UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
CENTRO DE COMUNICAÇÃO E EXPRESSÃO
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM INGLÊS: ESTUDOS LINGUÍSTICOS E LITERÁRIOS

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“WHAT’S THIS COUNTRY COMING TO?”:
PATRICK MCCABE’S BOG GOTHIC IN *THE BUTCHER BOY*

FLORIANÓPOLIS
2020

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Dissertação submetida ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina para a obtenção do título de Mestre em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários
Orientadora: Prof.ª Dr.ª Beatriz Kopschitz Xavier Bastos

Florianópolis
2020

Ficha de identificação da obra elaborada pelo autor,
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dos Santos, José Eduardo
"WHAT'S THIS COUNTRY COMING TO?": PATRICK MCCABE'S BOG GOTHIC IN THE BUTCHER BOY / José Eduardo dos Santos ; orientadora, Beatriz Kopschitz Xavier Bastos, 2020.
64 p.

Dissertação (mestrado) - Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários, Florianópolis, 2020.

Inclui referências.

1. Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários. 2. Gótico do Pântano. 3. Patrick McCabe. 4. Literatura Irlandesa. 5. Gótico Irlandês. I. Kopschitz Xavier Bastos, Beatriz . II. Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários. III. Título.

José Eduardo dos Santos

“What’s This Country Coming To?”: Patrick McCabe’s Bog Gothic in *The Butcher Boy*

O presente trabalho em nível de mestrado foi avaliado e aprovado por banca examinadora composta pelos seguintes membros:

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Certificamos que esta é a **versão original e final** do trabalho de conclusão que foi julgado adequado para obtenção do título de mestre em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários.

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CPF: 437.248.686-34

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Orientadora

Florianópolis
2020

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my advisor, my girlfriend, my friends, my classmates and my family, since they were vital to help me overcome my insecurities, problems and doubts, and finish the thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must begin my acknowledgments thanking my parents, José Luiz and Terezinha, for raising me to pursue my dreams and always try to do my best no matter what. Thank you, mother, for always enduring the harsh moments that life threw on you and always doing this with a smile on your face, showing me that we must be brave, but kind. Thank you father, for telling me that, no matter what we do, we must always excel at it. I might have deviated from my best, but I am sure I always carried the intention in my heart. I would also like to thank my siblings, for playing an important part in the construction of my character. Moreover, I would like to thank my nephew and godson, Luiz Guilherme, for showing me that even I being what I consider a distant and relapsed uncle I can still be a role model to be followed. The same goes to my niece, Rafaella, who explicitly said that she is really proud of me and takes me as an inspiration.

I shall address special thanks to my girlfriend, Jocielen, for being by my side on every step of this journey. She played an important role on cheering me up and motivating me to continue and finish my research, even when everything seemed lost in despair and idleness. Thanks for being my partner in life, caring for me in a way I am sure I do not deserve. As you once said: we might not be together forever, but the moments we lived already make the present the best it can be.

I would like to express the deepest and most sincere appreciation to my advisor, professor Beatriz Kopschitz Xavier Bastos, who, since the beginning, showed me the most caring support and guidance, always guiding me with utter professionalism and cheerful dedication. As my advisor, she stood by my side, orienting me through every step of the way and showing me the best path, always trying to cheer me up and show me a potential that I could not believe I had (and I might still not do) and encouraging me even when I gave her every reason to give up on me. Words are not enough to describe how this powerful and wise woman played the most important role in this journey. To give you a raw idea I can say the following: every time I left one of our colloquiums I felt refreshed and inspired to keep on researching and writing, even thinking about my future as a researcher in the Irish literatures field of study. Without her wisdom and patience, I would not have finished this work. I will always be deeply grateful for her guidance (and even more for her patience and faith in me) through these years of the Master's program.

My most sincere gratitude to the Post-Graduate Program in English, for providing me with the chance of learning so much. Special thanks to every professor in PGI with whom I

had classes. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and helping me develop mine, specially Professor Daniel Serravalle de Sá, who accepted to be a member of my qualifying committee and whose support, wisdom, encouraging words and advice played a crucial part in my academic progress, both for the development of this thesis and my (in)sanity.

Before and during this journey, I have come across unique and special people who made it lighter, funnier and with whom I shared moments of happiness, sadness, difficulty and even a little bit of despair. My heartfelt thanks to Eloísa “coleguinha” Dall’Bello, who was my confidant, my advisee partner, my international congress emotional pillar and my personal model and muse. Your friendship is something I treasure the most in my life. Special thanks to Mariana, Marília, Juliana, Luana, Vinicius and Fran, for being the best classmates and Master’s program buddies that I could have. Your support and friendship was and still is unique and needed. A “big one” for the “Ruzera and Cerveja” buds: Lesy, Paola, George, Olegário, Fábio, Ruth, Renato and Bettina. The bar nights we had and the chats about life, as well as the ones about the academic life were crucial in this journey. Many thanks also to my “Raça”: Henrique, Georgia, Pedro, Silvia, Vinicius, Monique, Rael, Luanna, Jordain, Jefferson and Wellington, for your brother and sisterhood, as well as the parties and karaoke nights which were a fugue from sadness and depression. A million thanks to all of my other good friends and colleagues who have been a part of my life throughout these years. You are all in my heart and I will be forever in your debt.

I would also like to thank CNPq for the financial support during two years, which allowed me to fully dedicate myself to the Master´s program and to my research.

You need darkness in order to see light.

(Unknown author)

ABSTRACT

The present study analyses the construction of Bog Gothic in the *The Butcher Boy*, novel written by the Irish author Patrick McCabe and first published in 1992. By analysing the use of Classic Gothic and New American Gothic tropes, as well as Irish society in the mid-twentieth century in the novel, my main point is to find out what constitutes the literary subgenre Bog Gothic, the aforementioned author being regarded as the creator of such style. My hypothesis is that the Bog Gothic is made up from a mixture of Classic Gothic elements and New American Gothic's psyche-oriented writing style placed in a rural Ireland that suffered from social problems, from a revisionist point of view, to present the country's disparity between rural and industrialised Ireland. As a means of better understanding if this is how Bog Gothic is constructed, this study offers a historical contextualization of Ireland and the Gothic genre in the country as well as how the term Bog Gothic was created and has been treated so far. Concerning the theoretical background, the analysis is based on the concept of Classic Gothic, relying on Siobhán Kilfeather's, George O'Brien's and Edmund Burke's concepts of Gothic; David Punter's, Irving Malin's and Babitha's insights on New American Gothic; and Terrence Brown's and Yen-Chi Wu's work on nationalism. I argue that, by presenting a novel that focuses on the narrator's psychological issues at the same time that it uses tropes usually featured in Classic Gothic novels, within the Irish context of an unstable era, Patrick McCabe creates his own style of Gothic in *The Butcher Boy*, which will be replicated on later works by him.

Palavras-chave: Bog Gothic; Patrick McCabe; Irish Literature; Irish Gothic; New American Gothic

RESUMO

Este estudo analisa a construção do "Gótico do Pântano" no romance *The Butcher Boy*, escrito pelo autor irlandês Patrick McCabe e publicado pela primeira vez em 1992. Ao analisar o uso de elementos do Gótico Clássico e do Novo Gótico Americano, assim como a sociedade irlandesa na metade do século XX no romance, meu objetivo principal é descobrir o que constitui o subgênero literário do Gótico do Pântano, sendo o autor supracitado considerado o criador de tal estilo. Minha hipótese é que o Gótico do Pântano se dá pela mistura de elementos do Gótico Clássico e do estilo literário voltado à psique do Novo Gótico Americano situados em uma Irlanda rural que sofre com problemas sociais, como uma maneira revisionista de representar a disparidade entre as "Irlandas" rurais e industrializadas. Para melhor entender se o Gótico do Pântano é assim construído, este estudo apresenta uma contextualização história da Irlanda e do gênero Gótico no país, assim como o termo Gótico do Pântano foi criado e estudado até agora. No que tange o aporte teórico, a análise está embasada no conceito de Gótico Clássico, se baseando nos conceitos de Siobhán Kilfeather, George O'Brien e Edmund Burke; nas ideias de Novo Gótico Americano de David Punter, Irving Malin e Babitha B.; e nos trabalhos sobre nacionalismo de Terrence Brown e Yen-Chi Wu. Argumento que, ao apresentar um romance que foca nas questões psicológicas do narrador, enquanto usa elementos comumente relacionados ao Gótico Clássico num contexto de uma era instável na Irlanda, Patrick McCabe cria seu próprio estilo de Gótico em *The Butcher Boy,* o qual será reproduzido em seus trabalhos posteriores.

Palavras-chave: Gótico do Pântano; Patrick McCabe; Literatura Irlandesa; Gótico Irlandês; Novo Gótico Americano

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXTS OF INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

Studies on Irish Gothic literature have grown considerably in recent years, and one can now say that the genre is directly related to the history of Ireland. Daniel Serravalle de Sá and Anelise Reich Corseuil (2012, p. 11-12) point out that although the Gothic is now a well-researched category, there is still no satisfactory definition of the term available. This assumption is corroborated by Jarlath Killeen, who states that there has been much critical discussion on how to define the term Gothic – as a "tradition," a "canon," a "genre" or a "mode." When trying to determine how to approach Gothic, it is important to consider David Duff's (*apud* KILLEEN 2002, p. 14) inquiry into genre theory, where he states that it is a "disputatious field," since there are few texts that belong to only one particular genre. Killeen, in turn, states that, although discarding the idea of treating Gothic as a genre may seem attractive, since Gothic may be said to combine different genres, to do so is obscurantist in relation to literary history (2002, p. 13 – 14), and should, thus, be discouraged. How to address Gothic, then? Stating this instability, and placing Gothic as "genreless," would tend to isolate it. I, therefore, do approach Gothic as a genre based on John Frow's reading of Ann Freadman's argument on genre: "[one should] think of genre in terms of sets of intertextual relations […] the relation between all those texts that are perceived to be relevantly similar […] as well as all those texts perceived to be relevantly dissimilar" (FROW *apud* KILLEN, 2002, p. 14). Further, my evocation of similarities and differences in McCabe's work, and its comparison with other works, supports defining and addressing Gothic as a genre.

An overview at the theorisation of the Gothic in Ireland shows that, since the eighteenth century, the genre has represented the suppressed fears and anxieties of Irish society. Scholars including Vera Kreilkamp, Jarlath Killeen, Jarrold Hogle, Siobhán Kilfeather and William John McCormack, amongst others, support the idea of a literary Gothic tradition, passed through generations of Anglo-Irish writers (even if at times these scholars have engaged with the issue of the adequacy of terminology when it comes to defining Gothic). William John McCormack (1991, p. 835), for example, points out that tracing this tradition back to Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Sheridan Le

Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) shows that, differently from Horace Walpole – widely known as the writer of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the first novel which (arguably) received the title of "Gothic novel" –, Irish writers have manifested a lack of interest in the medieval period in their writings, focusing their stories, instead, on religious wars from the seventeenth-century onwards and frequently linking them to contemporary concerns. Jarlath Killeen (2014, p. 34), in turn, argues that Anglo-Irish writers showed a unique fascination with the occult, the terror, the madness and the supernatural, most probably because the Gothic genre worked as the Anglo-Irish community's political unconscious.

At the end of the twentieth century, a new Gothic subgenre, encompassing the characteristics of a post-independence country, seems to have arisen in Ireland: the so-called Bog Gothic. Focusing on the political instability of the Irish border region and its effects on Irish rural communities, Patrick Joseph McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), the exponent of this new Gothic subgenre,[1] tells the story of Francie Brady, a small Irish town boy who narrates his murder tale. His journey into insanity starts with his dysfunctional family composed of a mentally ill mother and a drunk, abusive father. Due to their social situation, Francie grows up with envy of his Anglicised middle-class neighbours, The Nugents, who live a wealthy life and can afford everything the Bradys cannot, be it food, clothes or comics. After life-changing events – his mother's suicide, his father's act of drinking himself to death, the sexual abuse in an industrial school by a priest, to cite just a few incidents – Francie's mind is deeply wounded and he starts his descent into madness, which culminates in the butchering of Mrs Nugent, who had branded Francie's family as pigs. *The Butcher Boy* is the first novel of what is regarded as a "thematically linked trilogy" (LACEY, 1998, p. 50), also composed by *The Dead School* (1995) and *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998).

To understand better Irish society and its relation to Gothic tradition, a converging line must be traced. The Irish Gothic novel has often been regarded as a purely Protestant genre, which emerged as a response to the political crisis in eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish society. The Irish Protestant community experienced a crisis in the 1750s, mostly after the Money Bill dispute, in which the undertakers who controlled the Irish Parliament at the time fought politically between themselves for power over Ireland, dividing the community internally. As Roy Foster (1988, p. 236-237) points out: "the Westminster Parliament could legislate for Ireland, and under Poyning's Law they had to transmit heads of bills for approbation in

[1] I use the term "subgenre" based on Derek Gladwin's (2016, p. 213-214) definition of McCabe's work as subgenre, mode or form depending upon how it will be used to describe the literary style.

England." The 1753 Money Bill was a supply bill to make up the revenue for the Crown, which put the Speaker of the Crown, Henry Boyle[2] on the "patriot" side of the opposition and against the 'court' constituency. After finding an alteration in an Irish money bill that was sent to Westminster, which would dispose a surplus in the Irish Treasury by reducing the national debt with England, Boyle's supporters rejected the alteration, leading the country to a constitutional crisis (KILLEN, 2014, p. 58). Foster (1988, p. 207) also points out that the political instability of the 1750s coincided with a credit and banking crisis, setting off rumours about English discrimination against Irish trade and exploitation of the Irish establishment, as well as threats of non-importation boycotts that followed. Due to this dispute (and the patriotic fervour it arose), English politicians decided to change the undertaker system rule and began searching for support in communities marginalised by the Anglican elite: Catholics and Presbyterians. Killeen (2014, p. 63) asserts that, due to the crisis in the Anglican enclave, "a different kind of literature [was] necessary to articulate and negotiate the split [within], one which addresse[d] internal psychic division as well as external menace." This political tension between the Anglican community and the English court, who were teaming up with Catholics and Presbyterians, resulted in a generation of Anglican writers who, fearing Catholic threat and English attack on Ireland's economy, created "Gothic heroes" to face the "monstrified" threats to the country.

In the nineteenth century, Ireland underwent a major change in its political status due to the Act of Union, which established the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1801. This Act transferred political power and authority entirely to London, a decision which generated a state and sense of stagnation in Ireland not only because the country was then ruled by the English parliament, but also because of the many social problems it had to endure. John Henry Whyte points out that the Irish were facing many problems, being the most serious the question of land:

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[2] Henry Boyle (1682-1764): regarded as the leader of the Whigs in Ireland in 1729, he became Irish Commissioner of Revenue, Privy Councillor, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Speaker by 1733. He acquired national popularity in 1753 for opposing the government's attempt to appropriate a surplus in the Irish Exchequer (FOSTER, 1988, p. 232). Alongside two other undertakers, George Stone (1708-64), the Archbishop of Armagh and John Ponsonby (1713-87), Chief Commissioner of the Irish Revenue Board, Boyle entered a political dispute for power, which lead to the Money Bill dispute in 1753 (KILLEEN, 2014, p. 58).

> The land of Ireland was simply not sufficient to feed all those who were trying to get a living off it. Population was increasing rapidly. This led to a competition for land and drove up rents, thus reducing still further the people's resources. Things could have been better if farming methods had improved, but, except in Ulster, most farmers had no security of tenure, and they had learnt by experience that if they improved their holdings, the landlord was quite likely to put up the rent. (WHYTE, 2001, p. 204)

Moreover, Irish economics was limited. As Edward Green (2001, p. 218) points out, Ireland lacked the mineral resources, particularly coal, to guarantee an industrialisation of the country, and the Irish did not lie in any international agreement of trade while the landlords did not invest in the improvement of their tenants, and commercial and industrial prosperity were threatened by disparity between English and Irish resources. Being majorly an agriculture based economy country, over two-thirds of the Irish people depended on it to make a living. When the country was hit by "The Great Famine"[3] people all around the country started to emigrate mostly to England and the United States. Around one million people had left Ireland by 1848, while another million had perished. This, as Derek Hand (2011, p. 71) asserts, led the Irish to remain "somehow benighted, incapable of entering fully into the benefits of modernity," throughout the nineteenth century.

The social stagnation of Ireland resulted in an equal paralysis in the literary scenario and Irish fiction writers remained focused in the Anglican and Irish grudge. An inquiry into the history of the Irish Gothic novel in the nineteenth-century shows that the genre often approaches social, political, cultural and religious issues in stories that are gloomy and/or violent, and quite frequently placed in Ireland. Besides the major Gothic novels cited in the beginning of this introduction, Siobhán Kilfeather (2006, p. 85) stresses out that the relation of Gothic texts to politics and social issues became evident, for example, in the first decades of the *Dublin University Magazine*, which was published in the 1830s and showed numerous cases of essays on politics with language of haunting, terror, dismemberment and monstrosity. Conflicts between Catholics and Protestants remained thus recurrent in the nineteenth century and many critics agree that iconic Gothic writers evoked Ireland's history and politics by addressing religious and racial issues of their society.

The Irish experienced another major transformation in the national scenario in the twentieth century, after the bloody and difficult process of independence, which culminated in the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, and a subsequent

[3] The period between 1845 and 1850 is known as "The Great Famine," due to potato crops being compromised by a fungus, leading the Irish people to starvation and/or death.

Civil War. Terence Brown (1985, p. 37) points out that, after the Civil War in the early 1920s, Ireland intended to re-create an "Irish Ireland." According to Yen-Chi Wu (2012, p. 3) this movement "inherited the spirit of cultural nationalism in the late nineteenth century, which took Gaelic culture as the quintessential Irish cultural origin and attempted to reinvigorate a 'Gaelic Revival.'" Moreover, this movement – led by Ireland's Prime Minister, Éamon de Valera[4] – was a political conservative reaction to the materialistic way of life in Great Britain. De Valera ruled from 1932 to 1958 and tried to create a self-sufficient country by, for example, raising taxes on British products. However, instead of boosting Ireland's economics, de Valera's decision led the Irish to an era of poverty, famine and emigration so severe that the new government of Seán Lemass, in 1959, was unlikely to make a significant impact before new elections, due to "the mood of deepening despair" (LEE, 1989, p. 341). De Valera's lack of understanding of economics policies led the nation to a period of dire poverty in the 1940s and the 1950s, hitting harder on the agriculture-based western community (WU, 2012, p. 3).

In the introduction to the book *The Irish Novel: 1960 – 2010*, George O'Brien (2013, p. vii - xxvii) points to the main aspects of Irish twentieth-century novels. A shift in tone can be noticed: Irish writers started focusing more on fresh perspectives on Irish life and the individual experience. Another crucial characteristic of mid-twentieth-century writings is the historical revisionism[5] they propose. Most contemporary writers address the "scars of colonial trauma" and a certain fear of remembering and narrating the past (FLANNERY apud MCCANN, 2014, p. 67). Moreover, after Ireland achieved independence in 1921, and power passed from the hands of the Anglo-Irish to Irish Catholics, a new "Gothic tradition" emerged. With the Catholic dominance, the Irish countryside, the church, the hearth and the modernisation of Ireland turned out to be major themes in post-independence Gothic fiction, and the figures of Catholic history, like de Valera and the Archbishop John Charles

[4] One of the founding members of the Fianna Fáil, Éamon de Valera became Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) in the election of 1932, succeeding William Thomas Cosgrave. After Michael Collins signed the Anglo-Irish treaty separating the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland, de Valera led the anti-Treaty into Civil War. In 1926 he founded the Fianna Fáil republican party, which had the aspiration to institute a state of protectionism, both economic and cultural (FOSTER, 1988, p. 536).

[5] Historical revisionism commonly refers to a post-nationalist view on Ireland's nationalist historiography contrary to the political and cultural nationalist orthodoxies of the Irish Free State (BASTOS, 2003, p. 4).

McQuaid[6], were transformed into stock villains. This critique of the recent past populated Irish postcolonial writers' minds (KILLEEN, 2014, p. 205).

Often set in rural Ireland and featuring characters who are castaways from society, Patrick McCabe's fiction raises problems of a broken Irish rural society that was torn apart by the partition of Ireland in 1921 and by changes in internal policies in the mid-1950s. Ellen McWilliams (2013, p. 392) characterises McCabe's work as "literary revisionism," that is, as a kind of fiction, which seeks to revaluate the nationalist ideology that permeated the nation in its post-independence era. One could add that the aberrant imagery used in *The Butcher Boy* and its shocking plotline draw from the Gothic tradition. This preference for small town and rural Ireland aligned with the grotesque tone in his stories has granted McCabe the label of "King of Bog Gothic," term first coined by journalist John O'Mahony (2003), who aimed to capture McCabe's constant interest in portraying Ireland's borderlands situation through the lenses of socially dysfunctional characters.

Although created by a journalist, the term Bog Gothic rapidly became a label among literary critics to describe McCabe's work, due to his style which brings up a "regressive and supernatural Ireland that aligns with stereotypes of boglands" (GLADWIN, 2016, p. 213). No definition of what Bog Gothic is and how it fits in the Irish Gothic tradition is yet to be found, although some critics have tried to define and characterise the subgenre. Siobhán Kilfeather (2006, p. 94) affirms that Bog Gothic might be set as opposite to the Big House Gothic – horror stories written in the nineteenth century portraying the Anglo-Irish folk who lived in big houses and manors in colonial Ireland. The opposition Kilfeather proposes deals directly with the Irish Gothic tradition, since Bog Gothic represents the struggles produced by English cultural domination on rural Irish people's minds in the post-independence era, and Big House Gothic deals with the unstable political scenario and the identity conflict of the Anglo-Irish in colonial Ireland. Ellen McWilliams asserts that the subgenre is associated with "the gruesome content of [McCabe's] novels and his preferred setting of small town Ireland [...] where narrators are maniacal outsiders cut off and excluded from mainstream society" (2013, p. 431-432). McWilliams (2013, p. 312) also affirms that McCabe's portrayals of main characters' journeys into madness are moulded by the multiple events in Irish history, like de Valera's decision to raise taxes on English products by the mid-twentieth-century and affected

[6] John Charles McQuaid was the Lord Archbishop of Ireland from 1940 until 1971 and a close friend to Éamon de Valera (FEENEY, 1974, p. 7). He played a major role on de Valera's economic plan for Ireland, since the majority of the population in the island was Catholic and the acceptance of the Bishop (and his closeness to the Taoiseach) was an appealing notion at the time (FEENEY, 1974, p. 12).

the country's economy, or Seán Lemass's rapid modernisation politics that marginalised rural areas and modernised metropolitan ones. These choices show the author's engagement with the Gothic tradition, which seeks to relate to history.

In his pursuing of depicting the rural life of a mid-twentieth century Ireland, McCabe produces grotesque imageries in *The Butcher Boy* through Francie Brady's actions in response to the environment he was raised and lives in. However, not only the social dichotomy between the Bradys and the Nugents and the Gothic outcome must be realised here. More than just a social representation of the country, McCabe's novel depicts the psychological obsession of Francie with Joe Purcell (his best friend) and The Nugents, which cannot be overlooked when considering a possible analysis of this subgenre. That is because more than just a "revisionist Gothic novel," McCabe's novel embraces what is called "New American Gothic" that revolves around the mind and psyche of the character. In his incessant pursue of acceptance, Francie deepens himself into a hopeless well of madness, full of incessant disillusions and disappointments that drive him mad. Irving Malin (MALIN, 1962, p. 5) points out that in "New American Gothic [...] there can be no terror without the hope for love and love's defeat."

McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* comprises socio-political aspects of the 1950s and 1960s Ireland – decades in which the novel is set and Patrick McCabe grew up. This period became McCabe's background for most of his works, in which, not rarely, a rural Ireland is presented alongside with violence and psychological troubles. Due to McCabe's tendency to romanticise and reinforce the Irish rural utopia in a way, some critics bring to light the relation of McCabe's works to the historical events of Irish modernisation in mid-twentieth century by relating them to provincial rural life of the Irish border. As Fiona McCann (2014, p. 71) points out: "The borderland setting for [his] novels is not just a fitting topography for contemporary exploration of the Gothic tropes of old. Rather, it is the Gothic tropes themselves [...] which best serve McCabe's investigation of local politics."

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH, OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

Although the field of Irish studies has been increasing considerably at PPGI-UFSC, there have been no studies of Patrick McCabe's work or the Bog Gothic up to the moment. Patrick Joseph McCabe, better known in Ireland as Patrick McCabe only, is a contemporary writer who started his career writing children's books but reached fame with his first endeavour in the Gothic genre: *The Butcher Boy* (1992). The novel was shortlisted for the Booker Prize – a literary prize awarded annually for the best original novel written in English. McCabe, later, had another work shortlisted for the Booker Prize: *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998). He adapted his first major work, *The Butcher Boy*, to theatre, in a play called *Frank Pig Says Hello*, first performed at the Dublin Theatre Festival, in 1992. Moreover, he had his two Booker Prize shortlisted novels adapted into films by the renowned Irish novelist and director Neil Jordan, known for directing *Mona Lisa* (1986), *The Crying Game* (1992) and *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), the latter, an adaptation of Anne Rice's renowned homonymous book. Both adaptations of *The Butcher Boy* – into theatre and film – were addressed by Cecília Adolpho Martins (2011), in the only Brazilian MA thesis addressing the novel entitled "*The Butcher Boy, de Patrick McCabe: no palco e na tela*," in which she discusses the novel through the lenses of theatrical and filmic transpositions.

A critical study and dissemination of *The Butcher Boy* in the contexts of Classic Gothic novel tradition, New American Gothic, and the 1950s and 1960s Ireland, is still pertinent and contributes to the fields of Irish and Gothic studies at UFSC, in Brazil, and even in international academic context, as the review of literature below (1.3) reinforces.

The main objective of this investigation is to analyse Patrick McCabe's novel *The Butcher Boy* (1992) as the exponent of the subgenre Bog Gothic. My intention is to investigate Gothic tropes within the novel, supposedly characterised as Bog Gothic, and identify the key concepts of this subgenre of the Gothic by analysing them based on Classic, New American Gothic tropes and how McCabe's novel is correlated to both the political and economic scenarios of the mid and late twentieth-century. In the scope of Classic Gothicism, I investigate how McCabe uses Classic Gothic tropes, such as hauntings and gruesome imagery, to set the reader in an uncomfortably shocking situation. By exploring New American Gothic representations, I investigate how Francie Brady is introduced to the reader, the role of Mrs Nugent in the story, the chain of events that lead Francie into madness and,

ultimately, the moment of Mrs Nugent's murder. I deepen my analysis by focusing on the anxiety promoted by the narration by Francie himself and the creation of a mad-depressive scenario due to the depiction of his surroundings and life events. One of the most significant literary aspects in *The Butcher Boy* is the narrative point of view. Since the novel is narrated from Francie's point of view, how his emotions affect the reader's judgement towards his actions, how reliable he can be and how his real inner feelings affect him are taken into consideration here. I also analyse how the narrative revolves around the major theme that is the identity crisis of Francie, but also how the novel addresses minor themes such as the social isolation, maddening and cultural oppression. Finally, I relate the novel to de Valera's protectionist approach, which almost led the country to bankruptcy, and Lemáss's rapid economic ascension, which caused a state of social segregation in the country, and address the Irish small rural town setting, inspired by McCabe's own hometown, Clones, in the 1950s and 60s.

This investigation raises the following questions:

i) Why is the novel *The Butcher Boy* characterised as Bog Gothic?
ii) How do literary Gothic tropes converge with the characterising of Gothic in general and, more specifically, with the characterising of Bog Gothic in the novel?
iii) How did economic and social issues of mid- and late twentieth century affect McCabe's writing of *The Butcher Boy*?

My hypothesis is that this new subgenre of Gothic literature has emerged in Ireland and might have a crucial impact on the literary scenario, especially in the twentieth century Irish Gothic writings. *The Butcher Boy,* as stated before, is thus considered the exponent of the subgenre Bog Gothic, and was the first novel to be labelled as such, for embodying social critique (revisionism) in a specific literary style (Gothic).

1.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON PATRICK MCCABE'S *THE BUTCHER BOY*

Kate Walls published the first and, up to the present moment, only book about Patrick McCabe's work, entitled *We Won't Make It out Alive: Patrick McCabe and the Horrors of the*

Irish Mundane (2010). Walls (2010, p. 3) argues that McCabe employs a neo-Gothic style in his writings by using mundane social problems personified in alcoholic violent fathers, mentally ill mothers and abusive priests to shock the reader by showing how unnatural these anesthetised problems are by the Classic Gothic motifs. Walls (2010, p. 3) also brings to light that McCabe, instead of creating characters that overcome the troubled background and rise above society's normativity, deals with twisted individuals who are seen as reflections of an inert, insensitive society that is blind to the horrors of the mundane around it .

Although there is only one book written about his work, McCabe's novels are the object of many articles and book chapters. The third chapter of the book *A Poetic of Dissensus: confronting violence in contemporary prose writing from North Ireland*, "Postcolonial Gothic and Body Politics in Recent Novels by Patrick McCabe," by Fionna McCann (2014), addresses McCabe's novels from a postcolonial point of view. McCann affirms that McCabe "engages with the postcoloniality of Ireland through a Gothic satire which is also a parody of the Gothic genre" (2014, p. 67). She also affirms that the borderlands in McCabe's novel fade into the background, and the conflicts that marked the six counties in Northern Ireland between 1956 and 1962 and 1969 and 1998 serve as scenario for his more recent novels. These novels are set in the fictitious border town of Cullymore, alluding to the border tensions and confronting the legacy of partition and the extent to which tensions between Protestants and Catholics shape their very existence (MCCANN, 2014, p. 66). For McCann, McCabe's style is used to oppose the dominant political and social literary narratives by not only writing about the "invisibility" of the border problems using the Gothic, but also to parody the Gothic genre. Thus, McCabe would not only be using the Gothic to express the society's problems of the period in which the novel is placed, but the author would also be using the style to mock it, once the author does not take part on his critique and writes about the oppression suffered by the Irish and the blindness they self-imposed on themselves.

In the third chapter of the book *Reading the Contemporary Irish Novel: 1987 - 2007,* entitled "Malignant Shame: Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992)" Liam Harte discusses literary elements like setting and characters, in the novel. He points out to the fact that McCabe, differently from other contemporary Irish writers, runs away from classic rural claustrophobia. He affirms that his novels mark a break with this realist tradition, considered by himself "inadequate to the task of expressing the acute postcolonial anxieties and absurdities of contemporary Ireland" (HARTE, p. 75-77). The "runaway" element in Harte's

work corroborates with McCann's view of McCabe's work, which affirms that familiar elements of the Gothic settings – ruined castles, graveyards, mouldering abbeys, fragmented manuscripts, and torture chambers – are not present in McCabe's writings. McCabe, in turn, address how "what starts out as being strange and remote ends up being all too familiar" (HARTE, 2014, p. 67-68). The feeling of dubiousness that is also characteristic of the Gothic genre is portrayed by the "character symbolic ambiguities of the border, which divides without itself belonging to either division" (HARTE, 2014, p. 79). In other words, McCabe's works ask to be read allegorically, according to Harte. We might think of McCabe's creations as borderline-case characters whose identities "do not exist or only barely so – double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject" and are a representation of the national ethos of the time.

Yen-Chi Wu (2012), in the thesis "Re-visioning Ireland: A Gothic Reading of Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*," reads the Gothicism in McCabe's novel through revisionist lenses, inferring that the novel's Gothicism criticizes the waning nationalist literature. Considering that McCabe's formative years coincided with the beginning of Ireland's economic growth (between late 1950s and early 1970s) Wu (2012, p. 10) affirms that the rapid modernisation of Ireland, due to the economic outburst that culminated in the Celtic Tiger's rise and fall served as food for thought for McCabe.

Likewise, Liam Harte, in the book chapter already mentioned, argues that "McCabe is more interested in examining the acute crises that ensue when a still-decolonizing culture, which has not yet come to terms with its traumatic history of occupation and partition, undergoes an accelerated process of uneven modernisation" (2014, p. 80). For both Wu and Harte, McCabe's novels revise the fast economic rise of Ireland, how it affected Irish consciousness negatively and how the nationalist literature obscured its social problems with flag-weaving narratives.

Finally, as mentioned above, Cecília Adolpho Martins, in the only Brazilian MA thesis addressing the novel, entitled "*The Butcher Boy, de Patrick McCabe: no palco e na tela*" (2011), discusses the novel through the lenses of theatrical and filmic transpositions, which are not the focus of this thesis.

Based on the previous selected discussions over Patrick McCabe's work, I have identified that the literary elements that constitute his first novel as Bog Gothic have not yet

been addressed in a satisfactory way, which could lead to a full description of the Bog Gothic subgenre. I, then, approach McCabe's first novel. *The Butcher Boy*, as the representative of this writing style – the Bog Gothic – through the analysis of its literary elements.

1.4 UPCOMING CHAPTERS

Having established the context of investigation, as well as presented the objectives, research questions and hypothesis of this research, the subsequent chapter – Chapter 2 – comprises the critical basis for the analysis of the Bog Gothic in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*. The critical chapter draws attention to the history of the Gothic genre, more specifically, its Classic Gothic elements. Then, there is a discussion of and New American Gothic characteristics – which are included to provide a deeper understanding of McCabe's writing style. The critical chapter also outlines a historical contextualization of Ireland's political, social and economic history in 1950s and 1960s Ireland, particularly before and at the time of Éamon de Valera's government, especially in terms of its impacts on rural communities and the country's development.

Chapter 3, which includes the analysis of the Bog Gothic in *The Butcher Boy,* proceeds from a dialogue between the critical material and the novel. In order to find out how this subgenre is created, I make use of concepts of Classic Gothic tropes as proposed by Kilfeather and O'Brien, to Burke's definition of the sublime and the beautiful, and to theoretical pieces by scholars like David Punther and Babitha B., on New American Gothic. My analysis of the novel also includes an examination of political, social and economic issues, reflected in pro- and anti-modernisation views of the author within the text, establishing a parallel between the characters' personalities and representations through their past and present actions. To conclude, the final remarks session comprises my specific and general conclusions of the study, and observations and considerations for future research both in the area of Gothic, Bog Gothic and Irish studies.

2 CRITICAL APPROACHES TO GOTHICISM AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY IRELAND

2.1 THE IRISH GOTHIC NOVEL

Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*, here regarded as the exponent of contemporary Bog Gothic, is set in mid-twentieth-century Ireland, period during which the country passed through major political and social transformations, and it is "effectively engaged in a reformation of the past, rather than as any revolutionary assault on a contemporary establishment" (MCCORMACK, 1991, p. 831). The Irish Gothic includes a major relation to Irish history and politics, and works as "literary authority," due to the world-renowned Irish Gothic writers of the past. As McCormack points out, "Irish Gothic fiction is remarkably explicit in the way it demonstrates its attachment to history and to politics" (MCCORMACK, 1991, p. 833). Numerous writers have approached the Gothic genre in Ireland since the eighteenth century. From Anglo-Irish writers – like Le Fanu, Stoker and Maturin – who depicted the constant Protestant "fear of being devoured or assimilated" by Catholic "monsters," to contemporary Postcolonial Gothic writers – like Eugene McCabe –, who has used war scenarios of the twentieth century as the main background for their stories to depict the social traumas and dilemmas of those affected by the revolution and the Troubles.[7]

The Irish Gothic is essentially a Protestant tradition, in which the writers' fascination with the occult and madness is explained due to the fact that the Gothic genre, since its beginning, operated as the community's political unconscious (KILLEEN, 2014. p. 34). By the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, a major increase on the publication of Gothic novels could be seen in the country. Kilfeather (2006, p. 81) points out that, by the time Irish writers, who followed both English Gothic tropes, with an interest in early history and the sensational terror, and North American ones, with sociological problems and

[7] From 1968 to 1998, the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland faced a period of constant conflict, both armed and political. After a brief period of peace provided by Seán Lemass' decision to join the Free Trade Agreement with the United Kingdom, leading to a period of economic cooperation between both Irelands (BROWN, 2004), an instability generated by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in pursuit of equal rights and end of persecution led to a major crisis between the nations (MOODY AND MARTIN, 2001). Mainly placed in the borders, the conflicts had around 3.500 killed, being its most famous "events" the "Battle of the Bogside" in 1969 and the infamous "Bloody Sunday" where soldiers from the British forces shot dead 13 people who were marching against the internment.

oppression of folk, changed drastically their writing style after 1798, focusing more on explicit terror allied to institutions, such as the Catholic church, and the devil in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), or allegations of original manuscripts, claiming an alleged veracity to the story, like Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). That is: differently from the terrors of the supernatural and the imminent threat of the foreign unknown that Classic Gothic writers customary permeated their writings with, nineteenth-century Irish Gothic writers focused on a more realistic scenario, portraying the country and its social and political problems instead of perpetuating the cycling agenda of portraying the opposite side as a monster of sorts.

Kersti Powells (2014, p. 128) claims that the Protestant Anglo-Irish families who built their "Big Houses" in Catholic Ireland would never feel safe in the land they had colonised. Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie (2014, p.1) point out that the major theorisation on Irish Gothic promoted in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century was fuelled by psychoanalytic readings of Irish Gothic writings, showing it as "the fictional representation of the repressed fears and anxieties of the minority Anglo-Irish population." Bearing that in mind, one can say that the Gothic is a continuous review of the past hauntings through new horrific narratives that uses well-known tropes in new guises and methods. This can be clearly seen, for example, in Le Fanu's writings, such as *Uncle Silas* (1864), in which the Catholic majority, represented by Uncle Silas and his house, haunts Maud Ruthyn, which here impersonates the small group that retains the power and is "in control of the situation," which would be the Protestants.

The objective of this section is not, however, to engage with the roots of the Irish Gothic fiction, which is linked not only to written but also to oral tradition and which also, as Killeen (2014, p. 11) affirms, "should be read in relation to both Irish history of the 1750s and 1760s *and* to conventions of the genre in a broad term." Richard Davenport-Hines, (apud KILLEEN 2014) who suggests a historicisation of the Gothic tradition, corroborates this affirmation by suggesting a close reading of the very early Irish Gothic placed in relation to Gothic as a genre, since it comprises "four hundred years of excess, horror, evil and ruin." Instead, the intention here is to map a 'Classic Gothic tradition', rooted in Irish novels and its elements, in order to help categorise the Gothic tropes present in McCabe's Bog Gothic.

This important Irish inheritance of Irish writers can be traced back to the Anglo-Irish rule and its incessant fear of the emancipation of Catholics. As Kersti Powell (2004, p.128) points out, "Ireland's dark and troubled history, its mainly Catholic population, and its romantic scenery offered an irresistible terrain for Gothic writers." Corroborating with this,

Robert Miles (*apud* MORIN and GILLESPIE, 2014, p.3) also suggests that the literary Gothic still relies on a series of established themes and narratives that makes readers' expectancy predictable, by always combining, among other tropes, "supernatural figures and events with medieval Catholic Continental settings, [and] an interest in the Burkean sublime."[8] As it can be seen, a certain anxiety towards the Catholic community can be found in Irish Gothic writings. Even though Ireland was a land with a majority of Roman Catholic population, the Anglo-Irish ascendancy dominated society. The portraying of social anxieties and the anti-Catholic writings were not a form of expressing the Protestants' vision towards the Catholic's usurpation and violation only. More than that, Diane Long Hoeveler (2014, p. 36) affirms that "memories of Catholic atrocities committed against Protestants in Ulster and beyond were continually revived in the Protestant imaginary." Vera Kreilkamp (1998, p. 96), in turn, affirms that the Gothic writers during the period of the Big House novels

> emphasize[d] compelling features of Ascendancy life in postunion Ireland: preoccupation with a loss of position and prestige, with spiritual and physical decay, and with the guilt an imperial class fast losing ground to Catholic political challenge[d].

Moreover, Kreilkamp (1998, p. 97) also highlights that these Gothic pieces were not merely the heyday of Gothic fiction, but "literary responses to Anglo-Ireland's preoccupation with and negotiation of waning social and economic power structures." In other words, Gothic novels were a form of resistance towards a terrifying Catholic community and also an attempt for a second-wind for the Ascendancy to keep on ruling over a majorly Catholic country.

The revisiting of the past is one of the main characteristic (if not the main one) of the Gothic novel. McCormack (1991, p. 831) asserts that it is necessary to "read Gothicism as […] a reformation of the past." This point of view is corroborated by Killeen's (2014, p. 10) view on the Gothic in Ireland: "If the Gothic is often seen as the return of the repressed, the past that will not stay past, Ireland has usually been constructed as a place where the past had never in fact disappeared." The constant haunting of the past – long or not – and the social anxiety lived by the Ascendancy seemed to be the fuel for Gothic writers imaginations.

[8] According to Edmund Burke (1764, p. 39), the sublime is "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort of terrible, or conversant with terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror."

Although a "pre-history" of the Irish Gothic exists[9], most critics have reached a consensus about writers who represent the Gothic canon in Ireland. McCormack (1991, p. 832) affirms that "Charles Robert Maturin (1782 – 1824), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814 – 1873) and Bram Stoker (1847 – 1912) [...] are invoked in the name of a more substantial Gothic tradition." Although affirming that McCormack's attempt to define the Gothic has left unanswered gaps, Killeen (2014, p. 27) also agrees on the idea of tradition. He affirms that

> a list of writers which includes figures substantial as Maturin, Le Fanu, Wilde, Stoker, [and] Yeats [...] all of whom have connection to the same political and geographical space, [...] all of whom have some thematic associations, may still amount to a (much complicated) version of a tradition, indeed, a Gothic tradition and a mode all at once.

As McCormack, Killen, Morin and Gillespie (2014, p. 1-2) reinforce, although many critics have discussed the issue of terminology, their approach to Irish Gothic supports the idea of a literary tradition that is reproduced by Anglo-Irish writers and "is traceable from Regina Maria's Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (1796) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) to Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)."

The Gothic novel of the nineteenth century relied on the Ascendancy's view of the Catholic community as an imminent, lurking threat. More than that, the "canon" of Irish Gothic literature, differently from the school of Walpole, which showed an undeniable interest in medievalism and depicting the past, Stoker, Maturin and Le Fanu preferred to deal with their contemporary affairs (MCCORMACK, 1991, p. 832) and behind their novels, a preoccupation with the country's socio-political moment is present. Powell's (2004, p. 128) view of Gothic literature adds that most canonical Irish Gothic writers "were unable to draw a clear demarcation line between past and present political situations." That being said, it is common ground to affirm that Classic Gothic novels or novels inspired on Classic Gothic tropes have a tendency to write about the past to criticise the present. This is most relevant when considering the fact that the events on McCabe's novel happen in the mid- 90s – a moment of economic ascension followed by a time of recession for Ireland –, while it was

[9] William John McCormack points out that Regina Maria Roché's *The Children of the Abbey* (1796) alongside with Mrs Kelly's *The Ruins of Avondale Priory* (1796), Mrs F. C. Patrick's *The Irish Heiress* (1797), 'the Wife of an Officer' who wrote *Most Ghosts!* (1798) and Mrs Colpoys' *The Irish Excursion, or I Fear to Tell You* (1801) are some of the contributors of the Irish "pre-history" of Gothic fiction (832). Kirsti Powell also praises Jonathan Swift's pamphlet "*A Modest Proposal*" (1729) as the earliest example of the Irish Gothic (128).

written in the last decade of the twentieth century, when the country lived the Celtic Tiger period of rapid modernisation, even if there was a dramatic reversal later. Briefly, McCabe criticises the present by showing how it is repeating the past, which is clearly a Classic Gothic trope.

In a *New York Times Book Review*, Rosemary Mahoney acknowledges the Gothicism present in McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*, but in a belittling way. She praises Francie's first-person narrative "despite its Gothicism and its gruesome ending" (MAHONEY, 1993, p. 9). This "despise" of Gothicism by Mahoney, who affirms that it "blurs" the novel's literary merits, can be related back to Irish Gothic literature in the early nineteenth century, due to its categorisation as "popular trashy novel with little literary value," which came to "have [...] historical and cultural significance, becoming an established field of study" (WU, 2012, p.10). However, Wu (2012, p. 10-11) goes on and problematizes Mahoney's approach of the novel's Gothicism, by highlighting the gruesome ending as the main factor for categorising the novel as Gothic. This categorisation also brings to light a discussion about what critics call the "new Gothic" in *The Butcher Boy* and its relation to psychopathology and the grotesque[10].

Adhering to McCormack's point of view, I attempt to define a "Classic Gothic tradition," seeking to find the "Bog Gothic's place" within the Gothic genre based on the idea of antiquarianism from a historical perspective. By antiquarianism, I here agree with Wu's (2012, p. 14) approach and his definition of Gothic revival: "antiquarianism in the Gothic revival manifested an uncertainty and discontent for the fast-changing society in the eighteenth century, which was a time of massive and tremendous transformation." From a cultural perspective, it is important to denote the prejudice towards the Irish people, as Luke Gibbons (2006, p. 10) affirms: "the Gothic as a mode of sensibility took on board much of its cultural pathology, maintaining a series of deep-seated, troubled connections with wider systems of prejudice, paranoia and bigotry." When it comes to an "Irish Gothic tradition," the term itself is quite problematic. This is due because, as Killeen (2014, p. 27) points out:

> The Irish Gothic is a canon, a tradition and a mode all at once. To assert a Gothic tradition in Ireland we need not make a disguised claim to Irish self-sufficiency or even any great thematic coherence linking very different texts

[10] Laura Eldred categorises McCabe's novel as "contemporary Gothic, which often takes the traditional Gothic themes of nostalgia, repetition and decay to new and gory heights" (ELDRED, 2006, p. 54).

> and authors; we have merely to suggest that certain Irish writers pursued certain similar questions that were historically specific to the Irish situation. [...] The 'Irishness' of the tradition comes from the fact that the writers had some important Irish connection, dealt with Irish issues, and were partially influenced by (or at least vaguely aware of) an Irish line of precursors.

McCabe inserts Gothic tropes in his novel. The author shows a major preoccupation with the society's economic situation and subsequent marginalisation of a specific group, here represented by Francie. By writing of the Irish Republic in the 50s and 60s, while living in the 90s, McCabe shows a concern with the present and an imminent repetition of the past, where a seemingly economic boom had only served to elevate the disparity between the country's urban and rural communities. In addition, the author still addresses a historic grudge with England, by portraying a half-English family as antagonists and having the main character commit atrocities to and with it. Wu (2012, p. 40) asserts that the fact that the main antagonist, Mrs. Nugent, calls the Bradys "pigs," is a Gothicised racial stereotype used here to fuel a racist discourse from the Anglicised community towards the barbaric Irish one.

In general, the Gothic genre, and here I put an emphasis on the Irish Gothic, is a cyclical answer to society, politics, religion and economics, used often to revise the past and its impact in the present, as can be seen in the following words by Kilfeather:

> Indeed, the Gothic appears more often than not as a response to modernisation, a mode of registering loss and of suggesting that new forms of subjectivity are necessary to deal with the new forms of knowledge and power that are conquering past systems and beliefs. But if an interest in memory and loss were to be seen as the defining features of the Gothic, there would be a risk that the genre would be asked to encompass almost all of modern Irish writing. (KILFEATHER, 2006, p. 83)

2.2 NEW AMERICAN GOTHIC

As mentioned before, *The Butcher Boy* is set in the mid-twentieth century Ireland, a time when the country suffered enormously from poverty due to the protectionist policies enacted by Taoiseach Éamon de Valera. In an interview for the Irish University Review, Patrick McCabe stated that "poverty was certainly everywhere when [he] was growing up […] there was a deep hurt at all levels of society, […] it wasn't overt but you were always conscious of it" (FITZSIMMON, 1998, p. 181).

Poverty, in turn, triggers a range of social issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence, mental illnesses and, in worst-case scenarios, suicide. The Brady family is certainly

affected by all these symptoms. Benny's drinking problem, which makes him behave violently towards his family; Annie's mental state, which takes her to a mental institution and then to suicide; and Francie's insanity, which turns him into a delusional egocentric teenager with murderous intents, are all literary representations of these symptoms and, as Wu points out, "serve to problematize the romanticised utopian rural family in the nationalistic rhetoric" (WU, 2012, p. 3).

A number of critics have analysed Gothicism in the novel. Reflecting the various interpretations of the term, they apply a range of perspectives. Rosemary Mahoney, in one of these perspectives, diminishes the Gothic found in the novel to the simple acts of violence committed by Francie (MAHONEY, 1994, p. 9). However, this association of Francie's psychopathology and grotesqueries with Gothicism has been used as material for critics to analyse the novel from a more psychological view. Laura Eldred, for example, classifies the novel as "Contemporary Gothic" and examines the monstrosities created by Francie. In another approach, Charles O'Neill analyses the novel through Baktin's idea of "grotesque realism."

The lenses of these critics would seem to argue that the main character's psychopathology, emotional distress and violent reactions are more relatable to a "new Gothic" view than to Classic Gothic tropes. This "new Gothic" is what David Punter refers as the New American Gothic, a "literature of psychic grotesqueries" (PUNTER, 1996, p.2). As a branch of the Gothic genre, the New American Gothic differs greatly from its precursor. Wu expresses this as follows:

> The gloomy castle and supernatural elements that are characteristics in the early Gothic novel are nowhere to be found in the [N]ew Gothic. This ew Gothic, looking up to Edgar Allan Poe, finds a new site of horror in the human *psyche*; hence, ghosts, vampires and monsters in early Gothic novels are altogether replaced by criminals psychopaths (usually with sexual perversion). (WU, 2012, p. 11)

Throughout his journey, Francie Brady tells his tale from his own point view, using his personal experience and judgement to describe or explain how the people and events around him are like, no matter how distorted or unreal. McCabe's option for a first-person narrative allied to Francie's narcissistic ego relates to what Irvin Malin affirms: for New-American Gothic authors, "'the psyche is more important than society', and usually they write

about a microcosm: a Southern town, a city house, an army camp in peacetime, or Central Park." (MALIN, 1962, p. viii). In other words, the problems and struggles of an individual and his or her environment overshadow any view of society's problems as a whole.

In his journey of murder, Francie faces a number of situations where he creates excuses and scenarios with his personal opinion as his guide, and his judgement determines how right he is – in his head he is never wrong. This narcissistic way of seeing situations is a typical component of the New American Gothic, in which egotistic characters who love themselves so much cannot partake in society other than by controlling others (MALIN, 1962, p. 6). These "others" come to disrupt their perfect balance, which is their life as they live, and this disruption is punishable with resentment and destruction.

Francie is too attached to his life as it is and fears change, which comes in the form of the loss of his best friend, and of his days of playing. Although the change indeed comes, Francie attributes it to a specific other: Mrs Nugent. In his deranged reasoning, Francie blames Mrs Nugent for the loss of his family's happy past and Joe's alienation., In Francie's words: "It was fine until Mrs Nugent started interfering and causing trouble" (MCCABE, 2015, p 183).

Malin points out that while the "others" are true to their identities, the narcissistic ones lose their confidence and security, and this ambivalence leads to a conflict that is only resolved through violence (MALIN, 1962, p. 15). For Francie, this means the murder of Mrs Nugent, and through this resolution, his self-peace is found through the only means left, which is death. Apart from this journey towards resolution, Francie is in constant search of his loved past, which, deep down, he knows cannot come back, therefore he seeks ceaseless suffering. As Ihab Hassan points out, "to love is to suffer, to intensify one's loneliness […] it would seem that love, in intensifying the lover's pain, in precluding communion, and in electing outlandish recipients, seeks its own impediments" (HASSAN, 1960, p. 314).

The Gothic genre is not a new one – it has changed greatly overtime. New American Gothic, which gets its characteristics from changes of social structure, is one of the results of this change. Classic Gothic elements, themes, structures, and concerns are thus still visible in New American Gothic, but with changes. It contains a range of meanings that are absent in its forefather. Babitha B. affirms that

> throughout the existence of Gothic, society has been displayed anxiety about superstition, about loss of control, about child and women abuse, about the transgression of limits and boundaries, about unity and coherence and

> fragmentation. Gothic supernatural elements are revisited by the New Gothic and submitted to a number of mutations and changes. Thus the themes of [New American Gothic] turns to sociopaths, psychoses, modernity, vile, murders, sexual transgressions, and especially child abuse, for creating the effect of terror in the reader. (BABITHA, 2011, p. 27)

New American Gothic has also become a means of shaping awareness in the society through violence. Like the Gothic genre, New American Gothic is an expression of excess. It is intentionally made up of paranoias and taboos, including those of sexuality, to convey horror. Other characteristics such as "mutations, contamination, distortion, fragmentation, transgression are exacerbated by narratives, which not only describe horror but also inhabit it." (BABITHA, 2011, p. 28).

New American Gothic writers portray inner conflicts of their characters, and go deeply into a psychological approach. Differently from Classic Gothic, which portrays reality as a distorting mirror and is essentially subjective, this branch of Gothic presents a world that is emphatically distorted at its core (MALIN, 1962, p. 8-12). John Aldridge, in his book states that New American Gothic novels are able to create a particular problem that is detached from the social world, avoiding giving significance to the evil and guilt within the context of society (*apud* MALIN, 1962, p. 3). In other words, authors who opt to follow this path portray the problems of an individual in relation to society, and not how a 'society' affects individuals, in contrast to Classic Gothic, which focused mainly on portraying struggles between groups of individuals and their outcome in society. Following this idea, Babitha states that

> the present day Gothic becomes ever more entangled with social and cultural patterns. It mirrors the late twentieth century society's obsession with the memory and of the past; with sexual transgression; with satanic abuses and crimes; with psychoanalysis, with mental dislocations; insane acts, and chaotic worlds. The characters of post-modern Gothic texts are moulded in the fashion of the traditional classic Gothic heroes. Characters are like their classic counterparts, especially the Gothic heroes, quest for identity. Child protagonists, with their unstable identity, exemplify the search for truth and a stable self. Hence in the vein of original Gothic, late twentieth century contemporary Gothic exploits personal and social fears and portrays the disastrous and destruction, but with the latent violence of its narrative contexts lending a newly hostile and barbaric edge to contemporary Gothic. (BABITHA, 2011, p. 177-178)

Wu, on the other hand, states that these "early Gothic [writings] are engendered in a specific cultural context, and the genre is hence full of cultural and historical significance. To generalise the Gothic as psychological horror fiction would be negligent of the genre's literary strength." (WU, 2012, p. 11). This literary strength is found in Classic Gothic's attachment to history and society. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall argue that the aching problem of this New American Gothic lies in "the prevalent de-historicising of Gothic writing and of its cultural references" (*apud* WU, 2012, p. 11).

Hence, so as not to lose sight of the historical weight the novel encompasses, since many theorist regard it as revisionist, it is important now to examine the historical context, seeking to elucidate how the representation of the mid-twentieth century society, allied to both the ideas of both Classic and New American Gothicism, help us to understand the composition of the Bog Gothic as a whole.

2.3 THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY IRELAND

The Gothic genre as a whole is intrinsically connected to society. Siobhán Kilfeather points out that

> if by the Gothic one understands a series of conventions concerning the representation of landscape, character, history, plot and the supernatural, and which give a distinctive stamp or character to certain types of fiction, then it is possible to identify elements of the Gothic in Irish writing from the 1590s to the present. Indeed, the Gothic appears more often than not as a response to modernisation, a mode of registering loss and of suggesting that new forms of subjectivity are necessary to deal with the new forms of knowledge and power that are conquering past systems and beliefs. (KILFEATHER, 2006, p. 83)

Based on the idea that the Gothic is a persistent revival of the past, and that McCabe's novel deals with the instabilities of the Irish society and politics due to the country's pivotal changes, in order to proceed with the analysis of *The Butcher Boy*, it is necessary to draw the Irish scenario of the 1950s and the 1960s.

After Ireland's independence and the creation of the Irish Free State, the election of 1932 brought to power the Fianna Fáil Party, led by Éamon de Valera at the time. This new government adopted a republican policy, broke the oath of allegiance with the British crown, which had been included in the Free State constitution, and bolstered the industrialisation in the country (T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin 276). De Valera's position on the economy

started an economic war with the British government. John Joseph Lee points out that, after the Taoiseach's retention of the annuities paid to Britain, the English "imposed in retaliation 20 per cent *ad valorem* duties on Irish exports of livestock and livestock products," which, in turn, was retaliated by de Valera by "imposing duties on British coal" (LEE, 1989, p. 178).

De Valera's pursuit of an "Irish Ireland" rapidly sought to disentangle the country form all British influence. Roy Foster highlights that the Fianna Fáil's subtitle, "Republican Party," ranged from "merely anti-British to agrarian-syndicalist-revolutionary, not to mention exclusivist-Gaelic-Catholic" (1988, p. 542), and that, in de Valera's vison, its ideal was "small agricultural units, each self-sufficiently supporting a frugal family; industrious, Gaelicist and anti-materialist […] built on […] ancient peasant life" (1988, p. 538). This nationalist ideal, as Wu points out, was clear in de Valera's vision of the rural community: "the Irish rural region where the Gaelic culture was well preserved was hence regarded as the emblem of the ideal Ireland" (2012, p. 3). Although de Valera's wish to raise a self-sufficient Ireland disentangled from Great-Britain influence and dominance, his policies led the country to the brink of an economic bankruptcy.

The change in the national scenario came only in 1959, a year of major change in Ireland's politics and economic policies. As Mary E. Daly points out, in 1959 Éamon de Valera, who was elected President of Ireland, which was mainly a symbolic title, was succeeded by Sean Lemass as Taoiseach. This change in government marked a transition toa younger generation, who left the united Ireland and Gaelic revival behind, committing to abandon the protective economics of the previous decades (DALY, 2016, p. 3). By this time, Ireland had started its *Programme for Economic Expansion*, seeking to join the European Economic Community (EEC) and seek modernisation and industrialisation for the country, since its economy was falling behind other Western Europe countries. Wu asserts that "[Lemass's] economic expansion program successfully saved Ireland from [the] economic precipice resulted from de Valera's conservative economic policies" (2012, p. 2). It was during Lemass'a period as Taoiseach that Ireland experienced its greatest economic growth, as Brian Girvin notes:

> During his short period as Taoiseach, Lemass shifted the balance of power within Irish society. His administration initiated the most comprehensive attempt at modernisation which had occurred in Ireland. In a broad sense, Ireland acquired 'modernity' during this decade, becoming increasingly

> industrialised, secularised, urbanised and bureaucratised. (*apud* Daly, 2016, p. 4)

Sean Lemass led Ireland out of the economically protectionist government idealised by de Valera, which in practice plunged Ireland into massive economic recession, and rapidly began a process of economic growth by launching liberal economic projects, such as the signing of the Anglo-Irish Free-Trade Agreement (AIFTA), opening a free market with Northern Ireland and England, and the *Programme for Economic Expansion.* As Terrence Brown affirms, these initiatives sought to place the country amongst the leading capitalist nations of the modern world (1985, p. 164) and, counting on a better economy, Lemass believed that Irish folk could "achieve the country's most profound aspirations- genuine political independence and unity between north and south" (1985, p. 189). Thus, a rousing wave of patriotism took over the island, gathering the people together on a mission to revitalise the country's economy.

Following economic growth and modernisation in the late 1950s and early/mid-1960s, by 1969 the rate of growth decreased drastically. Daly asserts that "the numbers at work were static or contracting; politicians were failing to confront thorny problems such as such as regional development strategy and a sustainable local taxation base (2016, p. 5). The *Programme for Economic Expansion*, which nowadays is referred only as the *First Programme,* was focused on the industrialisation of the country rather than economic development (LEE, 1989, p. 344).

The Irish Government stopped subsidising agriculture (rural communities were left aside during the *Programme*) and border communities faced many struggles in everyday life. McCabe reflects the national ethos of the late 1950s and early 1960s quite clearly in *The Butcher Boy*, by portraying the dualities lived by both the border communities, here represented by the Bradys, and the ascending middle-class nuclear family, the Nugents. Wu asserts:

> Considering [the] national ethos at the time, the Nugents with their material affluence and economic adaptability are undoubtedly the desired model for the Ireland in the making; as their name tellingly implies, they are the "new gents" of the new Ireland. Nevertheless, if this impeccably middle-class Nugents (new-gents) are the ideal family celebrated as the image for the new Ireland, the dysfunctional Bradys are the dark side of the face that haunts the Republic (WU, 2012, p. 41-42).

Harte argues that "McCabe is more interested in examining the acute crises that ensue when a still-decolonizing culture, which has not yet come to terms with its traumatic history of occupation and partition, undergoes an accelerated process of uneven modernisation" (2014, p. 80). For both Wu and Harte, McCabe's novels review the fast economic rise of Ireland, how it affected Irish consciousness negatively, and how the nationalist literature obscured its social problems with flag-weaving narratives. With the rapid modernisation of the country, society started to become more and more homogenised. As Lyons expresses it,

> both parts of the island [were] so exposed to the dominant Anglo-American culture that I cannot see the process of absorption ever being held in check […] It could very easily and quickly happen that Anglo-Americanism could extinguish what remains of our local and regional identities […] The things we quarrel about now, may in fact have disappeared in a generation (*apud* BROWN, 1985, p. 310)

It is important to take note of the changes in society to understand how they relate to the novel. McCabe represents the rapid modernisation in the anglicised Nugents, who come to erase the antiquarian Bradys who are, now, an image of a waning past. The changes cause a violent response from those who are having their culture dominated, exemplified by Francie, who is having his life "erased" by Mrs Nugent.

3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BOG GOTHIC IN PATRICK MCCABE'S THE BUTCHER BOY

McCabe's fiction conveys a crumbling society by using characters who have their spirits and identities crushed by many kinds of oppression and repression. Bog Gothic is the association of these two terms – Bog and Gotjic – to the "gruesome content of [McCabe's] novels and his preferred setting of small town, rural Ireland" (MCWILLIANS, 2013, p. 431). Although having Bog in its name, the Bog Gothic, as Gladwin affirms, only extends to other literatures that relate to the boglands in a smaller context (2016, p. 213). This is clearly identifiable since the word "bog" *per se* appears only once throughout the whole book: "He said nothing only to be down at Benediction in half an hour and up at six the next morning for footing turf in the bog" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 75). I will now try to understand and describe how the Bog Gothic is constructed and why it is the epitome of McCabe's literary style.

3.1 HOW TO KILL A PIG: CLASSIC GOTHIC LEGACY IN *THE BUTCHER BOY*.

Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* has undeniable Gothic characteristics that remit us to Classic Gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Siobhán Kilfeather (2006, p. 81) points out that, among the many elements of Gothic writings, some are recurrent: haunting and apparitions, hunger, corpses, live burials, madhouses, deformities, inquisition, dismemberment, restlessness, surveillance, footsteps, howls, nightmares and violence. Francie Brady's manic journey is filled with hauntings, apparitions, and goriness, for example, narrated by the character himself.

Francie Brady's first-person journey begins in his problematic childhood, passes through his mentally unstable/psychopathic-impulsed teens and ends up in his solitary end as an adult inside a mental institution. There are numerous signs of different kinds of Gothicism throughout his life journey, be they classic 18th and 19th century representations, or new, revamped styles.

Looking first at haunting and apparitions as Gothic tropes, an interesting fact is that the whole novel can be read as a haunting tale, since it starts with Francie locked up in a mental institution, telling the story of how he had murdered Mrs Nugent: "When I was a young lad twenty or thirty or forty years ago I lived in a small town where they were all after me on account of what I done on Mrs Nugent" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 1). This passage illustrates

how Francie is haunted by his childhood memories, revising every step that led him to the murder.

Kilfeather points out that Gothic novels cause the reader to feel uncomfortable in terms of his or her capacity for reasoning and to become confused with the way information is presented, and to be overwhelmed by the feelings of shock and apprehension that are also experienced by the characters (2006, p. 83). Scattered throughout the novel are numerous passages that McCabe uses as psychological and emotional triggers that cause huge shocking responses in the reader. As George O'Brien argues, one of the most recurrent elements in *The Butcher Boy* is the haunting memory of Francie Brady, which fabricates memories of his parents' life and is haunted by both of their deaths (2013, p. 114), which probably started when his father attributed Francie's mother's death to the fact the kid left the house (MCCABE, 2015, p. 47). The best example of this haunting element can be seen in the following passage: "I don't know what made me do ma, I said . . . Then ma smiled and said she understood, she knew it wasn't my fault. Come home Francie she said. I'm sorry ma, I said again then she said it again, come on home, I'm waiting for you." (MCCABE, 2015, p. 44). In this passage, Francie is away from his town and experiences a vision of his mother calling him back home. He buys her a gift and hitches a ride back home, only to discover that his mother had passed away while he was absent. The fact that Annie Brady is already dead when Francie has a vision of her – which can be read as a supernatural or even ghostly apparition – is the first explicit example of how McCabe uses Classic Gothic elements in the novel to generate an uncomfortable reaction in the reader.

The image of Annie Brady, Francie's mother, haunts Francie's mind over and over again. In one of his reveries, Francie surrounds the Nugents' house and wonders about the family's life. In this passage, he addresses himself as an opposite of Phillip who "love[s] his mother more than anything in the world and [would] never do anything in the world to hurt her" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 47). The opposition here is created a little later, when Francie states the following: "there'd be only one thing anyone could say about me and that was: I hope he's proud of himself now, the pig, after what he did on his poor mother" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 48). The guilt Francie feels has counterparts in shame and fear, which creates a kind of haunting dichotomy in the narrative. For example, when Francie breaks into the Nugents' house and, in

a strange reverie pretends to be part of the Nugent family, he is haunted by Phillip's and Mrs. Nugent's images who try to force him to become one of them:

> Then slowly she unbuttoned her blouse and took out her breast.
> Then she said: This is for you Francis. She put her hand behind my head and firmly pressed my face forward. Phillip was still at the bottom of the bed smiling. I cried out: *Ma! Its not true!* Mrs Nugent shook her head and said: *I'm sorry Francis its too late for all that now. You should have thought of that when you made up your mind to come and live with us!*I thought I was going to choke on the fat, lukewarm flesh.
> *No!* (MCCABE, 2015, p. 65)

The mother figure is the breaking point for Francis. The suffocation, the fear of becoming a Nugent and putting the memory of his mother in the past, the subsequent exasperation, and the whole imagery of this haunting creates an aura of restlessness in the reader. This dichotomic clash between repulsion and attraction can be found in Classic Gothic novels, an example of which is the encounter of Jonathan Harker with one of Dracula's women (STOKER, 1897, p. 55-56); here it takes the form of Francie's relationship with his guilt towards the memory of his mother.

The pervasive psychological haunting of Francie's mother features again later in the novel. This time, Father Sullivan, who has been sexually abusing Francie in exchange for cigarettes and candies, triggers his haunting memories by forcing Francie to talk about his past, more precisely his worst deed. While the priest sought something to sexually arouse him, Francie wanted to stop the conversation, since his worst deed was "killing his mother." At the moment when Father Sullivan asked for something Francie could never forgive himself for, Francie sees his mother once again saying it was not his fault (that she died) (MCCABE, 2015, p. 90).

Annie Brady's last "apparitions" in the novel come in two different ways. The first one is when Francie sees his friend Mary, ex-lover of his uncle, in a candy store looking through the window just as his mother did, which transforms her into half a ghost of his mother (MCCABE, 2015, p. 216). The second is when Francie decides to burn his house and himself within it. After breathing some smoke, he hears his mother saying "it's over […] it's all over now" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 218). In this passage, the sense of restlessness is created by the fact the police are after him for the murder of Mrs Nugent and the fire is consuming the house rapidly. However, Francie is haunted by the ghost of his mother until the moment he decides to put an end to his life and burns his house down, to put down the Brady legacy to an

end. In fact, Francie's final act is merely a reflection of his mother's haunting. Francie is not haunted by Annie's love for him alone, but also by his inability to redeem the Brady name as hos mother wanted him to and believed that he could when she said: "We don't want to be like the Nugents" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 20), which Wu draws attention to this in his thesis: "When Annie plays 'The Butcher Boy' to Francie, she proudly proclaims that they are the Bradys. […] This is the last conversation Francie has with Annie. Therefore, Annie's words have become her last wish that Francie has counted himself responsible to live up to" (2012, p. 70). However, Francie carries the guilt not only of killing his mother, but also, secretly, of wanting to be a Nugent. This desire is what drives him toward his madness and ultimately leads him to the murder act.

Another Classic Gothic element present in the novel is its use of supernatural elements, such as Francie's holy visions. Although Francie's discourse is seen as unreliable, that does not mean that these singular events should be overlooked due to it. At the same time Francie makes up the stories by saying "[Father Sullivan] kept asking me about them so I had to make up a few yarns about them and all the things they said to me" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 86), he also affirms that these events occurred "around that time I started the long walks and the holy voices" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 84).

Francie's first supernatural encounter occurs when he sees the image of Our Lady after thinking he had heard Her talking to him earlier:

> I knelt on the soggy turf for penance. I looked up and there she was over the handball alley. I wasn't sure what to say to her ah its yourself or did you have a nice trip or something like that. I didn't know so I said nothing at all. She had some voice, that Blessed Virgin Mary. You could listen to it all night. It was like all the softest women in the world mixed up in a huge big baking bowl and there you have Our Lady at the end of it.
>
> She had a rosary entwined around her pearly white hands and she said that it gladdened her that I had chosen to be good. (MCCABE, 2015, p. 84-85)

This holy apparition to Francie remits to Edmund Burke's approach of the sublime[11] and the beautiful.[12] The feeling of astonishment, which leaves Francie unable to say a word, is comparable to Burke's view of passion and its relation to astonishment. Burke says:

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[11] Burke affirms that the sublime is the result of pain and terror, which are "capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror; which, as it belongs to self-

> The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. […] Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect. (1757, p. 41)

Although the image of Our Lady causes Francie to experience a good sensation, the petrified state he finds himself in is a Gothic outcome.

Burke also proposes that

> whatever is qualified to cause terror, is a foundation capable of the sublime; to which I add, that not only these, but many things from which we cannot probably comprehend any danger have a familiar effect, because they operate in a familiar manner. (1757, p. 121)

If one considers Burke's point of view on the sublime and the beautiful, Francie's supernatural encounter reveals a feeling of awe, reverence and respect – the feelings which Burke sees as immediately subodinate to astonishment, and are included in his definition of the sublime. Although this is not Francie's only encounter with saints, it is the only one in which he experiences this state of surprise.

Throughout the novel, Francie experiences visions and conversations with apparitions, images and statues, but there is no other moment when he feels the same as in the first encounter. Just after the vision of the Blessed Virgin, he tells the priests that he sees other Christian figures like Saint Joseph, the Archangel Gabriel and others he does not recognise (MCCABE, 2015, p. 85), as well as Saint Catherine and Saint Teresa of the Roses (MCCABE, 2015, p. 85). These apparitions do not carry the same quality of enhancement of the character as they do at the first apparition, since he only chats and winks to them as if they were old friends. Francie does this in another encounter with an image of Our Lady, where he

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preservation, is one of the strongest of all the passions. Its object is the sublime. Its highest degree I call *astonishment*; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence, and respect, which, by the very etymology of the words, show from what source they are derived, and how they stand distinguished from positive pleasure."(1757, p. 129-130)

[12] The definition of beauty in Burke's view is the "quality, or those qualities in bodies, by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it. I confine this definition to the merely sensible qualities of things, for the sake of preserving the utmost simplicity in a subject, which must always distract us whenever we take in those various causes of sympathy which attach us to any persons or things from secondary considerations, and not from the direct force which they have merely on being viewed" (1757, p. 73).

just winks and says she is far from the place they first met (MCCABE, 2015, p. 160). In a later encounter with Jesus on the cross, Francie asks information on how to get to Joe's room in his school in Bundoran (MCCABE, 2015, p. 204). These supernatural encounters cannot be considered Classic Gothic factors due to the fact that none of them produces the feeling of the sublime in the way that the first does. Even though Francie has chats and interactions that can be considered – from the tone of their narrative – unnatural, his unreliability as the narrator of his own story and his mental instability make the alleged supernatural nature of these encounters dubious, since they could just as easily be no more than Francie's own imagination.

The gory imagery of McCabe's novel is another important area of discussion. Gothic novels, as mentioned before, have common ground in portraying gruesome scenarios filled with blood and macabre situations. The so-thoroughly described murder of Mrs Nugent and the events that occur after it also show McCabe's inclination to Gothic tropes, such as the use of explicit violence, dismemberment and corpses:

> I lifted her off the floor with one hand and shot the bolt right into her head *thlok* was the sound it made, like a goldfish dropping into a bowl. . . . Then she just lay there with her chin sticking up and I opened her then I stuck my hand in her stomach and wrote PIGS all over the walls of the upstairs room. (MCCABE, 2015, p. 213-214)

This passage includes a description of goriness that can be compared to prince Conrad's crushing by a giant helmet in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), where the boy is "dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet" (1901, p. 5) or even more to Ambrosio's death in Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), where "the Eagles of the rock tore his flesh piecemeal, and dug out his eyeballs with their crooked beaks" (1796, p. 302). Thus, all imagery of slaughtering and goriness in *The Butcher Boy* seem to fit into some of Kilfeather's definitions: Gothic novels are constructed with tropes such as bleeding corpses and dismemberments (2006, p. 81).

The butchery act committed by Francie is followed by even more shocking passages: "I made sure to cover her over good and proper with the brock there was plenty of it they wouldn't be too pleased if they saw me with Mrs Nugent in the bottom of the cart…" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 214) and "Hello my good man. . . . What did you order? Two pounds of

chump steak? Or was it half pound of Mrs Nugent? Sorry folks, Mrs Nugent's not for sale!" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 216). The strong imagery McCabe imbues Mrs Nugent's corpse with, covered in meat and being transported throughout the city by Francie, who acts as if nothing had happened, is a strong Gothic element that the author uses in the novel. It also remits to Gothic classics like James Malcolm Rymer's and Thomas Peckett Prest's *The String of Pearls: A Romance* (1846), where the "demon barber" Sweeney Todd murders his clients and uses their flesh in the making of meat pies, always acting as if nothing had happened. Francie's maniac journey turns out to be a perfect example of antiquarianism intrinsic to the Gothic genre. Francie represents the resistance of the nationalist Ireland's ideals in face of the modernisation of the land, represented here by the Mrs Nugent and her imminent threat of taking Joe – who represents his safe haven, where he can go back to the good days of his childhood – from him. As Wu asserts, "in Francie's lunatic reasoning, the carefree past is before Mrs Nugent comes into the town. Therefore, for Francie, to return to the pre-Nugent era when everything was fine is to get rid of her" (2012, p. 33).

Mrs Nugent's murder is the most explicit use of goriness, but numerous other passages shock the reader with situations of Gothic imagery; for instance, when Francie and Father "Bubbly" are talking about Francie's parents' honeymoon in Bundoran. The priest says that the Bradys still have time to go back there to sing as they used to, in which Francie responds: "it's not often you see a singing skeleton she'll bring the house down" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 94). When Francie attacks Buttsy, Mrs Nugent's brother, and clocks a rock in his skull, almost killing him (MCCABE, 2015, p. 122), although the first scene brings the shock of the sarcasm produced by Francie, the second comprises an explicated, more violent response from the main character towards Buttsy, whom Francie leaves crawling and bleeding and begging for help.

McCabe brings another instance of disturbing gory imagery to the reader when Leddy, the local Butcher, teaches Francie how to kill a pig by shooting a baby pig in the head in front of him:

> [Leddy] scoops him up in his arms … Isn't he lovely says Leddy again he sure is he sure is and the next thing what has he in his hand only a gun not a real gun it was a captive bolt and what does he do only stick it into the baby pig's head and bid-dunk!, right into his skull goes the bolt and such a squeal. Then down on the concrete plop and not a squeak out of him. (MCCABE, 2015, p. 135)

Although the scene, which is set in the local abattoir, prepares the reader for a possible gory outcome, some elements must be taken into consideration when analysing it. More than just the image of a little pig being shot in the head, the stream of consciousness narrative presents a level of guilt coming from Francie who found the baby pig lovely at the first moment and "hears" the piglet saying "Please – will you not let any harm come to me?" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 135) when Leddy picks it up. However, at the moment the baby pig is dead it talks to Francie again: "you said you'd mind me and you didn't" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 135). The narrative is even more shocking when it is taken into consideration the fact that Francie is just a kid who had to witness the slaughter of a "lovely animal" and cannot even feel bad about it, as the narrator points out that he could have said "why oh why did you have to do such a terrible thing to him he never harmed anyone in his whole life you're cruel cruel man Mr Leddy! And throw myself down on top of the poor little dead little baby pig" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 135). The fact Francie needs a job makes him go even further into this appalling situation, demanding him to kill a baby pig himself to prove he is worthy of being employed. As he passes through the conversation and the guilt, he ends up killing the pig and throwing it on the floor beside the first one (MCCABE, 2015, p. 136). Once again, the shock here is caused not by the setting, but by the situation *per se*, where a young boy has to face killing and overcoming of feelings to perform an action he showed resistance to in a matter of minutes. In sociological terms, this can be read as the necessity of the Irish people to adapt to the modernising wave the country was going through, forcing the people to put pride and nationalism aside, even though it means going against their own nature, in order to survive the period of struggle. In this sense, McCabe approaches the Maturin, Le Fanu and Stoker "school," who preferred to deal with society's problems instead of only restraining themselves to the past (MCCORMACK p. 832), showing a Gothic reinvention of representing the past.

The last evidence of this kind of Gothic imagery as the focus on the abject lies at the moment when the reader becomes aware of Bernard Brady's death. After a moment of intense reverie and probable denial of the situation, the police officers from the city find Francie's whereabouts and Bernard's body rotting on the couch, infested with maggots. (MCCABE, 2015, p. 155). Francie's response to this situation shows his inability to accept the reality, which can be related to Dino Felluga's reading of Julia Kristeva's view on the abject: "what we are confronted with when we experience the trauma of seeing a human corpse (particularly

the corpse of a friend or a family member) is our own eventual death made palpably real" (KRISTEVA *apud* FELLUGA, p. 138). In other words, Francie's shock might be read as his understanding of how he has been re-enacting his father's footsteps – the industrial school, the fear of priests due to their abuse, the alcoholism – and how his fate was to become that same corpse full of maggots, which is a re-enactment of the past (MCCABE, 2015, p. 831)

Another Gothic trope that McCabe uses in his novel, though not often, is the "monstrification" of people. This is a device commonly used to personify monsters or objects to transmit shock and a sense of horror to the reader. The monstrifications narrated by Francie are hard to be taken seriously, due to the unreliability of the narrator. The first monstrification happens when Francie sees an "alien-wasp" figure with tentacles in the figure of Father Bubbly that frightens him (MCCABE, 2015, p. 158). One possible approach is that the image of the priest in his mind had become a synonym of terror after Francie is molested by Father Sullivan earlier in the book. The tentacles are the priest's hands; the creature's sting is his penis. The image of the priest as a monster in the story that Francie tells the doctors (MCCABE, 2015, p. 160–161) could comprise the horrific image that Francie created in his mind for the paedophile clergyman and his traumatic experience with him.

The strongest evidence of a haunting monstrification happens when the narrator sees himself and his family as pigs in a literal way. Although the story presents passages where Francie plays a pig in his reveries, they are all lucid to a certain extent, since we cannot completely rely on the narrator's discourse. After his father's death, Francie goes to a mental institution and starts mixing reality with comic stories and delusions. During an examination at the mental institution, Francie starts a conversation with Joe, who suddenly shows up at the place (an obvious delirium, probably caused by a state of psychosis, which will be discussed later in this thesis). Francie then ends up at his town's grocery shop, talking to Mrs Connolly, who offers him an apple, in exchange, if he will sing and dance. However, instead of just giving the apple, Mrs Connolly implies that he can only have it if he picks it up like a pig (MCCABE, 2015, p. 166). After the scene where Francie tries (and fails) to pick the apple by biting it, enter "Ma and Da Pig." They are portrayed as literal pigs, with "two wee piggy eyes set away back in a ball of pink skin" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 168). The monstrification of the natural, which is commonly used to generate abhorrence towards the imagery of what the monstrous represents, is treated differently by McCabe here, though. Instead of using monsters to avert people from specific situations, the author displays the townsfolk in

Francie's dream as quite aware of the "Pig family" treating the Bradys as some kind of special presence that always perform a show or a row (MCCABE, 2015, p. 165-67).

3.2 "I'LL CLICK MY TIME LORD FINGERS": NEW AMERICAN GOTHIC IN *THE BUTCHER BOY*

Despite the undeniable presence of Classic Gothic elements in the novel, McCabe also drinks from other Gothic fountains that are easily perceived throughout the narrative: New American Gothic[13] influences. New American Gothic elements, thus, are also added to *The Butcher Boy* from the beginning to the end. According to Babitha B., "it turns to sociopaths, psychoses, modernity, vile murders, sexual transgressions and especially child abuse for its effects of terror and horror" (2011, p. 21). Punter points out that in these styles, "we are given little or no access to an "objective" world; instead we are immersed in the psyche of the protagonist, often through sophisticated use of first-person narrative" (2013 p. 2). That is exactly what McCabe offers the reader: Francie shows psychotic and sociopathic behaviours and, due to the first person narrative, the reader is immersed in Francie's way of seeing and dealing with the world – as part of which Francie often creates imaginary worlds where he is a "pig teacher" or a super hero that saves the day and is (or thinks he deserves to be) applauded for it.

The first moment at which a symptom of psychosis[14] shows up in the novel is when Francie needs to reaffirm his delusional belief of his mother being taken to a "garage" to make it easier for him to accept the fact that Annie had a mental breakdown and tried to commit suicide:

> I didn't know anything about ma and all this but Joe filled me in. I heard Mrs Connolly saying breakdown what's breakdown Joe. I says, Oh that's when you're took off to the garage, Joe told me, its when the truck comes and tows you away. That was a good one I thought, ma towed away off the street with her coat on. Who's that they'd say. Oh that's Mrs Brady they're taking her

[13] Following the definition presented in chapter 2 of this thesis

[14] Although psychosis is normally related to the stereotypical symptoms of hearing voices and extreme paranoia, different symptoms suggest different and/or mild cases of paranoia as pointed by Berit Brogaard (2016). Some of the symptoms cited here can be related to schizophrenia, which when untreated can become psychosis, as per comments in Psychology Today (2019).

> off to the garage. … Hand me down the spanner I think Mrs Brady's ankle needs tightening. (MCCABE, 2015, p. 9-10)

Even though Francie later reveals that he knew all along what the garage really meant (MCCABE, 2015, p. 37-38), this extract underlines Francie's urge to create a mental escape.

Since the necessity of creating a different reality might be seen (in most cases) as an attempt to deal with moments of difficulty in most cases, Francie's need to blind himself in a fictional narrative is a recurrent event in the novel. Be it by assuming the identity of a comic character like Algernon Carruthers (MCCABE, 2015, p. 41) to justify his fancy dinner in a hotel, or by becoming a pig teacher to "train" the Nugents how to be good pigs (MCCABE, 2015, p. 66 – 68). To mask the fact that he invaded and defecated in the Nugent's house, Francie often puts himself in an imaginary world to ease the moment he is inserted in. Among the characters he incorporates, Francie's most preferred persona is Adam Eterno, the Time Lord (MCCABE, 2015, p. 47), used to supress his guilty, fear or discomfort in most of the cases and transport him to his fantasy world. In his first personification, Francie takes the title of Time Lord while being analysed by the mental institute doctors – after he is checked in due to a delusional/shock state after his father's death – and does not care for the students and doctors watching and taking notes on him, once he "was too busy being Adam Eterno The Time Lord in that big chair. They could scribble all they liked I was away off through hyperspace" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 164).

During the time in the mental institute, Francie incorporates Adam Eterno once again after being told by one of the nurses that he was going to have his brain removed and would have to grow a taste for eating paper (MCCABE, 2015, p. 163). Even though he finds the nurse's speech funny, the moment he realises he was going to the surgery room he panics and tries to run away screaming "You can't touch me! I said. You can't lay a finger on me! I want out of here!" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 163). Trying to break the fear and agony, Francie enters the fantasy world and incarnates the character once again (MCCABE, 2015, p. 164), ending up in another delusional dream of becoming a literal pig, getting sliced in two halves (MCCABE, 2015, p. 169). The third time the title of Time Lord is mentioned is the most important in this section, since it shows Francie's mental problem explicitly. After the surgical procedure, Francie receives medications and express the following statement: "There was no more Time Lord or any of that stuff after they gave me tablets" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 169). This sentence sums up Francie's condition as a person who suffers from psychosis and needs to be medicated to control his situation. Francie still maintains a violent behaviour towards people,

as he still wants to punish the nurse for threatening him with stories affirming the doctors where going to put holes in his head (MCCABE, 2015, p. 169–170). However, as long as he was in the mental institution and under medication, his condition got better and his delusions as Time Lord disappeared, only to come back later in the novel, trying to "save Bundoran from its ugliness" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 196).

Although he does assume other characters, it is in the Time Lord that Francie finds his main escape from the pain of reality, which seems to work until his last appearance in the novel, where Francie pities the fate of Mary (who used to be his Uncle Alo's lover) (MCCABE, 2015, p. 216). He tries to use the Time Lord discourse to cheer Mary up, but feels impotent and stupid as he realises his reveries come to no avail: "there was warm tears in my eyes because I could do nothing for Mary" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 217). It is at this moment that the use of the Time Lord as a mask for Francie's unhappiness and a possible depression is explicitly shown, as Francie accepts that his only alter ego who used to make everything feel and look better can no longer sustain the farce. Punter reaffirms the connection between Gothic and this branch of psychoanalysis by affirming that

> Using condensation, displacement and various representational modes as tools, we carefully rework our desires into the stuff of dreams, in which we can safely experience what we do not want to acknowledge in waking life. In day-dreams and neurotic symptoms, we use the mechanisms of defence to construct systems that satisfy basic desires while still letting us function adequately in the 'real' world. Dreams and daydreams are stories written by ourselves for ourselves, though. In literature, we weave the beautifully elaborated fabric of language that lets us articulate what could not otherwise be known or said, not only for ourselves but for others also. (PUNTER, 2000, p. 244).

Through this analysis, it is quite clear that the Time Lord façade used by Francie can be considered as a case of psychosis used to mask his traumas and depression with a delusional belief of a better place created by himself – it thus fits as a quite clear example of the New American Gothic genre.

Another characteristic of the genre is Francie's sociopathic behaviour. One of the most impactful demonstration of it happens when Francie starts talking to Phillip Nugent after the "Pig Toll Tax" incident – Francie's attempt to charge a toll on the Nugents for passing in front of his house – incident. Due to Francie's previous aggressive behaviour, Phillip does not want

to continue with the conversation, but ends up enjoying Francie's company due to the latter's manipulative speech, complimenting Phillip's music material and showing interest on things he likes, like music:

> He broke into a trot as soon as he seen me but I ran after him … I told him his music case was one of the nicest in the town. … He sort of grinned and half-laughed when I said that and his cheeks turned pink. … Then I said about the books inside. What about them Philip? I said. Can I have a look at them? … could you sing these (songs)? Will you teach me some of them? (MCCABE, 2015, p. 48-49).

By showing interest in Philip's hobby, Francie buys him over with his guile and meticulously prepares the way to move to another subject: "We were getting along right well and his cheeks weren't so flushed now so I started talking to him about the comics" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 50). Francie steers the conversation into opening up the subject of the comics, and uses it to say that the Pig Toll Tax was just a joke (MCCABE, 2015, p. 51), conquering Philip's trust. Although at first glance Francie's behaviour seems to be that of a friend or at least of a repentant one, this passage portrays nothing but Francie's meticulous manipulation in order to have a chance to kill Philip in a secluded place. By bringing up the issue of the comics, Francie says that his aunt in America has brought many different comics with super heroes like Green Lantern with a hammer coming out of his ring (MCCABE, 2015, p. 51), in order to catch Philip's attention. Once he has it, Francie declares that the comics are stacked in the chickenhouse, which is a quiet, secluded place where Francie knew no one would see or hear anything, a "dark world of chirps and bubbles" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 51) used as one of his playgrounds. After informing Phillip that he was going to bring the comics, Francie comes back with a chain and tries to murder the Nugent boy, only to be stopped by Joe at the last minute.

Although this passage comprises what seems to be a psychotic break, the main point here is that it reaffirms Francie's sociopathic behaviour with his manipulative talk to gain Phillip's trust and entice him into going to the chickenhouse. A meticulous, premeditated crime – even though it has failed – prepared and executed by a (probably) nine, ten year-old child encompasses elements in the New American Gothic category. Walls affirms that McCabe tries to create horrific and extreme violence in his novels to blur problematic childhoods, enabling a reading where the society is a sick world that neglects and mistreats children to whom, even though they become subject of gossip in their towns no help is ever

offered and are unable to change their behaviour, which has been broken by a traumatic childhood, so that only the atrocious results of it can be seen (WALLS, 2010, p. 74-75).

A further New American Gothic characteristic is represented in the relationship between Francie and Father Sullivan or, as the narrator says in his mind, "Tiddly." As Francie becomes an important figure among the priests of the industrial school, his visions and lies attract the interest of an abusive clergyman who finds in the boy an object of sexual pleasure. Although the relation "paedophile priest molesting a child" is already an example of Gothicism, it is important to analyse the nature of the relationship and its effects on Francie, as this directly affects the narrative afterwards. After Francie has the first vision of Our Lady, the priests in the school ask him to tell the stories of the holy encounters, always praising him and God for it but, as Francie uses the visions, allied with lies, to get more and more attention, Sullivan's interest on him grows. After one of the stories, the priest "plants this big slobbery wet kiss right on [Francie's] lips" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 86) and asks him to tell his story of seeing Saint Teresa of the Roses again. After this point, Father Sullivan's only goes further in what the narrator calls, "the Tiddly Show" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 86). At a certain moment, the priest asks Francie to sit on his lap and starts masturbating himself:

> Sit up here he said and slapped his knees. So up I went. What does Tiddly do then only take out his mickey and start rubbing it up and down and jogging me on his knee. Then his whole body vibrates and he bends away over (MCCABE, 2015, p. 86).

At first glance, it seems that Francie does not care about, or understand, what is going on, as he continues the narrative with "I thought he was going to break off in two halves" (86). Though not knowing the situation *per se*, Francie does understand that it is a non-natural event for both him and the cleric. This understanding is evidenced later in a passage where Francie affirms that everything will be alright as long as he keeps being Tiddly's wife (MCCABE, 2015, p. 97). The naturalness with which Francie deals with the situation shocks the reader, considering that he is a young boy selling his body to a priest for candies and cigarettes at the same time the priest calls him his "best little girl" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 88).

Although Father Sullivan depicts a stereotyped figure, it is Francie's alleged control of the situation that baffles the readers' mind. As he receives a dress from "Tiddly," he thinks to

himself that he “felt like laughing my arse off but poor old Tiddly wouldn’t have liked that” (MCCABE, 2015, p. 98). Francie’s awareness is even more perceptible when Sullivan asks him to tell everything about his life, to which he responds with “Ten Rolos, says I […] I gave him a heap of lies and truth all mixed up” (98).

Francie’s knowledge of his situation and his mischievous mind tend to create an atmosphere of control in the middle of the unnatural situation he is settled, but it is the outcome and the late impact this relationship has on Francie’s mind and friendship with Joe that leaves a permanent damage to the narrator’s psyche. After leaving the industrial school, Francie looks out for Joe and finds himself confronted by an unexpected inquiry promoted by his loved friend. In Francie’s story, there was one thing that caught Joe’s attention: the fact that Francie was locked in the boilerhouse (MCCABE, 2015, p. 106). Though Francie hesitates to answer, when faced with Joe’s insistence, his own belief in his best friend’s friendship makes him tell the whole story between father Sullivan and himself, focusing on the dress and the candies, but leaving outside the kiss, the abuses and everything else that could cause discomfort in both Joe and himself (MCCABE, 2015, p. 106). However, not satisfied with Francie’s shallow explanations, Joe inquires even further for the reasons behind Francie getting candies, cigarettes and the boilerhouse. Against his own will, Francie tells the whole story between Father Sullivan and himself, only to receive a negative outcome from Joe and see his best friend in shock (MCCABE, 2015, p. 107). This is the breaking point for Francie, where he decides to call his traumatic experience at the industrial school a lie, fearing that Joe would never talk to him again.

This repression by Joe might be a major cause for Francie to overreact by killing Mrs Nugent, due to the fact that Francie’s feelings towards Joe might have evolved from a deep friendship to a sentimental attachment, as can be understood by Francie’s words:

> If I could have gone to Joe’s house to tell him all about this it would have been good it would have been the best thing ever. Anything you want Joe I’d say to myself on the way to his house you can have it now because I’m going to buy it for you. We could go up on the deck and I’d show it to him, all spread out before him and say whatever you want, Joe its all yours. Where do you want to go Joe? You’re the boss. […] It would be good if it could have happened like that with Joe but it wouldn’t so it was no use thinking about it (MCCABE, 2015, p. 147).

These words reflect an over attached Francie who would try to do everything to see Joe’s happiness. One might understand this as a deep sentiment that Francie carries with him

and developed throughout the years, but has to keep it to himself due to both Joe's strangeness towards his story in the industrial school and Phillip's constant presence, which might be seen as a rival to the narrator's love for Joe.

Analysing how Francie had to suffer the abuses and never talk to his best friend about them, it is impossible to dissociate the whole situation from the feeling of horror and repulse which it and its consequences cause in the reader, be it due to the priest's actions and the narrator's false impression of control, or Joe's shock and repulse towards his once best friend for life. McCabe presents the reader a New American Gothic experience in showing the naturalised unnaturalness of Francie's relationship with the people surrounding him – whether they are friends, family or strangers to present the reader this different approach on the reader's mind. Babitha B. develops the Burkean definition of the sublime:

> The sublime is anything, that produces the strongest the mind is capable of feeling. This feeling is that powerful emotion in which terror and pain coexist with delight and astonishment. "Gothic" produces great emotional effect on the reader through its presentation of sensational, emotional incidents and strange settings with tremendous imagination. It concentrates on developing aweful astonishment rather than rational or moral thinking. (BABITHA, 2011, p. 126)

One can thus affirm that the "New Gothic" (as Wu claims) or the New American Gothic is an extension of the classic Gothic tropes inserted in different settings and narratives that provoke in the reader the same feeling of restlessness and shock. As Punter affirms, the "New American Gothic deals with the landscapes of the mind, settings that are distorted by the pressure of the principal character's psychological obsessions" (MCCABE, 2015, p. 2). And that's exactly what McCabe does, by showing an obsessive Francie Brady, lost in a murderous, manic quest to retrieve sanity by being insanely murderous in his own distorted reasoning.

3.3 TWO SIDES OF A NATIONAL COIN: MODERNISATION X ANTI-MODERNISATION

The Butcher Boy exposes two sides of mid-twentieth-century Ireland. The Bradys as a representation of the national, idealistic view of De Valera's rural utopia where "Irish roots" must be kept, characterising an antiquarian and romantic, nationalist nostalgia, and the well-adjusted Nugents, who represent the modernisation, globalisation and, of course, change in the social and economic scenario. In the 1960s, Ireland faced a modernisation wave that opposed the nationalist view proposed by the Taoiseach and the disparity between tradition and remodelling created a social rift in the country. This modernised Ireland generated an illusion of economic wealth and great expectations that were not met, as pointed out in the second chapter of this thesis. In the 1990s, the decade in which the novel was written, after the economic blackout the country went through in the previous two decades, another relentless wave of modernity hit the Republic and pointed out how the "Gaelic dream" was more and more in the past. In his novel, McCabe personifies the hollow nationalist dream through the Brady family's fond memories of the past.

Benny and Annie Brady, Francie's parents, are a fruit of the nationalist era. They embody the nationalist antiquarianism and yearn for a romanticised, fantasized past where they could break away from the present misery and flee to a glorious past. Many passages in the novel show this attachment to their "golden days" and represent clearly their nostalgia towards them, which affects Francie's vision of the world directly. For Annie, her desire to go back in time is well represented by her favourite song, "The Butcher Boy," and by how she sings it with a total involvement. Although the novel does not present the whole ballad, the attachment of Annie to its suicidal lyrics is a case of an interesting allusion to nationalism. When analysed as a whole, the song presents a girl with a nostalgic view towards the past: "I wish I wish/ I wish in vain/ I wish I was a maid again/ but a maid again I'll ne'er be/ till apples grow on an ivy tree" (O'CONNOR, 1998, *track* 15). The attachment Annie has to the song can be directly related to her nostalgia towards the past where she did not live in misery and had not yet met Bennie, who captivated her with promises of a poor life, but full of love. Wu asserts that Annie's failure of living the past leads her to her suicide, as the girl in the song does (2012, p. 27): "He went upstairs and the door he broke/ he found her hanging from a rope" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 21).

More than attachment to the past with the ballad, Annie herself presents a powerful allusion to De Valera's resistance against Britain's influence. After coming back from the mental institution, Annie is fuelled with a desire to improve her life and overcome the anglicised Nugents and their "pig" labels:

> She said we'd never be run down in this town again we'd show them we were as good as any of them. She looked into my eyes and said: We don't want to be like the Nugents. We don't want to be like any of them! We'll show them – won't we Francie? They'll envy us yet! We're the Bradys. Francie! The Bradys! (MCCABE, 2015 p. 20)

By saying that the Bradys are as good as any of them, an allusion to rural, border Ireland is made. De Valera's rural utopia of an Ireland that developed through the hardworking farmers and the unmaterialistic way of life is analogous to Annie's wish not to be overwritten by the Nugents' social position and their view on the Bradys as social misaligned people, that can be seen as a response of Irish people trying to overcome more than four hundred years of foreign influence in their culture. In turn, this is also one of the many Gothic conventions, as Siobhán Kilfeather points out:

> The Gothic appears more often than not as a response to modernisation, a mode of registering loss and of suggesting that new forms of subjectivity are necessary to deal with the new forms of knowledge and power that are conquering past systems and beliefs (2006, p. 83).

However, even though Annie tries to stand up straight on her feet and move on with her life decently, she still ends up suffering mental breakdowns and ends up committing suicide. As much as her will to stick to her roots and try to make it work can be seen as an equivalent to nationalistic ideals, her morbid end is also correlative to their crumbling before Ireland's modernisation and how the government protectionist politics led the nation to an "economic suicide."

Just like Annie, Benny also yearns for his lost days of fame days. Once a renowned musician, Benny turned into an abusive, alcoholic man who beats and mistreats his family and spends his days and money in the town pubs. Instead of trying to make his life work, Benny gives in to pure nostalgia of the past, retelling how romantic and unique his trip to Bundoran with Annie had been and how he was praised and acclaimed. In his story, Benny tells how "there was no row …, no whiskey" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 92) and how the people wanted him to sing and called both Annie and Benny the lovebirds (92). However, Francie finds out in his own trip to the city that it was all a fabricated lie, that his father was drunk every day and humiliated Annie by misbehaving and mistreating the people at the inn, a priest included

(MCCABE, 2015 p. 198). The Bradys' romanticised view of the beginning of their love story is comparable to Éamon De Valera's idealistic self-sufficient and Gaelic Ireland. While in the "Over the Seas" hotel, Benny asks Annie if she is "prepared to live on potatoes and salt for the rest of her life" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 93), which remits to De Valera's dreamland of anti-materialist, frugal families. This can be related directly to the impact of De Valera's ideals on Ireland, since just as the nation could not live on ancient agricultural practices, the Bradys could not live on passion and love alone. Benny's alcoholism, allied to his constant unemployment, increases Annie's mental issues. Unable to adapt, to go back to their "golden days," and facing poverty, the family goes into total collapse. As De Valera's leadership left Ireland in a state of economical bankruptcy that Sean Lemass had to deal with, Annie and Benny's nostalgia and inability to adapt to modernisation result into their providing a broken, poor family life that directly affected Francie's outcome.

Annie and Benny's attachment to the past are reflected in Francie's actions and thoughts. Francie constantly blames Mrs Nugent as the cause of his family's collapse and the one responsible for Joe's detachment from him. Unable to see that it was due to his thoughtless actions and his parents' attachment to the past that he ends up alone and in pathological attachment that ends in the gruesome murder of the Nugent matriarch, Francie embarks on a journey to a day when there was no Mrs Nugent, to make everything fine again. Differently from his parents, who grew up in the nationalist era and long for the past, Francie is a product of the effects of this utopic view and epitomises the Gaelic dream of sticking to his roots and recovering the identity of the nation. For Francie, the only way to travel back to the glorious past is to get rid of the menace that is responsible for all his misfortunes, as she is the one who "caused all the trouble if you hadn't poked your nose in everything would have been all right" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 2). As Kate Walls asserts, "Francie Brady takes [his] daydreams a gruesome step further and ultimately stalks and the woman who has come to embody everything about the home he will never have" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 85). In this case, just change home for past and a satisfactory comparison will be attained.

Throughout the novel, Francie's recurrently says or thinks that the Nugents are the ones plotting against his happiness of living the era in which everything was fine. Whether it is through Phillip's studying music and lending Joe a music book (MCCABE, 2015 p. 129), or the two of them hanging around together (MCCABE, 2015 p. 141), or the Nugents going to the Purcells – Joe's parents – (MCCABE, 2015 p. 148), the presence of the Nugents is reason enough for Francie to think they are the kidnappers of Joe and, thus, his only chance to be

happy. In his last moderate attempt to make Joe come back to his side, Francie goes to Bundoran, where Joe is studying. Even the fact that the lights go out Francie attributes to Mrs Nugent (MCCABE, 2015 p. 202); but the example that best illustrates Francie's feelings of persecution is when, after he breaks into the school, Joe appears and says they are friends no more, which makes him think that Joe was switched by the Nugents (MCCABE, 2015 p. 208). The modernising wave that hit Ireland by the 1960s is personified here by the changes that the Nugents brought, and it is impossible for the prior period to come back into Francie's life. Whether it be his parents' deaths, his best friend's aversion to him or how the Nugents meddle in his life, Francie's pre-Nugent era will not come back; and the country will not go back to its pre-colonised times.

At the same time that McCabe exposes the chain of social malaises which the Bradys face as a correlative to the hollowness of nationalist ideals, the author addresses the social pitfall that was the modernisation, and separation of the country – and how equally hollow, similarly, this idea of progress was. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the Nugents represent the modernisation of the country, and their model is exactly what Sean Lemass had in mind for the economic expansion program. As their name implies, the "new gentlemen" were the ideal for the Irish families of the 1960s, with purchasing power and properly educated. In this sense, McCabe seems to favour a revisionist view on mid-twentieth century Ireland, addressing how the poverty – derived from the government decisions – hit the countryside and how the Anglicised Nugents were really coming out on top of the other citizens. However, the Nugents also represent the rough materialistic way of life, its similarities with England's coloniser era and the erasing of the national identity in order to achieve economic growth.

This take can be seen at the beginning of Francie's tale, when Joe and he "borrow" Phillip Nugent's comics. A little before that, Mrs Nugent asks them to be careful with the comics, since they "cost money" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 3). The overprotection of the comics is a clear allusion to the modernising preoccupation of accumulating wealth and goods. This preoccupation is evident in other passages throughout the novel, such as when Mrs Nugent addresses Francie's clothes (MCCABE, 2015 p. 4), and her conversation about putting Phillip and Joe in a private school with Mrs Purcell (MCCABE, 2015 p. 148). Still, the passage about the comics is not only a demonstration of the materialistic Ireland, but also a representation of

the country's identity being wiped out. Although Mrs Nugent was born and raised in the same town as Francie, her time in England and her affluent life make her treat those who were once her compatriots as, as she calls them, pigs (4), which can be seen as an externalisation of British colonial values within Mrs Nugent. Wu affirms that contemporary Gothic allowed writers and critics to make sense of the peculiar Irish context, as well as correlate the pronounced presence of it in contemporary writings in relation to the "troubles of the nation" (2012, p. 78). This freedom allowed a wider understanding of and/or developments from Ireland's complicated past.

For a moment, Francie is at peace with the presence of the Nugents in town. Before the arrival of his uncle Alo, Benny's businessman, brother who has settled in London, Francie meets both Mrs Nugent and Phillip leaving a bakery with a cake. He laughs at them, since his house is filled with cakes for Alo (MCCABE, 2015 p. 22) and tells himself that Mrs Nugent would have to wait a long time before he cares about her again (MCCABE, 2015 p. 23). This passage resembles the beginning of De Valera's Gaelic Ireland plan, since, in his vision, everything was now fine and going well, as, just as Alo Brady was doing fine coming from Irish roots – and Ireland would survive on the work of its folk. However, considering Alo as an embodiment of the nationalist ideal is a grave error, since he left Ireland and has no plans of coming back to his country. Alo's economic growth is more related to the modernisation wave than to the conservative policies. Instead of working in Ireland, Alo moved to London to work and gather wealth. More than just being in charge of overseeing ten men (MCCABE, 2015 p. 23, 28), Alo adopted British manners of dress and speech and is even fa ont of admiration for Francie (MCCABE, 2015 p. 28). Alo and Benny Brady can be seen as the clash of both modernisation and antiquarianism. After going to the defense of Mary from Alo's flirtatious behaviour, saying that "Things get to her, […] her time of life its not easy for a woman, you'd think he'd have more wit a man of his age" (MCCABE, 2015 p. 33), Benny criticises Alo's choice of life and confronts his brother's nationalism, so to speak. Francie's father points out that he had "left behind his Irish roots" when he

> made a cod of himself with [Mary]. Never even had the guts to ask her out straight till it was too late […] Camden Town's the place he met the only woman he ever laid a finger on. Took her to the altar because he was afraid to ask anyone else. Twenty years his senior, for the love of God. Half-blind and hates him from the day she married him (MCCABE, 2015 p. 35).

As Wu affirms, “Benny’s accusation that Alo has deserted his true love is also an accusation that Alo has sacrificed his personal and national identity for the sake of wealth” (2012 , p. 67). This is also a point that Nancy Scheper-Hughes treats as the rural condition of “double bind”: “whether to emigrate and try to make good elsewhere, or whether to stay behind and prove loyal to mother and mother land” (*apud* Wu, 2012, p. 206). In this case, Benny represents the loyal son who stands his ground in the motherland, while Alo is his counterpart who left his pride behind in search of wealth, which was a common situation for Irish folk after De Valera’s poor choices for the economy of the country.

As mentioned before, the Gothic is intrinsically attached to history and politics, and through it, McCabe addresses both sides of this changing Ireland in his novel. Wu points out that

> Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* adopts a more complicated re-visioning of the nation’s past. Set in the interface between traditional nationalism and economic modernisation, the novel is critical of Irish nationalism and is romanticised historiography, yet is also suspicious of the modernising force that tends to renounce the nation’s past. (MCCABE, 2015 p. 2012, p.)

In this sense, McCabe’s criticises the rapid modernisation that affected the country negatively in two ways: due to the country not being prepared for it, and because of the country’s nationalist ethos. This nationalist attitude stagnated the economic and social growth, and also created a social barrier, just when the modernisation wave proposed by Sean Lemáss was at its peak.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 “THEY'LL ONLY FILL YOU FULL OF LIES AND LET YOU DOWN” – MCCABE’S BOG GOTHIC

Approaching the end of this study, it is important to readdress some of its main topics. I first focus on the picture of mid-twentieth century Ireland that I have dealt with in the Critical Chapter (Chapter 2), in which I presented the economic and social situation of Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, and readdress some critical views that relate Irish history to McCabe’s novel. I then present my conclusions from the analysis of the Gothic elements in the novel and how Ireland’s issues of mid- and late twentieth century influenced the author, discussing my general and specific objectives, as well as my research hypothesis, and link these points to the concept of Bog Gothic. Finally, I present some observations and ideas for future research on McCabe’s work.

While witnessing another cycle of disastrous-ending mentality – with the Celtic Tiger period – McCabe revisits the country’s 1960s decade as a warning of what is to come. Very similar to the way in which Lemass and his expansion program led the country to a “nonchalant, if not hostile attitude toward her nationalist past” (WU, 2012, p. 75) in exchange for economic wealth, the country faced another period of accelerated modernisation that endorsed national pride after overtaking Britain’s economic growth. As a response to the collective blindness and the condition the country seemed to be repeating, McCabe puts forward his perspective on both moments, with *The Butcher Boy*’s setting as a harbinger of the displacement and injustice created by the process of social change that came with the economic boom.

The Celtic Tiger phenomenon ended as abruptly as it started. After a decade of economic growth, the emerald island fell into an abrupt recession. Kieran Allen states that, by the end of the 2000s, critics had declared that “The Celtic Tiger is dead” (*apud* WU, 2012, p. 76). The sudden fall of the soaring Celtic Tiger caused the critics to remember the economic boom of the 1960s, and draw attention to the underside of Ireland’s economic miracle. Colin Coulter states that “readings [on the Celtic Tiger period] tend to understate or overlook entirely those dislocations and injustices that have marked the process of social change in the recent period of economic boom” (2003, p. 28). Coulter argues that the interpretations of the years of economic expansion focused merely on outstanding figures for the Gross Domestic

Product (GDP), giving an erroneous impression of evenly distributed economic growth in the nation. However, the Celtic Tiger era ended up speeding the uneven distribution of wealth in the country (COULTER, 2003, p. 22). The economic boom benefited only those who were already wealthy, and they ended up exploiting the working class more, presenting the familiar class distinctions and inequalities of any capitalist society. Coulter also contends that a wave of materialism had taken over the twenty-six counties during the Celtic Tiger era, promoting a "spiritual emptiness that invariably attends the process of modernisation" (2003, p. 25). Thus, it is right to affirm that the accelerated modernisation of the Celtic Tiger period took a toll on Ireland as a nation, leaving a trail of social inequality and spiritual emptiness. In this regard, I argue that the Gothic genre has proven useful to describe various aspects pf Ireland's society.

The twentieth century has brought a range of changes to the Gothic genre. Narratives filled with aristocratic villains amidst ruined castles placed on overwhelming landscapes are no longer the commonplace amongst Gothic writers. However, the Gothic tradition lives in the cultural anxieties conveyed by these same "early" Gothic writers, who had plenty to drink from the unique Irish context. Matthew Schultz brings up the relationship between contemporary Irish works and the Gothic. He asserts that "Irish writers have long been obsessed with, and haunted by, Ireland's troubled history, and have regularly turned to Gothic evocations of ghosts and vampires as a means of negotiating Ireland's uncanny historical repetitions" (*apud* WU, 2012, p. 79). The Gothic, then, is an evocation of the past that can be used "either to introduce vigor in the past or to confront the violent and traumatic past" (WU, 2012, p. 79). Patrick McCabe's novel, though, is both: while it reinforces the idea of traditional nationalist rural utopia in the Bradys, it critics this same template by showing the horrendous outcome of the modernising force that further marginalised those who were already marginalised.

In my thesis, I have called attention the novel's Gothic elements, both Classic and New American, to explain McCabe's approach to Gothicism through both lenses, both definitions. With the concept of Irish Gothic, I seek to set out the intrinsic relationship of the genre to the country's history, and how the literary elements, allied later with McCabe's view on the country's society, at a particular point in time, emanate a Gothic aura not only through the violent acts at the end of the novel, but throughout the whole book. Underlining Francie's psychopathology, I foreground the idea of the New American Gothic as a major frame in

McCabe's work, arguing that McCabe underlines social circumstances that drive Francie's madness deeper as the novel progresses. Finally, I describe how McCabe uses the two main families in the novel as representations of both the nationalist and modernising ideals, and how the author sets up their motivations and criticises them, at the same time.

I conclude that the term Bog Gothic, despite reflecting one of the best-known terrains in Ireland, is used because the subgenre relates to rural people and their society, as separated from the modernised, developed/-ing city centres. The novel *The Butcher Boy* is thus regarded as Bog Gothic because of its focus on society as a microcosm and how that society affected a marginalised individual, leading him to a berserk rampage in search of self-love as well as external love.

The Classic Gothic tropes I that bring up in my analysis support identification of this work as Gothic not only due to the author's interest in the past, an attribute that is considered as one of the central characteristic of the genre, but also because of its use of Gothic tropes, such as monstrifications, haunting and the sublime (even though the narrator's unreliability makes the reader doubt the veracity of the information given).

Another important observation, in conclusion, is that the Bog Gothic subgenre drinks quite a lot from what I could call a "Freudian agenda." Focusing on the psyche and the problems of the ego, McCabe makes use too of many New American Gothic elements for this to be overlooked. The construction of the antagonist is not done only by a specific act. It is built up in the mind of Francie, as snowball of hatred that, even when Mrs Nugent could not have absolutely any way to be related to a problem, Francie makes a way for her to be connected, as a way to feed and justify his sociopathic behaviour. Not only that, the usage of New American Gothic tropes lead to the biggest Classic Gothic act.

Finally, the representation of society and its injustices and inequalities through the Bradys and the Nugents end up being not only a setting for the novel, but the most important element of it. McCabe uses the 1960s as a warning and a review. By writing at the beginning of the Celtic Tiger era and seeing how blind the Irish were in relation to it, the author alerts for the omen of social malaise through the repetition of the past. The same past that once happened because of a rapid modernisation and one that, even though not this was not well reported, augmented the gap between the wealthy and the poor. The social malaise brought by both periods of modernisation ends up being the price the nation has to pay for a hollow growth, in which those who suffer from it are those that are already underprivileged, such as the Bradys, in *The Butcher Boy*. Francie's outburst is nothing more than an answer to the

relentless modernisation that is also a proof of how de Valera's nationalist ideals were wrongly conceived and inappropriately executed, and, in a sense, dead since their beginning.

Summing up all these observations: McCabe creates the Bog Gothic by mixing both Classic and New (American) Gothic tropes in a narrative that is concerned to depict his revision and also serves as an alert to society.

For future research, a possible path would be to analyse the subsequent novels by McCabe. and how Gothic tropes are conveyed, and Irish society represented in them, in order to reinforce or contradict the findings of this work. Another possibility would be a comparative analysis between two or more novels by the author, in which the protagonists present manic personalities or social disorders.

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