ABEI Journal – The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies, v. 25, n. 1, 2023, pp. 99-115.

Devouring Hometowns: James Joyce's Dublin and Dalton Trevisan's Curitiba

Cidades devoradoras: A Dublin de James Joyce e a Curitiba de Dalton Trevisan

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Abstract: *The issue of geographical escape permeates the texts of* Dubliners *(1914) by James Joyce and* Em busca de Curitiba perdida *(1992) by Dalton Trevisan. In both works we come across characters who try to run away from a reality marked by frustration, decadence and paralysis. The impossibility of being able to leave the physical space of the city invariably leads them to sublimate this need through other types of evasion, such as the dream or daydream; the idealization of exotic and distant places; the temporal flight – by valuing the past at the expense of the present time; vices – mostly, drinking; superficial and fleeting relationships and, in the extreme, death as the ultimate solution to the hardships of which they are victims. Thus, Joyce's Dublin and Trevisan's Curitiba are not idealized, much less understood as places of protection and warmth – characteristics generally associated with the idea of hometown. In the fictional context in which they are presented, these cities function not only as settings, but as a large and stifling persona that imprisons its inhabitants and inexorably outlines their destinies.*

Keywords: *James Joyce; Dalton Trevisan; Dublin; Curitiba; Geographical Escape.*

Resumo: *A questão da fuga geográfica permeia os textos de* Dublinenses *(1914), de James Joyce e* Em busca de Curitiba perdida *(1992), de Dalton Trevisan. Em ambas as obras nos deparamos com personagens que tentam escapar de uma realidade marcada por frustração, decadência e paralisia. A impossibilidade de conseguirem deixar o espaço físico da cidade invariavelmente os leva a sublimar essa necessidade por meio de outros tipos de evasão, tais como o sonho ou devaneio; a idealização de lugares exóticos e distantes; a fuga temporal – através da exaltação do passado em detrimento do tempo presente; vícios – em particular, a bebida; envolvimento em relacionamentos superficiais e fugazes e, no extremo, a morte como solução às agruras de que se veem vítimas. Assim, a Dublin de Joyce e a Curitiba de Trevisan não são idealizadas, muito menos entendidas como lugares*

ISSN1518-0581 | eISSN2595-8127 | DOI 10.11606/issn.2595-8127.v25i1p99-115

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de proteção e aconchego – características geralmente associadas à imagem da cidade natal. No contexto ficcional pelo qual são apresentadas, elas funcionam não apenas como cenários, mas como uma grande e sufocante persona que aprisiona seus habitantes e inexoravelmente delineia seus destinos.

Palavras-chave: *James Joyce; Dalton Trevisan; Dublin; Curitiba; Fuga geográfica.*

James Joyce was born in Dublin, the capital of Ireland, in 1882. Dalton Trevisan is a Brazilian writer born in 1925 in the city of Curitiba, the capital of the state of Paraná. The fictional universes created by both authors are obviously configured in particular ways due to the spatial, temporal and cultural distances between them. Even so, they share some relevant characteristics, particularly with regard to the relationship between their characters and the place where they live. In both cases, they are often portrayed as people who desperately want to flee the city of their birth, where they lead a difficult life full of anguish. This search for geographical escape in fact exposes deeper layers in such a characterisation of their lives, since it expresses an eagerness to run away from a harsh and decadent reality that paralyzes them. As Sam Bluefarb states, people who wish to escape generally "need to embark on a geographical journey in order to reach some sort of spiritual destination" (157). However, in both Joyce's and Trevisan's worlds, this flight proves to be impossible, as their characters repeatedly experience extreme situations from which they cannot escape, remaining inexorably stuck in them. Through a sublimation mechanism, they usually adopt alternative forms of evasion from reality, namely, the dream or daydream (since the hardships of reality seem inescapable); the idealization of exotic and distant places; the temporal flight to the past at the expense of the present; vices in their different manifestations (which stun the senses, relieving the pressures of the external environment and also the internal ones); love affairs that don't really mean anything to them; various types of distractions and, ultimately, death. All the texts compiled in the books by both authors, *Dubliners* (1914) and *Em busca de Curitiba perdida* (1992), to be considered here, take place in the writers' hometowns. In *Dubliners* there are fifteen short stories. *Em busca de Curitiba perdida* consists of twenty-three texts, mostly short stories, but also some poems. Trevisan's title, an allusion to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927), anticipates the existential anguish of the characters.

Joyce's Dublin is inhospitable. It is a place where the rain is intermittently "drizzling down on the cold streets" (69), where it is often "dismal and cold out of doors" (89) and the short winter days lead the dusk to fall before dinner, making the houses grow sombre (20). The twilight, which can be poetic, symbolic and lugubrious at the same time, does not have the strength to resist the characteristic fog of the city: "[d]arkness, accompanied by a thick fog, [gains] upon the dusk" (65). The scenario created by the author is not welcoming. Autumn days, for example, are described in "Araby", the third short story in the book, in a non-idealised way: "[t]he career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables" (20). The same kind of environment is also built in "A Little Cloud". In this particular short story, the characters are shown as dehumanized and compared to animals:

> [a] horde of grimy children populated the street. They stood or ran in the roadway or crawled up the steps before the gaping doors or squatted like mice upon the thresholds. Little Chandler gave them no thought. He picked his way deftly through all that minute vermin-like life and under the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions in which the old nobility of Dublin had roystered (52).

Trevisan's Curitiba is equally dismal and, in many ways, even more inhospitable and frightening. It is inhabited by characters who live on the fringes of society: drunkards, prostitutes, people who are unhappy in love, superficial in relationships and, above all, extremely belligerent in relation to the city in which they live. It is invariably described as a land of desolation, hit by floods and about to be struck by divine wrath. It is the "*Curitiba das ruas de barro*"[1] (8), "*sem pinheiro ou céu azul*"[2] (9). It is a city that plagues its inhabitants with diseases such as typhus and pneumonia, like Chico in "*Pensão Nápoles*"[2] (11); a place where people are not sympathetic, such as is the case in "*Uma vela para Dario*"[4], in which the main character dies and is left on the sidewalk, in the rain, while his belongings are gradually stolen (20); individuals who abandon their parents, wives, husbands and who mistreat animals (59); a cold and rainy city, with people equally cold to one another; a refractory city with which the narrator does not identify at all: "*não te reconheço Curitiba a mim já não conheço / a mesma não é outro eu sou*"[5] (88).

For both writers, the city inflicts on its inhabitants a feeling of imprisonment that paralyses them. In "Eveline", for example, Joyce portrays the main character as a young

girl who dreams of a better future with Frank, with whom she plans to start a new life in Buenos Aires. The story's emphasis is not on the love she feels for this man, but on the difficult condition in which she lives and from which she wants to escape. Through this relationship she has a glimpse of hope, because she figures out that "in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married – she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been" (26). Before her mother's death, Eveline had promised her that she would take care of everything. This promise imposed a kind of moral obligation on her and, therefore, she began to live with her violent father who invariably returned home drunk. She had no choice but "work hard, both in the house and at business" (25-26). It was not easy at all for a poor 19-year-old girl, who was extremely fatigued, "to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work – a hard life" (26). Besides that, she had to spend all her salary at home. Now, however, Frank was going to "save her" (28). Ironically, when she finally has the chance to escape this harsh life, she is emotionally paralysed. At the last moment, at the departure station, she sets "her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal" (29) and Frank leaves without her. The way her body reacts to this – when she needs to decide whether to go or not – is very emblematic: "[s]he gripped with both hands at the iron railing," (28) as if she wanted to win an internal battle and force herself to stay. According to Florence Walzl, Eveline "is caught in a death trap, doomed by paralysis of will born of timidity and a mistaken sense of obligation" (225).

"Eveline" is not the only short story in which "escape seems to express the discrepancy between what life is and what it could be – in the minds of the escapers at least" (Bluefarb 162). "A Painful Case," for example, portrays Mr. Duffy as another character who is not happy and still cannot overcome a type of paralysis, becoming a self-absorbed character whose "life rolled out evenly – an adventureless tale" (81). His relationship with Dublin is evident in the opening of the story: he "lived in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen and because he found all the other suburbs of Dublin mean, modern and pretentious" (79). This "geographical" relationship is reflected in his personality – "he lived isolated from everyone" – and even in his physical appearance, since his face is described as if it "carried the entire tale of his years, [and it] was of the brown tint of Dublin streets" (80). He is a gloomy man, who lives in a sombre house and who has never left Dublin. In the analysis of Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro, "A Painful Case" is the book's "most beautiful and most painful story, emotionally, because of the solitude it creates" (Amaral, *Interview* 77).

The mood conveyed by the book can be better understood if we take into account Joyce's own comments. He states that he wanted "to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis (qtd. in Beja 32). For Joyce, Dublin "is the city of failure, of rancour and of unhappiness" (qtd. in Beja 54).

One way in which some characters seem to sublimate this inability or impossibility of leaving Dublin can be described as a desire to be transported to exotic faraway places with strange customs. This type of reference runs through the work, in one way or another. For example, "An Encounter" is narrated in a first-person perspective by a boy for whom school is boring and monotonous since it does not fulfill his need for real adventures. In his games with his friends, the Wild West is the playful context that constantly serves as an escape from a reality that does not satisfy him. It was his friend Joe Dillon who had introduced him to this enchanting region through the books that were part of his vast library: "[e]very evening after school we met in his back garden and arranged Indian battles" (12). These children's games, however, are not enough for the young narrator: "[t]he adventures related in the literature of the Wild West were remote from my nature but, at least, they opened doors of escape" (12). Despite being very young, he has this urge to free himself from the bonds that keep him away, in his view, from having a more meaningful life – and that first bond is school:

> [b]ut when the restraining influence of the school was at a distance I began to hunger again for wild sensations, for the escape which those chronicles of disorder alone seemed to offer me. The mimic warfare of the evening became at last as wearisome to me as the routine of school in the morning because I wanted real adventures to happen to myself. But real adventures, I reflected, do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought abroad (13).

It is in search of a real escape that one day the narrator and his two friends, Leo Dillon (Joe's brother) and Mahony, decide to skip school, venture into the city and cross the channel on the ferry. Dillon, ironically, ends up not showing up for the appointment, but the others go ahead with their plans. Again, one can see the desire to flee that comes to the fore as they observe the ships in the harbour:

> Mahony said it would be right skit to run away to sea on one of those big ships and even I, looking at the high masts, saw, or imagined, the geography which

> had been scantily dosed to me at school gradually taking substance under my eyes. School and home seemed to recede from us and their influences upon us seemed to wane (15).

This need to unbound from the monotony of school reveals, in an amplified way, the characters' eagerness to leave Dublin in order to have a "real life". Dillon is just one of the characters who are also not able to accomplish the aspiration to escape. On the other hand, those who succeed in doing that are the target of admiration and even envy from others who stayed and did not venture to discover new worlds. This is what happens, for example, with Ignatius Gallaher, Little Chandler's friend in "A Little Cloud": "[t]he friend whom he had known under a shabby and necessitous guise had become a brilliant figure on the London Press" (51) – and after eight years he returns to Ireland for a visit. The aura that surrounds this character in the eyes of his friends highlights the importance of those who have succeeded in escaping Dublin: "Gallaher had got on. You could tell that at once by his travelled air, his well-cut tweed suit, and fearless accent. Few fellows had talents like his and fewer still could remain unspoiled by such success. Gallaher's heart was in the right place and he had deserved to win. It was something to have a friend like that" (51).

Indeed, that guy "was Ignatius Gallaher all out; and, damn it, you couldn't but admire him for it" (53). This admiration seems to be accentuated by the contrast in Gallaher's choices and those of his friend. Like Dillon, who doesn't show up on the tour arranged with his colleagues, and Eveline who, in the final moment, abandons her dream of trying a new life in Buenos Aires, Little Chandler never left Dublin to live the adventures that other places would offer. Chandler then begins to think about the "changes those eight years had brought . . . and (as always happened when he thought of life) he became sad. A gentle melancholy took possession of him. He felt how useless it was to struggle against fortune" (51). His conclusion is a verdict upon himself: "[t]here was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. You could do nothing in Dublin" (53). As he is physically bound to his city, his mind begins to wander and he begins to build castles in the air: "[e]very step brought him nearer to London, farther from his own sober inartistic life" (53). The conversations he has with his successful friend have a double effect on him: although they are very interesting, they seem to accentuate his frustration. They talk about other cities: Paris, London, Berlin. The hectic and addictive life of these cities leaves Chandler perplexed and Gallaher concludes: "here we are in old jog-along Dublin where nothing is known of such things" (57).

Gradually, however, admiration gives way to discomfort: "[h]e was beginning to feel somewhat disillusioned. Gallaher's accent and way of expressing himself did not please

him. There was something vulgar in his friend which he had not observed before" (56). It is not difficult to understand the roots of such uneasiness: "Gallaher had lived, he had seen the world. Little Chandler looked at his friend enviously" (56). The feeling of frustration suppressed the admiration for his friend – a feeling that was stressed by the fact that Gallaher disdained things that for his friend were valued – such as a marriage, for example. If he ever gets married, Gallaher himself points out: "[i]f ever it occurs, you may bet your bottom dollar there'll be no mooning and spooning about it. I mean to marry money. She'll have a good fat account at the bank or she won't do for me" (60). This offends and discredits Chandler, who is married and has a son. This meeting with the "friend" that he had not seen for so long, instead of encouraging him, makes him feel incapable and a failure. That is why Ghiselin points out that characters like Ignatius Gallaher are Dubliners who have proved that "to be transported physically overseas is not necessarily to find a new life, or to be changed essentially at all" (65).

In one way or another, the characters in both Joyce's and Trevisan's worlds find themselves struggling with this indomitable fate that binds them to their hometown. Similarly, the need to escape becomes inevitable for all of them in very similar ways. One of the most explicit examples of this conflicting relationship between the city and its inhabitants in the book *Em busca de Curitiba perdida* is "Canção do Exílio," an ironic intertextual dialogue with the romantic poem by Gonçalves Dias written in 1843:

> Canção do Exílio
>
> Não permita Deus que eu morra
> sem que daqui me vá
> sem que diga adeus ao pinheiro
> onde já não canta o sabiá
> morrer ó supremo desfrute
> em Curitiba é que não dá (...)
> castigo bastante é viver em Curitiba
> morrer em Curitiba é que não dá
> não permita Deus
> só bem longe daqui
> mais prazeres encontro eu lá (42-44). [6]

The anguish of the poet is emphasized by the contrast with the source text. In "Canção do Exílio" by Gonçalves Dias, the poet glorifies, in an extremely idealised way, the qualities of his country – from which he is far away. The homesick lyrical persona vehemently cries

out to God to return to his homeland before he dies. In Trevisan's poem, the movement goes in the opposite direction, that is, the idea of dying in Curitiba is viewed as a curse. This context makes the message of the parodic version even more dramatic. For Veronica Kobs, in this text, "the dissociation between space and subject materializes and becomes definitive" (74).[7]

In "Lamentações de Curitiba", Trevisan once again makes use of the intertextual resource to emphasize his conflicting relationship with the city. This time, the dialogue is established with a biblical book of "Lamentations" of Jeremiah. In Trevisan's version, the message of deep distress is even more poignant:

> Lamentações de Curitiba
> A palavra do Senhor contra a cidade de Curitiba no dia de sua visitação.
> Ai, ai de Curitiba, o seu lugar será achado daqui a uma hora.
> . . .
> O que fugir do fogo não escapará da água, o que escapar da peste não fugirá da espada, mas o que escapar do fogo, da água, da peste e da espada, esse não fugirá de si mesmo e terá morte pior.
> . . .
> Maldito o dia em que o filho do homem te habitou; o dia em que se disse nasceu uma cidade não seja lembrado; por que não foste sempre um deserto, em vez de cercada de muros e outra vez sem um só habitante?
> Ó Curitiba Curitiba Curitiba, estendes os braços perfumados de giesta pedindo tempo, quando não há mais tempo.
> . . .
> Teu próprio nome será um provérbio, uma maldição, uma vergonha eterna.
> . . .
> A espada veio sobre Curitiba, e Curitiba foi, não é mais (13-14). [8]

By appropriating this passage in the Scriptures, the author also borrows its sacred and inexorable essence. In other words, just like the divine promises and curses, the predicted fate for Curitiba is its destruction and imminent desolation. Here the "dissociation, depersonali[s]ation and separation between the subject and the city, assumes the role of one of the seven plagues of the biblical narrative, at the end of time" (Kobs 72). The text provides evidence that this geographic flight has existential motivations. The constant tension in relation to the city seems to work as an external subterfuge for a deeper, interior existential pain, from which it is more difficult to escape: "*[o] que fugir do fogo não escapará da água, o que escapar da peste não fugirá da espada, mas o que escapar do fogo, da água, da peste e da espada, esse não fugirá de si mesmo e terá morte pior*"[9] (Trevisan 14).

Wherever people go, they carry all their worries with them. Dealing with internal pain is not simple. In this way, there seems to be a momentary relief when such conflicts are projected onto the outside world, in this case, on the city. And that is what these characters are continually doing as happens, for example, in "*O Senhor Meu Marido*,"[10] in which the errant behavior of the main character, João, offers another striking example of the issue of geographical escape as a subterfuge for an unhappy and frustrated life. Maria, his wife, was not faithful, but "*João era bom, era manso e Maria era única, para ele não havia outra: mudou do Juvevê para o Boqueirão*"[11] (37). The problem was that "*Maria era pecadora de alma, corpo e vida, não se redimia dos erros*"[12] (38). João moves from place to place in order to build a new life: Prado Velho, Capanema, Mercês, Água Verde, Bigorrilho... each neighborhood corresponding to a new affair of Maria. The way the story ends does not allow us to infer any hope for the future: "*[s]ão sem conta os bairros de Curitiba: João mudou-se para o Bacacheri. De lá para o Batel (nasceu mais uma filha, Maria Aparecida). Agora feliz numa casinha de madeira no Cristo-Rei*"[13] (40).

In the same way that João moves to another neighborhood because he does not know how to deal with the pain and shame of his wife's infidelity, in "Pensão Nápoles" Chico is always moving in an attempt to get some kind of emotional relief: "*morou em todas as pensões: Primavera, Floriano, Bagdá. Definhava ora na sórdida espelunca de nome pomposo, ora na salinha escura do escritório, a espirrar entre o pó dos papéis*"[14] (10). His life was boring and empty. In this short story, there is an element that makes the need for constant change even more sorrowful: "*[d]esde que aportou em Curitiba, Chico viveu às margens do rio Belém*", but "*[s]onhava em fugir para outra cidade – ah, Nápoles!*"[15] (10). This impossible dream becomes for him a fixed idea: "*ao receber a correspondência indagava ao carteiro: – Alguma carta de Nápoles?*"[16] (10). He wanted to leave, which in the text can even be understood as putting an end to his life. Instead, he "*mudava de emprego, noiva, pensão*"[17] (10). Ironically, he moves to the boarding house named after his dream city: "*Naufragou com seus trastes na pensão Nápoles, não a escolheu pelo nome. Condenado às pensões baratas que margeiam o rio, partilhando o quarto com estranhos*"[18] (11). He ends up sick, taken by tuberculosis, alone, frustrated and still a prisoner of the obsession to be far from Curitiba, in his idealised city: "*Depois do tifo preto e da pneumonia a pensão Nápoles. O nome não o deixava dormir*"[19] (12). A person's external changes undoubtedly reflect their internal conflicts and seem to function even as a momentary relief from them. The attitude of total aversion towards the city where Chico lives and the idealisation of a city in another continent where he would like to live lends the tragic tone to the short story. "*Oh, as noivas de Chico – a todas amou! Nem uma entendeu que não queria ser enterrado*

com os pés no rio Belém. Propunha fugirem para outra cidade. Qual das ingratas confiou no seu amor?"[20] (12).

Joyce's "Araby" is a short story in which the fascination for distant places with exotic landscapes and customs marks the entire plot. The appeal is already in the title. A boy is very excited at the idea of visiting the bazaar – that gives the story its name – and buy a souvenir for a girl he likes at school: "The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me" (20). This enchantment with the idea of Araby works for the boy in the same way as the idea of Naples works for Chico. A tragic irony is also shared by both characters. Chico ends up at the dirty, run-down boarding house named after the city of his dreams. And as for the boy, he is late because of his drunk uncle who forgot his request. Arriving at the bazaar just ten minutes before it closed, his desolation was inevitable:

> I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the six-pence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark. Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger (24).

In "The Sisters", a boy's account provides a similar type of response. The difficult circumstance in this case is the death of his tutor, Father Flynn. His attitude in the face of this fact is quite revealing. Instead of grief, he feels free from the priest's somewhat oppressive guidance. Interestingly, the boy mentions a dream he had the night before: "I felt that I had been very far away, in some land where the customs were strange – in Persia, I thought..." (7). The description of the distant and exotic place of his dream seems to reinforce his need to evade reality and to feel free. In this regard, Bluefarb emphasizes that even though "escape generally implies a flight from one reality to another, escapism has a wider cluster of associations. For escapism implies a flight from daily 'reality,' far less forgivable than literally running away from a society or situation" (5).

Gaston Bachelard comments on situations in which, through our dreams, "we hope to live elsewhere, far from the over-crowded house, far from the city cares. We flee in thought in search of a real refuge" (31). In *The Poetics of Space*, the author uses the image of the house as a metaphor for the other geographical spaces we inhabit. For the philosopher, "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (5). In a

similar approach, Edvaldo Souza Couto understands the big city as "the tension scenario" (63) and Brewster Ghiselin, commenting particularly on Joyce's work, states that the implicit aim of this need to escape Dublin is a "new condition of inward life" it is "not a place, but what the place implies, is the true east of the soul" (65).

In the narratives of both authors, the character's desire to escape is not limited to the issue of physical boundaries, but also concerns the temporal dimension. Thus, the drive to leave the city can be manifested through an idealisation of the past. Let us remember, for example, the version of "Canção do Exílio" by Trevisan, in which the poet expresses frustration with the Curitiba of the present day. For him, the city was better in the past. "The refusal to present Curitiba", Kobs states, "is sacramented with the desire for exile and removal from the homeland" (74). In the poem this is illustrated, for example, when the tree that stands as a symbol of the city – the pine tree – is mentioned as extinct: "*minha terra já não tem pinheiro / o sabiá não canta mais*" (44). And, finally, he concludes: "*Curitiba foi não é mais*"[21] (90).

This escape to a kind of idealised past is also evident, for example, in the last tale of *Dubliners*, "The Dead". Hearing the names of great singers of the past, the main character, Gabriel Conroy, lets himself be invaded by nostalgia and attachment to a time that no longer exists: "I must confess, that we were living in a less spacious age. Those days might, without exaggeration, be called spacious days" (158). Likewise, in "Clay", Joe Donnelly, after having already drunk a lot and being moved by an old melody sung by his friend, Maria, says that nothing compares to the old days. The feeling of deep sadness from the character's nostalgic posture invades the narrative. Emblematically, the story ends with a request from Joe to his wife: to "tell him where the corkscrew was" (79). Here, the need to escape the uncomfortable reality of the present is triggered or intensified by the sensation that drinking may provide.

In *Invisible Cities* (1972), Italo Calvino creates a fictional situation in which navigator Marco Polo is faced with the task of describing to the Tartar emperor Kublai Khan the places conquered by the sovereign, but which he cannot personally visit. The narrative, therefore, builds those cities with words. At one point, the Venetian merchant emphasises this relational aspect between the place and its description: "[n]o one, wise Kublai, knows better than you that the city must never be confused with the words that describe it. And yet between the one and the other there is a connection" (Calvino 61).

Just as Polo's descriptions reveal the new cities to the emperor, Curitiba and Dublin are also revealed to us through Trevisan's and Joyce's narratives. In this case, however, the scenarios that these authors weave about their hometowns are not welcoming at all – which

is ironic if we conceive the idea of home in a positive light. After all, as Bachelard says, it is in the home that it is possible to participate "in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material Paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live" (7). This is because a house is, or should be, "our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (4).

However, in both literary environments, this home – by extension, the hometown – is not characterised as a space of warmth and shelter, but as inhospitable and oppressive. Or, in the words of Antonio Candido, fictional spaces constructed within those frames function as "devouring spaces" (89). In his book, *The Discourse and the City*, more specifically in the chapter entitled "The Degradation of Space", the author analyses "the correlation of environments, things and behavior" (Candido 55), a confluence that seems very useful for the analysis posited in this paper, since, like the places analysed by Candido, Curitiba and Dublin transcend the condition of settings, of spaces of action. Bachelard proceeds with his argument: "We should therefore have to say how we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a 'corner of the world'" (4). Dubliners and Curitibanos, however, feel walled in, not rooted. Their birthplace, definitely, does not seem associated with protection and peace.

Thus, it is possible to understand that the existential emptiness of these characters is indelibly linked to the lack of a sense of belonging, to a type of "a *natio* – a local community, a domicile" in Timothy Brennan's words (qtd. in Hall 34). Philosopher Roger Scruton argues that the status of any individual as an autonomous entity is only possible "because he can first identify himself as something larger – as a member of a society, group, class, state or nation, of some arrangement . . . that he instinctively recognises as his home" (qtd. in Hall 29). Ernest Gellner understands that "without a feeling of national identification, the modern subject would experience a deep feeling of subjective loss" (qtd. in Hall 29). In other words, the notion of self is associated with this identification with a homeland, a nationality, a community.

Joyce's and Trevisan's cities can fit into the category that Marc Augé understands as non-places. For the author, three basic characteristics define what can be called a place and, therefore, the absence of these characteristics defines the non-place: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (Augé 77-78). In fact, neither Curitibanos nor Dubliners seem to appropriate these three characteristics in relation to the lived space. There is no possible identification of the characters with their city, since there are no significant links between them and their place

in the world. This idea is corroborated by Teresa Sá, for whom the "city of individuals is the world where each one maintains a relationship with the place based on memory, daily life, lived experiences. The identification of each person with a place stands out from this strong connection with a territory" (222). According to Hall, the narrative of the nation, that is, the way it is represented and the symbols attached to it, and the fact that we share this narrative lead us to a sense of identification and "gives meaning and importance to our monotonous existence, connecting our everyday lives with a national destiny that pre-exists us and continues to exist after our death" (Hall 31).

Considering Bachelard's analogy of the house, the damp and cold streets of Curitiba and Dublin, inhabited by decadent and hostile beings, symbolically evoke the underground part of a building. In this way, we understand that both fictional universes approach the image of the basement which stands for the "irrationality of the depths [because] it is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces" (Bachelard 18). This could justify the characters' fear of being walled up in their hometown and dying there. In one of his verses, Trevisan makes this harrowing feeling of imprisonment very clear: "*Curitiba sem pinheiro ou céu azul, pelo que vosmecê é – província, cárcere, lar*"[22] (9). Curitiba is home, but it is also a prison. And that is why Trevisan's poetic voice emphatically states that dying "*em Curitiba é que não dá*"[23] (42).

Finally, there is the ultimate form of escape: death – which works ambivalently in both works. It is something to be avoided and, at the same time, embraced as the last alternative to flee from a caustic reality: "*morrer ó supremo desfrute*"[24] (42), writes Trevisan – who, on the other hand, advises: "*tudo faça para não morrer*"[25] (43), but if it is not avoidable (and we all know it is not), "*só bem longe daqui*"[26] (43). As for Joyce, in many ways, death is the very act of staying in Dublin, for he "views paralysis as a kind of living death, or rather succession of deaths, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, details of darkness, cold, night, winter, and blindness image this process" (Walzl 223).

Trevisan does not present us with an idealised place, a city of propaganda, but "with a dystopian city that escapes classification. His Curitiba is grotesque, ordinary, immoral and carnivalised" (Prates and Teixeira 391; our trans.). According to Bosi, the writer "crosses the limit of expressionism" using "the grotesque, the sadistic, the macabre," (449; my trans.). The narrative construction emphasises – in a lugubrious, almost caricatural way – the dramas and inner dilemmas of the characters. Trevisan's stories are animated by "a cold existential despair, which leads [the author] to project in his voluntary poverty of means, the obsessions and moral miseries of the man of his

Curitiba" (Bosi 449; my trans.). The characters portrayed in this universe are doomed to self-imprisonment and complete hopelessness.

Joyce conveys this mood in "The Sisters", by means of a moment of subtle and poignant epiphany. This is due, for the most part, to "the fact that the revelation does not belong to the protagonist, a small kid, but to the reader: 'the boy does not know why he feels relieved by the priest's death, but the reader does'" (Amaral, *Interview* 77). This concept goes along with William Tindall's analysis of these rarified moments of awareness by the Dubliners: "When Joyce's heroes realise their condition, we too, if alert and sensitive, become aware of a condition so general we cannot have escaped it entirely. The revelation of Dublin to its citizens and of Dubliners to themselves reveals our world to ourselves" (Tindall 3-4). However, this kind of awareness in some situations of the book does not promote a significant change in their mournful lives. Instead of offering some kind of guidance and enlightenment, it makes their situation more dramatic. They are still trapped, and become aware of it, but they are not able to positively change their situation or the picture they see themselves in. On the contrary, sometimes it seems that they become more degraded as human beings as, for example, when Little Chandler takes out his frustration on his son because of being envious of Ignatius Gallaher; or Farrington who, dominated by an attitude of paralysis, hates his work, runs away in daydreams, is addicted to drink, comes home and unleashes aggressive behavior on his son that his boss had done to him, amplifying it through physical violence. Both of them divert all their frustration and anguish into their helpless children because they realize that they have become prisoners of a meaningless and decaying life.

In this sense, irony is used many times in the narrative to convey a stifling and confining existence. Self-awareness does not promote any positive turning point in the plots. As Regina Przybycien points out, both Trevisan and Joyce deal with paralysis and imprisonment in their texts. In *Dubliners*, for instance, the "epiphanic moments [do not] change a thing. On the contrary, they give the stories more poignancy because this self-awareness makes things even worse. The narrator maintains an ironical distance from the characters and their pathetic lives" (Przybycien). This is the same understanding of Walzl, for whom the short stories in Joyce's book, "in succession show a decline in the characters' reactions from painful realization of situation to almost total unawareness" (222).

Caetano Galindo points out that *Dubliners* has this "similarity of spirit with the work of Dalton Trevisan who, not by chance, was the first to translate fragments of *Ulysses* in Brazil, in *Joaquim* magazine" (qtd. in Del Vecchio). Vitor Alevato do Amaral also points to this fact that could be, more than a curiosity, a great source of inspiration for

the Brazilian author: "Joyce was born in Dublin; *Joaquim* in Curitiba. The writer Dalton Trevisan (1925) was its creator in 1946 and undertaker in 1948. What does *Joaquim* have to do with Joyce? The answer is simple: the first fragment of *Ulysses* ever to be translated and published in Brazil appeared in *Joaquim*" (Amaral). In fact, the bond between these two cities is a very close one: "Curitiba, sister of Joyce's Dublin, is that long journey of a writer scrutinising his city from the inside, in its sublime or cruel motivations, monstrous social injustices and dedications of a heroic fidelity never compensated" (Ribeiro). Undeniably, James Joyce's Dublin and Dalton Trevisan's Curitiba transcend the condition of scenarios, functioning as a large and involving persona that outlines their inhabitants' destinies.

Notes

[1] "Curitiba of muddy streets."

[2] "without pine trees or a blue sky."

[3] "Naples Boarding House."

[4] "A candle for Darius."

[5] "I don't recognize you, Curitiba; I don't know myself anymore / you're not the same; another am I."

[6] "Song of Exile / May God not let me die / without me leaving here / without saying goodbye to the pine tree / where the thrush no longer sings / to die oh supreme pleasure / in Curitiba it is not possible (...) / it is punishment enough to live in Curitiba / dying in Curitiba is not possible / may God not allow it / just far from here / more pleasures I find there".

[7] The excerpts from the sources originally written in Portuguese were translated by the author.

[8] Lamentations of Curitiba / The word of the Lord against the city of Curitiba on the day of His visitation. / Woe unto you, Curitiba; your place will be found within an hour. (...) / Whoever flees from the fire will not flee from the water, whoever flees from the pestilence will not flee from the sword, but whoever flees from the fire, from the water, from the pestilence and from the sword, will not flee from himself and will die in a much worse way. (...) / Cursed be the day in which the son of man dwelt in you; the day a city is said to have been born will not be remembered; why haven't you always been a desert instead of a walled place without a single inhabitant? / Oh Curitiba, Curitiba, Curitiba, you extend your broom-flower-scented arms asking for time, when there is no longer time. (...) / Your very name will be a proverb, a curse, an everlasting shame. (...) / The sword came over Curitiba, and Curitiba once was, it is no more.

[9] "Whoever flees the fire will not escape the water, whoever escapes the plague will not flee the sword, but whoever escapes from the fire, the water, the pestilence and the sword, will not flee from themselves and will have a worse death."

[10] "The Lord My Husband."

[11] "João was good, he was meek and Maria was unique, for him there was no other: he moved from Juvevê to Boqueirão."

[12] "Maria was a sinner in her soul, body and life; she did not redeem herself from her mistakes."

[13] "There are countless neighborhoods in Curitiba: João moved to Bacacheri. From there to Batel (one more daughter was born, Maria Aparecida). Now happily living in a wooden house in Cristo-Rei".

[14] "he lived in all the boarding houses in town: Primavera, Floriano, Baghdad. He would alternate between languishing in the sordid slum with a pompous name, and the dark little office room, sneezing at the dust rising from paper."

[15] "Since he arrived in Curitiba, Chico had lived on the banks of the Bethlehem River", but "he dreamed of escaping to another city – ah, Naples!"

[16] "when receiving the mail, he would ask the postman: - Any letters from Naples?"

[17] "[he] changed jobs, fiancées, boarding houses."

[18] "He was shipwrecked on the Naples boarding house with all his junk; he didn't choose it because of its name. He was condemned to those cheap boarding houses along the riverbanks, sharing a room with strangers."

[19] "After experiencing typhus and pneumonia, there was the Naples boarding house. The name wouldn't let him sleep."

[20] "Oh, Chico's brides – he loved them all! Not one of them understood that they didn't want to be buried with their feet in the Bethlehem River. He proposed fleeing to another city. Which of the ungrateful ones trusted his love?"

[21] "the thrush no longer sings" – and more than once he reiterates: "my land no longer has pine trees". / the thrush no longer sings". And, finally, he predicts: "Curitiba is not anymore".

[22] "Curitiba without pine trees or a blue sky, for what you are – province, jail, home."

[23] "in Curitiba it is not possible."

[24] "to die, oh supreme enjoyment."

[25] "do everything so as not to die."

[26] "just far away from here."

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