hasson ha publicado ya un primer libro con la historia de su familia, emigrados judeo-españoles llegados desde el reino Yugoslavo a la ciudad de Temuco en los años 20 y 30. El libro se publicó en Barcelona en 2009: Morada de mis antepasados. En paralelo ha investigado la familia Blest en su origen y establecimiento en Chile, fruto de lo cual ya se han hecho públicos un par de artículos, y hay otro par en desarrollo. Otra de los intereses corresponde a la historia de la literatura de ciencia-ficción en Chile en sus muchas variantes, sobre lo cual mantiene vigente un blog.

Abstract

Como parte de una investigación que busca descubrir y detallar la historia de la familia Blest, originaria de Sligo, en su desarrollo en Chile durante el Siglo XIX, entregamos hoy la segunda parte de ese trabajo. Emigrados ya desde su país de origen se establecen y desarrollan sus familias. Investigamos en registros parroquiales, libros de memorias, artículos de historia y la variada bibliografía que avanza por los primeros años del Chile independiente. Los principales años que se señalan corresponde al período que va desde 1815 a 1850. El resultado es una interesante saga que muestra el distinto destino familiar, siempre destacado, y su entrecruce con el desarrollo social y político de los tres muy bien educados hijos de Irlanda en un Chile al que aún le costaba mucho salir de su modorra de colonia española.

En un trabajo anterior examinamos con detalle el hogar formativo en donde se criaran los hermanos Blest en Sligo, Irlanda. Pudimos conocer a sus padres y antepasados, y también la ciudad de Sligo, su entorno y las actividades que allí desarrollaron especialmente su padre y su abuelo materno Andrew Maiben (Hasson 2010). Sigamos ahora la saga pero ya en nuestra tierra.

De esta familia formada por Albert Blest y Ann Maiben solo siete hijos llegaron a la vida adulta, cinco varones y dos mujeres, y de ellos tres se instalaron en Chile. El mayor es Andrés (Andrew al igual que su abuelo materno) comerciante, empresario y emprendedor y quien fuera el que señalara el camino a los restantes; Juan (John), médico que oscilara entre Chile y Perú, para establecerse definitivamente en Chile; y Guillermo (William), médico también, fundador de la Escuela de Medicina de Chile y padre de la connotada familia Blest-Gana.

Como ya indicamos Sligo era un importante puerto comercial, y el padre Albert Blest siguió los pasos de su suegro dedicándose al negocio del lino, hasta que todo su tiempo fue absorbido por la sociedad religiosa-educativa Hiberian. Ya sabemos que su hijo Andrés/Andrew acompañó a su padre un tiempo en sus actividades mercantiles, por lo tanto no parece sorprendente encontrarlo en Valparaíso en los albores de la independencia y como uno de los pioneros del intercambio comercial con Inglaterra.

Pero veamos el estado de las cosas en Chile en ese tiempo. En el año 1810, enterados de las noticias en España producto de las guerras napoleónicas, así como de la formación de Juntas de Gobierno en Cádiz – para gobernar en subrogación del rey mientras estuviese limitado- así como en otras regiones de América, los vecinos de Santiago exigieron la formación de una junta local, en el Cabildo Abierto convocado para el 18 de septiembre de ese año. Muy pronto la Junta fue cambiando de integrantes y de sesgo hacia una visión más independentista. Para lo que es de interés de este trabajo debemos destacar la dictación de la ley del Libre Comercio el 21 de febrero de 1811.

Hasta ese momento el comercio era un tema que las colonias españolas tenían muy restringido, pudiendo realizarlo solo entre ellas, y estaba absolutamente prohibido con cualquier otro país extranjero. Así, la economía se mantenía en su mínima expresión, y las necesidades de la gente solo podían servirse en los elementos más básicos, siendo todo el resto suntuarios reservados a la clase más pudiente.

La nueva ley pretendía ampliar de una buena vez el comercio logrando varios objetivos con ello, incluyendo el no despreciable intento de ampliar las arcas fiscales algo escuálidas por entonces. La ley liberaba una serie de restricciones, pero mantenía el proteccionismo para el comercio local al quedar prohibido a los extranjeros que debían así limitarse al comercio internacional a través de alguno de los cuatro puertos autorizados: Valparaíso, Talcahuano, Valdivia y Coquimbo.

Según todos los estudios, el primer barco mercante que arribó al puerto de Valparaíso aprovechando esta ley fue el *Fly* en 1811, bergantín de los hermanos John y Joseph Crosbies de Londres.¹ Dentro de la tripulación de este barco venía el joven John Barnard quién sería fundamental en los siguientes pasos de esta historia.

Al parecer Barnard se entusiasmó con las perspectivas del comercio con este lejano país, y a su vuelta a Londres organizó su propio viaje comercial

¹ Tal como se señala el *Fly* correspondiendo al primer buque mercante inglés en llegar a Chile, mientras el segundo fue el *Emily* con Blest a bordo y buscando crear en Chile una industria del cáñamo para servir a la marina inglesa (Vicuña 1833: 33).

a Chile, contratando para este fin el buque *Emily* en cuyo cargamento trajo justamente lo que en ese momento más se necesitaba “principalmente armas de fuego”. El barco fondeó en agosto de 1813 y además de Barnard (quien según Vicuña Mackenna tendría tan solo quince años), venían con él otras dos comerciantes que son de nuestro interés. Un joven español bilingüe, Joaquín Iglesias, y Andrew Blest. Los tres de alguna manera socios comerciales en esta aventura.

No muchos meses después la Patria Vieja se desmoronó con el Desastre de Rancagua el 1 y 2 de octubre de 1814. Los patriotas que pudieron huyeron a Mendoza. Unos pocos se escondieron, y un tercer grupo fue detenido por las fuerzas españolas y enviado deportado a la isla Juan Fernández. Así y mientras en el puerto, pocos meses antes con ya un incipiente y creciente intercambio, se veía ahora nuevamente vacío de extranjeros y mercaderías. Dice Vicuña Mackenna “no había británicos en Valparaíso. [y] Difícilmente si habría algunos gringos [norteamericanos]”(Vicuña 1910: 42). Podemos luego suponer que no habría ningún Blest por aquí, sin embargo los hechos parece desmentirlo. Ya sabemos que Andrés Blest llegó en agosto de 1813, y aunque podemos suponer que debe haber realizado algunos viajes que lo llevaron fuera del país, todo su accionar luego de terminada la Patria Vieja, y lo destacado del tratamiento que recibió de parte de O’Higgins nos hacen suponer que él permaneció en Chile este tiempo.

Por otro lado, y respecto al viaje de John/Juan Blest, en las referencias que hemos encontrado siempre se le cita como llegando el año 1813.² También se indica que desde Chile, Juan viajó luego a Lima y allí atendió al virrey José Fernando Abascal, conocido por su delicado estado de salud y quién finalmente renunciara voluntariamente a su cargo el año 1816 por este motivo. Por lo tanto ya antes de ese año Juan debe haber llegado y ejercido la medicina como para formarse un nombre que le permitiera tener acceso para curar a la mayor autoridad del país.

² Dos son los trabajos del siglo XIX que reseñan el paso del Dr. Juan Blest en Chile y Perú. Ambos están publicados en la única revista académica existente en Chile a mediados de ese siglo. Estos trabajos son (MacKenna 1851) y (Semir 1860).



Vista de Valparaíso desde uno de cerros ca. 1915

Así podemos situar la presencia de los dos primeros hermanos en nuestras tierras ya a contar del 1812 y 1813. Andrés se quedó en Chile, oscilando entre Valparaíso y Santiago. Juan se mudó a Lima, y meses después a La Paz. Varios años después se sumaría a ellos un tercer hermano William/Guillermo, médico titulado y con estudios de especialización en obstetricia.

Podemos confirmar todo lo indicado anteriormente gracias a una carta que hemos descubierto en la reseña con la vida de miembros del almirantazgo británico. Esta misiva está dirigida al vicealmirante de la Marina Británica Manly Dixon, fechada el 27 de marzo de 1815 y firmada por ocho súbditos británicos, solicita que la Marina pueda mantener un buque de guerra en los mares del sur de América justamente como una protección ante los tumultuosos momentos que se vivían, y ante el inminente retiro de la *HMS Indefatigable* capitaneada por Thomas Stain. Esta carta está firmada por, los hermanos Blest (Andrew y John), Campbell, Barnard, Crompton, Beetenson, Cood e Ingram.³

Ante la natural pregunta de qué pueda haber empujado a estos jóvenes, no podemos más que suponer que el hecho de querer labrarse un futuro fue el principal aliciente. También tenemos otro hecho que considerar. Albert Blest como parte de su trabajo con la Sociedad Hibernian de Londres entró en contacto con personas de mucho roce social e influencia en el ambiente londinense. Uno de ellos fue un alto directivo y fundador de la sociedad, Samuel Mills, quien fue además era un reputado comerciante y una gran personalidad religiosa protestante. En una carta que Albert le dirige el año 1825, le agradece especialmente el apoyo que ha entregado a muchos de sus hijos para que progresen en la vida y le cuenta

³ Biografía de Thomas Stain, y la carta que referenciamos se encuentran en un libro de 1831 publicado en Inglaterra (Longman: 1831). La biografía de Stain en p. 348 y la carta que se menciona aquí en p. 373.

específicamente de los tres que en esa fecha están en Chile y Perú, así como un cuarto que estaba en la India. Razonablemente creo que fue el consejo de Mills el que llevó a estos jóvenes a salir de los saturados países de Europa para buscar un futuro dado que lo único que contaban era con su educación y habilidad. Dice textualmente Albert: “Tengo con Ud. una deuda de gratitud que jamás podré saldar, pero que confío jamás olvidare. ¡Espero que mis hijos también recuerden a su generoso benefactor con afectuoso y agradecido respeto!”.⁴

En 1817, el mismo año de la victoria de Chacabuco, un 15 de noviembre y en la parroquia Santa Ana de Santiago, se desposa Andrés Blest con Concepción Prats Urizar. Otras dos hermanas de Concepción Prats también se casaron con extranjeros, una de ellas con el compañero de aventuras de Andrés, Juan Diego Barnard quién se desposará con Teresa Prats Urizar, mientras que una tercera, María Mercedes se casó con un oficial de la marina escocés Roberto Forges Budge.

Existía aquí un problema religioso, dado que Andrés no era de fe católica, y fue necesaria una dispensa para permitir el matrimonio. Se solicitó la debida dispensa a Roma, pero como ésta tardaba, la mayor autoridad católica del país entregó su dispensa y permitió que se concretara la boda.⁵ No era ésta una práctica habitual, y solo la fuerza y empuje laico de O’Higgins, así como la baja de poder de la Iglesia luego de la derrota española, permitieron que se lograra una flexibilización de las restricciones y se permitieran los matrimonios interreligiosos con mayor facilidad.

Juan, que se había instalado en Perú y luego Alto Perú (Bolivia), no volvió a residir a Chile sino hasta el año 1828. En el intertanto se casó en la ciudad de Moquehua con María Faustina Zavala, natural del lugar, el 21 de septiembre de 1827,⁶ mismo sitio donde nace su primer hijo. También viajó en un par de ocasiones a Chile luego que los fuegos de la independencia se calmaron en Perú y Bolivia. Mientras residió en La Paz y Moquehua ejerció la medicina con éxito según anotan sus biógrafos, aún

⁴ Dice en su carta Albert Blest: “I owe you a debt of gratitude which I can never repay, but which I trust I shall never forget. May my children also ever regard their kind benefactor with feelings of affectionate and grateful respect!” (Motherwell 1843), pp. 196-197. La traducción que se incluye es del autor de este trabajo.

⁵ Ha sido posible conocer esta historia gracias a las cartas que al respecto escribiera Diego Portales años después y con otro fin, pero incluyendo allí este proceso. Cartas número 160 (de diciembre 1831) y número 279 (de agosto de 1832) en el libro (Fariña 2007).

⁶ Esta información la cita Raúl Silva Castro (Silva 1940: 150) que la recoge como datos orales de su descendencia. Por nuestra parte hemos podido comprobarla en una partida de bautismo de su hija Manuela Blest Zavala del año 1827 que hemos localizado en el libro respectivo de la parroquia de Tacna.

cuando financieramente sufriera algunos reveses producto de la acción delincencial de un empleado suyo según nos cuentan.

DOCTORS OF MEDICINE.

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1815, March 15. John Blest, S. Jago.
 Dr. John Richard Farre and Dr. William Maiben, Sligo.
 March 30. Robert Wilson, H.E.I.C.S.
 Drs. James Moir and James Selbie, Aberdeen.

**Registro de la titulación del Dr. John (Juan) Blest en la
 Universidad de Aberdeen**

1821.

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ON Wednesday, 1st August, the **Senatus Academicus** of the University of Edinburgh conferred the degree of **Doctor in Medicine** on the following Gentlemen (102 in number), after having gone through the appointed examinations, and publicly defended their **Inaugural Dissertations** :—

	<i>From Ireland.</i>
Henry S. Boase, . — Contagio.	William C. Blest, — Amenorrhœa.
Ro. H. Brabant, — Valetudinis ex Animo Mutatione.	
	Anth. Eben. Blest, — Typho.

**Registro de la titulación de los hermanos William y Anthony
 Blest en la U. de Edinburgh**

Ya mencionamos que él habría llegado en 1813 a Chile, y aún cuando no tenemos la certeza de la fecha de traslado a Lima, creemos que es posible fijarla entre 1815 —año de su titulación en la Universidad de Aberdeen y en donde indica residencia en Santiago.⁷ y el año 1816 —fecha en que Abascal deja el cargo de Virrey como ya señaláramos.

Al llegar a nuestro continente fue “bien pronto conocido por sus distinguidos conocimientos profesionales” a los que sumó el hacerse “cargo de las circunstancias locales” y que se le destacara que se “posesionó del tipo de las enfermedades reinantes i del carácter particular con que se presentaban” en Sudamerica. Si a lo anterior sumamos su “arte de prescribir, que sin separarse de las reglas farmacológicas, combinaba en sus recetas diversas i certeras indicaciones terapéuticas”⁸ podemos visualizar

⁷ El registro de su titulación en Aberdeen señala que John Blest, se tituló el 15 de marzo de 1815, mientras era residente en la ciudad de “S.Jago” (Santiago), y con los tutores Dr. John Richard Farre y Dr. William Maiben, ambos de Sligo. Información disponible en el texto: (Spalding: 1892: 153).

⁸ Frases textuales escritas por su contemporáneo Miguel Semir y rescatadas desde (Semir 1860).

claramente las razones de su éxito, que le permitió ejercer sin problemas la medicina en Chile, Perú y Bolivia.

Juan y María Faustina tuvieron once hijos que llegaron a edad adulta, habiendo ambos cónyuges fallecido a una temprana edad. María Faustina el 7 de febrero de 1846, y un poco tiempo después Juan Blest con 58 años el 13 de enero de 1849, luego de un par de penosos años en donde su salud mental se quebró casi completamente. Parte de los hijos debieron asumir de alguna manera la crianza de los más pequeños, así como algunos buenos amigos que el Dr. dejó en esta tierra.

Sabemos que un número importante de irlandeses se integró al bando libertador en América, de hecho hay casos documentados en las fuerzas de Simón Bolívar destacando el caso de médicos (incluyendo el médico personal de Bolívar) educados en las mismas escuelas que los Blest.⁹ ¿Habría sido esto un movimiento general o es una mera casualidad?

En el caso de Andrés Blest, sabemos que intentó innumerables negocios y empresas en Chile. El primero de ellos, y que fuera al parecer el propósito inicial de su viaje a Chile, el cultivo del cáñamo y la construcción de una planta procesadora, tarea en la que tenía experiencia dado su trabajo con su padre en la industria del lino en Sligo.¹⁰ También se dedicó a la prospección minera, como muchos en esos años en que fue la principal industria en el país, en otros rubros industriales como la creación de la primera industrial formal de cerveza en Chile¹¹ tarea para la que además reclutó a un sobrino de la rama europea de la familia, y también la administración del Hospital de la Caridad de Valparaíso, entre otras actividades. En los diversas causas de la independencia en donde se hizo colecta de fondos, el siempre aparece allí con sumas significativas. Probablemente por esta y otras causas es que Bernardo O'Higgins lo incluye en su decreto del 20 de octubre de 1820 en donde honra a distinguidos colaboradores de origen extranjero entregándoles la nacionalidad chilena.

De su matrimonio con Concepción Prats sabemos de cinco hijos, una de los cuales –Carmen Blest– es la protagonista de un serio enfrentamiento religioso en el año 1844¹² y que reflejara el re-empoderamiento de la

⁹ Ver al respecto de los irlandeses en las tropas de Bolívar (Wilkinson 2008).

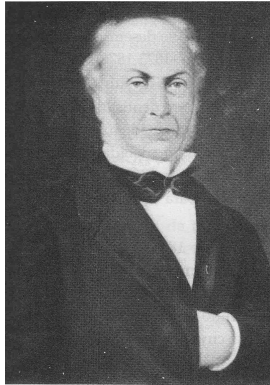
¹⁰ Cuando vimos la vida de la familia Blest en Sligo, ya detallamos la experiencia de Andrés apoyando a su padre (Hasson 2010).

¹¹ Respecto a la historia de la cerveza en Chile sugerimos ver en (Couyoumdjian 2004).

¹² El denominado Caso Liddar-Blest es reseñado con detalle en el libro de (Oviedo 1929). Cabe destacar asimismo que este suceso acaeció el mismo año del juicio a Francisco Bilbao por su artículo “*Sociabilidad Chilena*”.

Iglesia Católica en Chile en contra de los aires reformistas y liberales que habían soplado años antes.

De William (Guillermo) Blest, el que más prestigio de los hermanos lograra en Chile, sabemos que llegó alrededor de 1824 con profundos estudios médicos y una disposición para labrarse un futuro. Es casi seguro que sus dos hermanos mayores ya residentes en nuestra América hayan influido en su espíritu para decidirse a migrar en busca de nuevas tierras. Guillermo tiene un largo currículum de estudios tanto en la Trinity College de Dublin como de Doctorado en Medicina en Edimburgo en 1821.¹³ Sus intereses en especialización y formación lo llevaron a integrar innumerables organizaciones. En un texto del año 1826 señala ser “miembro de Sociedad de Medicina del Colegio de la Trinidad de Dublin, y de la sociedad quirúrgica-médica de Edimburgo, miembro corresponsal de la sociedad Huntarian de Londres, y miembro de la Compañía de Cirujanos Boticarios de Londres”. En consultas a la sociedad Hunterian hemos podido confirmar su asociación en el año 1824, y en donde además aparece registrado otro hermano médico suyo que permaneció en el Reino Unido llamado Albert Blest un año antes,¹⁴



Retrato del Dr. Guillermo C. Blest

En los diversos estudios que se han realizado en Chile a la figura de Guillermo, siempre se ha destacado que al poco tiempo de llegar se casó

¹³ En comunicación privada con la archivista de la Universidad de Edimburgo (Ferguson 2008) fue posible corroborar los siguientes datos. En el libro impreso con la lista de los médicos graduados en el período 1705-1845 da su nombre como Gulielmus C. Blest. Mientras en su tarjeta de ingreso (*enrolment*) su nombre es el conocido William C. Blest. Su fecha de graduación es 1821 y la tesis se titula "*De Amenorrhoea*". En el libro donde se señalan los nuevos doctores de medicina aparece registrado en agosto de 1821 junto con su hermano Anthony E. Blest y otros 100 nuevos médicos de todo el Reino.

¹⁴ En comunicación privada con el archivista de la *Biblioteca Wellcome*, que posee los registros históricos de la *Sociedad Hunterian*, éste informa que en los registros aparece que en el 26 de junio de 1823 se integra como Miembro Corresponsal Albert Blest, y que el Dr. [William] Blest aparece registrado el día 17 de marzo de 1824. (Hilton 2009).

con María de la Luz Gana López¹⁵. Pues bien, y en un dato muy poco conocido, podemos afirmar que Guillermo ya antes de ese matrimonio tuvo una relación con otra mujer, dado que engendró una hija llamada Valentina, y que aparece siendo bautizada el 13 de febrero de 1826 como hija natural de Guillermo Blest y Juana Urizar.¹⁶ La madre, que se identifica como Juana Urizar, solo puede ser Juana Agustina Urizar Garfías, prima en primer grado de la esposa de Andrés Blest, Concepción Prats Urizar. De lo que hemos averiguado Juana, junto a sus dos hermanos Fernando y Agustina Mónica, se habrían criado en Valparaíso dado que su padre, Silvestre Urizar tuvo cargos públicos en Quillota y Vallenar¹⁷ hasta su fallecimiento en 1823.

De seguro Juana y el elegante, buen mozo y recién llegado Dr. Guillermo Blest debieron conocerse en casa de Andrés en Valparaíso, producto de lo cual se realizó el interludio. Sobre el destino de la pequeña nada sabemos, pero lo que sí conocemos es que no más de un año después del nacimiento de Valentina, se casa Guillermo con María de la Luz el 22 de marzo de 1827 en la parroquia El Sagrario de Santiago, por lo que podemos suponer que la relación con Juana no continuó.

Al final de su existencia el Dr. Blest también haría algo parecido, ya viudo conviviría con una mujer y solo formalizaría un segundo matrimonio con María del Carmen Ugarte en 1879 muchos años después de nacidos los tres hijos: Zoila (1869), Ricardo (1871 y padre del connotado sindicalista Clotario Blest) y Arturo (1875).

Por medio del matrimonio con María de la Luz Gana, pudo Guillermo integrarse a lo más aristocrático de la sociedad chilena de entonces. Un cuñado de Guillermo fue Manuel Blanco Encalada, almirante y primer presidente chileno, quien sucediera a Bernardo O'Higgins al abdicar este a su cargo de Dictador Supremo en 1822. El resto de la familia Gana López estaba de igual forma bien ubicada, con varios militares y prohombres en sus listas. Por esto mismo Guillermo pudo atender profesionalmente a lo más granado socialmente, lo que se facilitó al ser un excelente profesional. Diego Portales lo tenía en muy alta estima y

¹⁵ La referencia más antigua respecto a esta anécdota, relativa al súbito enamoramiento y casamiento, la hemos hallado en una entrevista hecha a la hija Luz Blest Gana y que se publicó en el diario *El Mercurio* de Santiago con motivo del fallecimiento de Alberto Blest Gana. De allí en adelante aparece reiteradamente en variados textos, aún cuando los hechos no la avalaran (Dhalmar 1920).

¹⁶ La inscripción de bautizo está en el libro del año 1826, el número 38, Fojas 227 vuelta de la parroquia Del Sagrario de Santiago.

¹⁷ Aparecen en el libro de información genealógica de (Retamal 2003) aún cuando se señala erróneamente a Juana y a su hermana como fallecidas cuando aún eran infantes.

siempre lo recomendaba para sus amigos y conocidos¹⁸, llegándole a dar el puesto de Cirujano Mayor del ejército chileno en 1833. Antes lo apoyó en su disputa por la profesionalización de la medicina, y le nombró a cargo de la que fuera la primera institución de calidad para la formación de médicos en Chile.

La actuación pública de Guillermo es muy destacada. Nunca temió decir la verdad, y a poco de llegar y ver estado de la enseñanza y la práctica de la medicina en nuestro país, se decidió a escribir y publicar un panfleto indicando no solo los problemas que él veía, sino además los medios sugeridos para solucionarlo. Este panfleto, así como sus discusiones públicas con otros profesionales de la medicina, confluyeron para que el año 1833 se fundara la pionera Escuela de Medicina que se uniría a la Universidad de Chile luego de la fundación de esta en 1842, y de la que además es designado su primer director.¹⁹

Un par de años antes, en 1831 es escogido para integrar el parlamento, como Diputado por Rancagua, probablemente influenciado por sus parientes políticos. Luego de asumir como profesor de Patología y Clínica Interna, y de preparar el material de uso en clases dada la inexistencia de un texto, Guillermo sigue de profesor hasta el año 1851 donde se retira para jubilarse de la Escuela afectado además por el reciente fallecimiento de su esposa. Sin embargo es nuevamente convocado años después para que asuma nuevamente como decano por un período de dos años. Los recuerdos que se han registrado respecto a su persona lo describen como de ojos claros y cabellos rubios, también que era “un hombre alto, delgado, esbelto, de un porte altivo y elegante” y en otra parte que “tenía cierto aire de distinción soberbia, cierta nobleza segura de sí misma: era una figura esencialmente aristocrática”.²⁰ Al paso del Dr. Blest todo el mundo lo saludaba con respeto al interior del hospital o en la Escuela de Medicina según recuerda el Dr. Augusto Orrego Luco en sus memorias.

¹⁸ Las recomendaciones de Diego Portales están registradas al menos en un par de cartas, las que se encuentran publicadas en su epistolario. Ellos son la No. 157 del 9 de Doc. 1831 y la 530 del 14 de diciembre de 1834. (Fariña 2007).

¹⁹ Son varios los textos que relatan esta historia. Podemos citar una relativamente reciente (Perez 1993).

²⁰ Descripción recogida por el Dr. Augusto Orrego Luco en su volumen dedicado a la Facultad de Medicina en (Orrego 1953: 139-146).

OBSERVACIONES

SOBRE
EL ACTUAL ESTADO DE LA MEDICINA

EN CHILE

CON LA PROPUESTA DE UN PLAN
PARA SU MEJORA.
POR

Guillermo C. Blest, Doctor en medicina, miembro de la sociedad de medicina del Colegio de la Trinidad de Dublin, y de la sociedad quirúrgica-médica de Edimburgo, miembro corresponsal de la sociedad Huntarian de Londres, y miembro de la Compañía de Cirujanos Botánicos de Londres, y Licenciado en el arte Obstetrical.

Ha scriptsi non olti abundantia, sed amoris erga te
TULLI EPIST.

SANTIAGO DE CHILE:
IMPRENTA DE LA INDEPENDENCIA:
Año 1826.

Portada del panfleto publicado en 1826 por el Dr. Guillermo C. Blest

Otro evento no tan positivo, y en que sufrió algunas descalificaciones, que incluso lo pusieron en una posición bastante incómoda, fue el *affaire* Bilbao. Este se refiere a un supuesto apoyo que Guillermo Blest prestó a Francisco Bilbao durante su famoso juicio en junio del año 1844. En él Bilbao fue duramente acusado por sus ideas liberales plasmadas en un ensayo titulado “*Sociabilidad Chilena*”. Guillermo, al igual que muchos santiaguinos, concurrió al juicio. En un momento la situación se puso muy complicada y Bilbao había sufrido un desmayo, momento en el cual el Dr. Blest le prestó su auxilio. Fue tanta la presión que recibiera posteriormente Guillermo que debió dar explicaciones públicas por esta situación negando haber ayudado a Bilbao más allá de su obligación como médico. Creemos que su espíritu estaba con el joven Bilbao, pero las fuerzas reaccionarias no permitieron la mínima desviación de la posición oficial. Bilbao debió abandonar el país a principios del año siguiente, y Guillermo debió retractarse y disculparse.

En el ámbito privado es también de destacar el hogar que formara con María de Luz, de donde surgieron destacados personajes de la historia de Chile, muy especialmente los primeros tres retoños con quienes suponemos Guillermo se encargó especialmente de educar: Guillermo, Alberto y Joaquín Blest Gana.²¹ El matrimonio tuvo en total once hijos desde el año 1828 y hasta 1845, aunque no todos llegaron a la adultez. Además de los ya mencionados, otros fueron también profesionales, como por ejemplo

²¹ En una de las últimas novelas de Alberto, de hecho casi una autobiografía de su niñez, el autor reflejó el estilo y modelo de crianza que tuvo su padre con ellos, los tres mayores. Nos referimos a la obra ‘*El Loco Estero, Recuerdos de mi niñez*’ (Blest 1909).

Julio Blest Gana (Licenciado en Leyes en 1861). María de la Luz falleció mientras estaba de veraneo en el balneario de Constitución el 6 de marzo de 1851²² mientras que Guillermo lo hizo en la ciudad de San Bernardo el 7 de febrero de 1884. El diario *El Ferrocarril* le dedicó las siguientes frases: “Hombre abierto a las grandes ideas y partidario de las doctrinas liberales y progresistas, tanto por impulso de raza como por convicción, figuró siempre entre los espíritus más avanzados en materia de ciencias o de instituciones”.

Revisando la vida de estos tres hermanos en su migración, establecimiento y desarrollo podemos ver a través de su vida el entrecruzamiento de los conflictos y situaciones vividas por nuestro país. Llegan con la aurora de la Independencia, se cruzan con el penúltimo virrey en Lima, se integran a la sociedad con matrimonios mixtos sin problemas, participan de la fundación de la moderna Universidad de Chile y de la Escuela de Medicina, van y vuelven a Lima, posteriormente se ven enfrentados al fragor de las luchas políticas, se sorprenden con la imposición de mayores dificultades con la Iglesia Católica para el casamiento de sus hijos con protestantes, forman empresas pioneras en el país, se involucran en el auge minero, sus hijos ayudan a moldear el carácter nacional y se transforman en puntales culturales. No puede decirse que sea poca cosa para tan solo tres hermanos.

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²² Al momento del fallecimiento de Ma. De la Luz en el balneario de Constitución, se encontraba Guillermo en Santiago, y fue una amiga de la familia –Carmen Arriagada vecina de Talca- quien ayudará en el proceso, y que luego mereciera el reconocimiento del viudo por carta. Ver al respecto (Pinochet 2001) y (Poblete 1995).

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The Irish Hospital in Buenos Aires

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Abstract

The Irish Hospital in Buenos Aires was created and led by the incomparable Catholic priest, Father Anthony Dominic Fahy (or Fahey). He was later assisted by the Irish Sisters of Mercy. The Hospital played a significant role in caring for sick Irish immigrants fleeing from the potato famine in Ireland, and later for the ever growing local Irish community. This fleeting jewel of its community, begat with intense devotion and hard work, deserves to be widely known in Argentina, and by Irish men and women everywhere.

During the eighteenth century in the Viceroyalty of the River Plate, and after the independence revolution in which the “*Provincias Unidas*” gained their freedom from Spain, the Irish community, which was to play an important role in the growth and development of Argentina, increased slowly and steadily in size. Thomas Murray, in his narratives on Irish emigration to Argentina, estimated that in 1824 there were 500 Irishmen living in Buenos Aires and the surrounding countryside, and in 1832 the community had grown to 2500 members (Murray 1919: 57). Since most of them were Roman Catholic, with a poor command of the Spanish language, there was a need for a priest who spoke their language; after being appraised of this, and of two frustrated attempts, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Daniel Murray, sent Father Fahy (or Fahey as he preferred to write his surname) out to these lands (Ussher 1951: ch. 4,1).

Anthony Dominic Fahy was born in Loughrea, County Galway, Ireland, and after joining the Dominican Order in 1826, taking his vows in 1828, he was consecrated into the priesthood in 1831 in Rome. He spent a period as a missionary in a religious community in North America, and

¹ The author wishes to thank Prof. Juan José Delaney for his valuable suggestions and corrections, as also to Mrs. Susan Wilkinson for access to her private papers, and to the Rev. Kenneth Murray for his pertinent grammatical help.

some years in the Dublin Archbishopry, before his arrival in Buenos Aires in January 1844. Very shortly, that same year, he supported the group of the British Hospital's founders, and joined their second Board of Directors. Soon he became the spiritual advisor and counsellor to the local Irish community. His parish was scattered over the vast distances of the "pampas", which he regularly traversed on horseback to visit his flock. Thus, besides dispensing religious comforts to them, he also became their marriage counsellor; interpreter, postman and custodian of their moneys, as also their financial advisor (Murray 1919: 140 and 147).

During the Irish potato famine in the 1840s, a great number of Irish men and women emigrated to America, most of them to the United States, though a good number of them came to South America, mainly to Argentina. Many of them arrived in Buenos Aires sick and malnourished after a three-month voyage from Liverpool, mostly in primitive and poorly equipped vessels. A lot of them were penniless and could not pay for medical care in Buenos Aires. This was the main factor in Father Fahy's decision to establish a Hospital for them and for the burgeoning local community, based on the concept of free medical attention. Thomas Murray brought attention to the Irish hospital in his book *The Story of the Irish in Argentina* in 1919, as it was not widely known that Buenos Aires had such a hospital (Murray 1919).

In 1848, with help from his countrymen in making up the "Irish Relief Fund", Father Fahy rented a house on Cangallo street, between Esmeralda and Suipacha, and started the Irish Hospital. To sustain this enterprise, many small donations were sent by Irish settlers from the outlying countryside, in a radius of approximately 100 to 150 miles out of Buenos Aires. Also, many local businessmen contributed handsomely, of which Thomas Armstrong, George Dowdall, Bernard Kiernan, Patrick Bookey, Patrick Browne and Wilfred Latham stood out. The new Institution was initially known as the "Irish Immigrants Infirmary". The building, which was four city squares away from the Our Lady of Mercy church, was adapted to the new purpose, and three rooms were added to it, plus other pertinent reformatations (Murray 1919: 157).

The initial governing Committee was made up of Father Fahy as President, Mr. Bartholomew Foley as Secretary and Mr. Patrick Bookey as Treasurer. As from 1851, a Committee of five trustees was formed, entrusted to look after matters pertaining to its property. It had no authority over the Hospital's administrative decisions, which was in the hands of Father Fahy; a few years later this was to be shared with the Sisters of Mercy. The Chaplain organized Fund Raising campaigns, the proceeds of which were used by the Sisters as necessary. As time went by, it was deemed necessary to include more help, both to work on these campaigns and for the increasing administrative requirements. Thus, in

1868, the property was put under a new Committee, for which it was responsible, as it was for the governance of the institution. Mr. Michael Duggan was named Treasurer, and Mr. Edward Casey was the Secretary. At that time, the physician in charge was Dr. Lausen, born in Denmark (Murray 1919: 354).

In 1850, Father Fahy purchased the property, and on June 2nd, 1851, before a Notary Public he donated it: "...to all the Irish catholics residing in Buenos Aires and in the districts of its territorial jurisdiction, as to all else who chose to come to these parts, and in name of all of them, to the five gentlemen who form part of the administrative committee of the Buenos Aires General Hospital for Catholic Irish Residents...". In this same Donation Act, there is a phrase in which he recommends the Trustees to put in every effort towards the conservation of the Hospital: "...that it should not deteriorate, so that Irishmen will have this safe refuge always..."²

A new property was bought in 1862, on Riobamba street, between Viamonte and Tucumán. The original Hospital building was sold to Dr. Dalmacio Vélez Sarsfield (Usher 1951: ch. XVIII, 1). Dr. Cornelius Donovan was the first physician. He was assisted by Dr. Andrew Dick and Dr. James Lepper, both of whom were Consultant Physicians to the fledgling British Hospital.³ In its first year, the Irish Hospital admitted 158 patients, of whom 116 were men, 26 were women and 16 were children. Of this number, 138 were discharged cured, and 15 died. So stated Dr. Donovan's first annual medical Report in September 1849, which also included all the diagnoses made.⁴

Medicines were dispensed in Cranwell's Pharmacy,⁵ which was close to the Hospital, and run by the brothers Edmund and William Cranwell, both from County Kildare in Ireland. Dr. Donovan was from County Cork, and after studying Medicine in Paris and in Edinburgh, he arrived in Buenos Aires in 1844, aged 26. He was named surgeon to the Argentine Navy, recently created by Admiral William Brown; his services were frequently required by the Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas, both for his troops and

² http://members.tripod.com/fahyclub_exalumnos.ar/padre_fahy.htm

³ A group of British residents, led by the Anglican parson Rev. Barton Lodge, founded the British Medical Dispensary in July 1844, soon to be known as the *Hospital Británico de Buenos Aires*. It has evolved into a high complexity University Teaching Hospital.

⁴ Dr. Cornelius Donovan, *First Annual Medical report of the Irish Hospital*, September, 1849, quoted by Thomas Murria (1919) 158-159.

⁵ Edmund Richard Cranwell was born in Co. Tipperary in 1805, and arrived in the River Plate in 1825. He studied Pharmacy, and got his local degree. He established a Pharmacy (Botica) on Reconquista street, with his brother William in 1828.

for his family. Dr. Donovan's consulting rooms were initially on Parque (now Lavalle), and he later moved to N° 13 Reconquista street.⁶

Initially, the daily care of patients in the Hospital was administered by women with no formal nursing instruction. To improve the situation, in 1855 Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Paul Cullen, accepted Father Fahy's request to send out St. Catherine's Convent nuns, of the Sisters of Mercy's Order.⁷ Several of them accepted the challenge, and in February 1856 the following nuns arrived in Buenos Aires: the Mother Superior was M. Evangelista Fitzpatrick, the Assistant Mother M. Baptist. O'Donnel, and the Sisters M. Catherine Flanagan, M. Angela Rowlands, and M. Joseph Griffin. They were accompanied by two Novices, Rose Mary Foley and Anne Coffey, and a Postulant, Mary Moloney. They immediately took over the care of the patients, and established, with the help of the Chaplain, a school for young ladies. In 1858 three more Sisters arrived, and four more the following year. Shortly after, the Government questioned the legality of the newly established "foreign" Order, and its tenure of property. Up to the middle of the nineteenth Century, the only two existing orders in these lands were cloistered: the nuns of the Dominican monastery of St. Kathleen of Siena, and those of the Franciscan monastery of St. Claire. The presence of nuns going about daily, in public, teaching and ministering to the poor and sick, was a cultural shock. They were severely criticized and resisted, and their continuance was put seriously at risk: their unselfish devotion to the sick during a breakout of yellow fever, and Father Fahy's passionate defense of the Order, finally convinced the authorities that they could stay (Ussher 1951: ch. XI, 87). By the year 1859, in addition to caring for the patients, the Hospital and the new school, the Sisters had started up a convent and a public chapel. The building on Riobamba was adapted to house unemployed Irish girls, and to those girls orphaned during the frequent cholera and yellow fever epidemics (Ussher 1951: ch. XI, 94).

In the following years there were many difficulties in the upkeep of the Hospital, as all medical attention was free of charge, and its finances depended on donations. Several fund raising campaigns undertaken by Father Fahy and the Sisters of Mercy had very poor results. This caused the Chaplain to complain in "Letters to the Editor" in *The Standard*, that: "It would seem that the support given to the Irish Hospital is even worse

⁶ Susan Wilkinson, private notes, 1.

⁷ There is a certain controversy of how this came about: the authoress of "Pages in the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy" states that the State and the ecclesiastical authorities were responsible for requesting Archbishop Cullen to send them to Buenos Aires (Murray 1919: 172).

than the other Hospital, and it is a pity that the two have not joined up.”⁸ He also regretted the lack of support of some of his brother priests of his same Order. The attempts of Fr. Fahy and the nuns to obtain the necessary donations, to maintain the Hospital and to enlarge the premises, failed to reach the expected goals. Despite this, their assistance in the severe cholera outbreak in 1868, and the disastrous yellow fever epidemic of 1870 and 1871, was constant.⁹ During this last epidemic, Anthony Dominic Fahy passed away, aged 68. Though he died during the epidemic, his death certificate, signed by two physicians, establishes that he died of heart failure, on February 21, 1871 (Murray 1919: 344).¹⁰ His remains were buried originally in the clergy vault of the Recoleta cemetery, and later removed to a monument in the same cemetery, shaped to a Gaelic cross, built by Earley sculptors from Dublin.

Father John Leahy, who had assisted Father Fahy for some years, replaced him in the running of the Hospital, but due to illness, he returned to Ireland in 1873 (Murray 1919: 359). Subsequently, the Sisters of Mercy relinquished their role in the direction of hospital affairs to a committee of community laymen, which was called “Irish Hospital Committee”.

The committee devised the Irish Hospital Code, which outlined the rules to be followed in subsequent years. It is clear from the code that the committee was trying to deal with the challenges which confronted the hospital, develop a structure of patronage and also take care of those who needed care. The committee was impelled to impose certain restrictions and costs on care depending on patients’ situations. At the same time, a sentiment of caring for the patients is evident in the clauses which prevented patients being admitted who might harm others through illness or behaviour.

Irish Hospital Code:

- * That this Hospital be called the Irish Hospital of Buenos Aires.
- * That this Hospital be open to subscribers in case of sickness.
- * That the following be considered subscribers: Persons paying \$100 currency yearly, and workers and peons in the camp in the receipt of \$400 or less salary, on payment of \$50

⁸ “The other Hospital” is the Buenos Aires British Hospital. *The Standard* February 18, 1865. Quoted by Ussher J.M. op.cit. Ch XIX, p. 147-149.

⁹ All references agree on this point.

¹⁰ Fr. Fahy was treated in his last three years for heart disease, despite which he continued his demanding work unabated. During the Yellow Fever epidemic, whilst he cared for many of the sick, he was unwell, and his physicians diagnosed him to have ‘Bilious Fever’, unrelated to the epidemic. Two physicians stated that he died of heart failure. The location of his death Certificate is unknown.

- * That any person paying \$ 1000 yearly shall be considered a patron of the Hospital with privilege of sending two patients yearly; and those paying \$500 of sending one.
- * That no patient can be admitted without a written order from some party duly authorized to give same, except in urgent cases, when the Sisters of Mercy can determine as to admission of applicant.
- * That only subscribers will have the privilege of voting at General Meetings.
- * That an Annual General Meeting will be held on the 15th of August, for the appointment of Committee of Management for ensuing year, to which Meeting the outgoing Committee will submit a statement of receipts and expenditure during their term..
- * That the internal management be under the Sisters of Mercy, as it has been up to the present.
- * That patients who are non-subscribers be admitted, on bringing testimony of poverty from any authorized person.
- * Should the Hospital accommodation so permit, non-subscribers who can afford to pay may be admitted, on payment of \$50 a day.
- * That no case of smallpox or of virulent contagious fevers can be received, but that arrangements shall be made for the reception of such cases in some of the City hospitals.
- * That no patient will remain in Hospital after the Doctor decides he is to leave.
- * Persons whose reason is disturbed cannot be admitted.
- * All moneys collected for the Hospital shall be deposited in the Mercantile Bank of the River Plate (Murray 1919: 363).

Despite the introduction of a code, the Irish Hospital Committee could not revert the deteriorating economic and financial situation over the next few years, as the donations they relied upon were never enough to cover their expenses. In addition to this, there were discrepancies and differences of opinions between the governing trustees, the Sisters of Mercy, the clergy and prominent members of the community, on the role of the Irish Hospital. The result was that the Hospital closed down in 1879. *The Standard* published an editorial on the subject the following year, and among other concepts, mentioned that “The Irish Hospital flourished for a few years, and whether for want of patients or of support, or through defective management, its doors were closed and it became a thing of the past”. Also, “The Irish College was attempted by the late lamented Father Fahey, and whether for the want of support, or other cause, it was found not to succeed. The property was transferred for a small sum, and upon conditions reserving certain privileges to the Irish people, for the education of their boys. The college that has risen on that property in the Calle

Callao is the stateliest in the whole of the Republic!" (*The Standard* September 1919: Editorial).

In 1891, the last survivor of the initial committee, who had accepted the original donation, ceded the land and its buildings to the Irish Catholic Association.¹¹ Over a century later, it is difficult to speculate on the real reasons why this Institution ceased to exist. Leaving this aside, the contribution to the health care of the Irish community's sick and needy was truly enormous, and at the right moment, as the influx from Ireland thirty years after the Hospital's foundation lacked the drama of those first years in the forties and fifties, as the economic situation of the community had improved. Despite the fact that its contribution was brief –barely thirty one years–, the Irish Hospital played a significant role in caring for the Irish immigrants, and other members of the growing Irish community. The sustained efforts of Father Anthony D. Fahy and the Sisters of Mercy in organizing and running this not-for-profit charitable Institution were commendable, during a challenging time, and deserve more scholarly attention.

¹¹ The Irish Catholic Association was founded on June 5 1883, sponsored by the Archbishop of Buenos Aires Mgr. León Aneiro, and by Mgr. Patrick Dillon. It was empowered to administrate the Irish Orphanage and the Irish Hospital, and to receive donations and bequests pertaining to these properties. (See www.acirlandesa.org.ar)

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Reseña de libro

Miguens, Silvia. *Eliza Brown la hija del Almirante*, Editorial El Ateneo, Buenos Aires, 2012, ISBN 978-950-02-0671-6

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Cuando se lee una novela histórica, el lector constantemente se cuestiona: ¿cuál es la ficción y cuál es la realidad? En efecto, es esta línea divisoria lo que hace que al término del texto literario el lector investigue sobre el tema central de la novela. Antes de leer *Eliza Brown la hija del Almirante*, tenía muy poco conocimiento de la historia de Brown, y al indagar sobre su vida caí nuevamente en el cuestionamiento entre la leyenda creada en torno a esta joven irlandesa y su “real” biografía. En tal sentido, el material historiográfico le proporciona a la escritora argentina Silvia Miguens la posibilidad de entrelazar ficción y realidad, leyenda y hechos históricos.

En un total de quince capítulos, la novela se centra en dos dimensiones narrativas: la historia de las guerras de la Argentina (principalmente) y las vicisitudes de un romántico amor entre el capitán Francisco Drummond y Eliza Brown. Utilizando como gran trasfondo histórico la Revolución de Mayo de 1810, la guerra entre Argentina y Brasil en 1825 y el conflicto interno entre los federales y los unitarios, la novela se basa en la vida de la familia Brown conformada por el almirante Guillermo Brown, su esposa, Elizabeth Chitty, los hijos, Eliza, Guillermo, Eduardo, Martina y Totó, la criada. Obviamente, el almirante Guillermo Brown, como el patriarca de la familia, es quien se destaca como uno de los principales personajes tanto en la vida familiar como nacional.

La novela empieza *in media res* y luego se hace un recorrido cronológico del proyecto de vida de Eliza Brown. Esta cronología fragmentada le permite a la autora crear un personaje multifacético. Miguens muestra tanto los diferentes períodos de la vida de Brown (infancia, niñez y juventud) como la transformación que se produce en función de sus experiencias vividas en Irlanda y en la Argentina. Llama la atención que mientras que en su infancia e inicio de la juventud Brown muestra una inquietud por el conocimiento y un espíritu libre (para la época en que vive), años más tarde sucumbe al amor. Este cambio origina que la novela reproduzca, en una época posmoderna, el espíritu romántico de la literatura latinoamericana del siglo diecinueve, donde el personaje masculino se

inmola por la patria y el personaje femenino se sacrifica para reunirse en la eternidad con su amado. En otras palabras, se toma como modelo narrativo, la representación de los valores “patrióticos” (aunque muchas veces por extranjeros) entrelazada con el romanticismo decimonónico.

El eje estructural de la novela se basa en el tiempo y en el espacio. Mientras que la novela se ambienta principalmente a principios del siglo diecinueve, el narrador transporta al lector a un pasado más remoto. Por otro lado, si bien la novela discurre entre el pasado irlandés y el presente argentino, la acción principal ocurre en “La Kinta” o “La Casa Amarilla”, hogar de los Brown en la Argentina. De forma parecida a la casa de la familia Buendía en *Cien años de soledad* (1967) del escritor colombiano Gabriel García Márquez o de la familia Trueba en *La casa de los espíritus* (1982) de la novelista chilena Isabel Allende, “La Casa Amarilla” de la familia Brown cumple un papel protagónico en la novela. Esta casa es testigo del desarrollo de la familia, de las primeras inquietudes de Eliza Brown, de tertulias, de discusiones económicas y políticas, de éxitos y tragedias familiares. En tal sentido, “La Casa Amarilla” se caracteriza por su evolución y transformación a través de sus personajes. En otras palabras, mientras que la casa se ilumina en momentos de alegría, también se tiñe de tristeza ya sea por las dificultades económicas en un período de sus vidas o por las muertes que enlutan a la familia. A un nivel metafórico, se puede sugerir que es desde el balcón de este espacio doméstico donde se observan fragmentos del pasado argentino.

Hay que decir que el uso de las oposiciones binarias son elementos centrales en la narrativa de Miguens y se pueden agrupar de la siguiente manera: contraste entre el Viejo Mundo (Irlanda) y el Nuevo Mundo (Argentina), la ausencia y la presencia, la sombra y la luz, el silencio y la voz, el aparente patriotismo y la ambición comercial y personal (hecho que conlleva al enriquecimiento ilícito y a la corrupción) y la vida y la muerte. El uso del misterio y la representación del “mundo de los espíritus” y del “mundo de la realidad” le permite a la autora no solo darle una reinterpretación de la conocida leyenda de Eliza Brown sino también crear un sentido de armonía entre ambos mundos. A través de estas oposiciones binarias y desde la plataforma del presente se percibe la vida familiar de los Brown dentro de un contexto nacional.

Esta novela, de fácil lectura, se presta para discutir una serie de temas que caracterizan a la nación argentina tales como la influencia de la inmigración europea en esta nación, los orígenes de las fortunas extranjeras y la activa participación del inmigrante tanto en la gesta independentista como en las diferentes guerras que le tocó vivir a la Argentina. Si bien la “historia oficial” muchas veces intenta construir imágenes heroicas con el ánimo de crear el sentimiento patriótico y nacionalista en los ciudadanos, la novela histórica de Miguens replantea la

historia (aunque ficcionalizada) en un tono más objetivo, donde los protagonistas son individuos comunes que, en muchos casos, fueron motivados a pelear en las guerras no tanto por un espíritu nacionalista sino por la coyuntura del momento histórico que les tocó vivir. Por otra parte, el amor y la guerra sirven como telón de fondo para individualizar a aquellos ciudadanos que vivieron y murieron en el proceso de la creación de la nación moderna cuyas voces no lograron ser parte de la historia argentina. Recomiendo su lectura para aquéllos que están interesados en conocer la historia de esta nación desde una perspectiva literaria, donde los personajes de *Eliza Brown la hija del Almirante* “fluctúan entre el heroísmo, la traición y la leyenda” (Miguens, 178) y son ellos quienes dan vida a la historia de la moderna República Argentina.