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**Fictional Male Bodies and Their Affective Power in the Northern Irish
plays *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* and *The Belle of the Belfast City*
by Christina Reid**

Florianópolis

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Shall I Tell You My Name? and *The Belle of the Belfast City* by Christina Reid**

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Fictional Male Bodies and Their Affective Power in the Northern Irish plays *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* and *The Belle of the Belfast City* by Christina Reid.

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RESUMO

O presente estudo examina a interação entre o unionismo e as políticas de gênero de masculinidades nas peças *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989) e *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), publicadas na série Methuen Contemporary Dramatists (1997), da dramaturga Norte Irlandesa Christina Reid. Para examinar as práticas de gênero masculino dentro da comunidade protestante da Irlanda do Norte, e sua interconexão com as ideologias unionistas, esta análise faz uso de uma compreensão teórica de masculinidades como poder criativo sem fidelidade ao corpo masculino, mas sim sua capacidade de afetar e ser afetado (MCDONALD, 2018; HICKEY-MOODY, 2019). Para examinar o imaginário ficcional do Estado de Ulster, esta pesquisa mobiliza o conceito de “comunidades imaginadas” de Benedict Anderson (2006) para defender a hipótese de que há interdependência entre a imaginação do Estado-nação e as pedagogias de gênero. Esta pesquisa lê os personagens masculinos em ambas as peças como dispositivos semióticos que abrigam ideais transcendentais do que constitui um homem protestante “de verdade” em termos unionistas. A análise apresentada aqui demonstra como o atual conjunto de afetos gerados pela masculinidade de Ulster esgota os corpos masculinos de seu poder criativo generativo, reduzindo drasticamente suas experiências de gênero aos valores embutidos de servidão à dinâmica do estado sectário da Irlanda do Norte de 1980. Além disso, este estudo conclui que as duas peças selecionadas, no momento da produção, oferecem formas alternativas de representar as masculinidades protestantes da classe trabalhadora, afastando-se de modelos arquétipos e canônicos de homens unionistas, para oferecer um retrato dos destrutivos custos da performatividade masculina nos domínios do unionismo e lealismo. Assim, as peças de Reid contribuem para a re-imaginação identitária e a mitigação política e cultural crucial para a mudança social psicológica e simbólica de uma Irlanda do Norte sectária.

Palavras-chave: Drama Norte-Irlandês, Christina Reid, Masculinidades, Estudos de Gênero.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the interplay between Unionism and the gender politics of masculinities in the plays *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989) and *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), published in the Methuen Contemporary Dramatists series (1997), by Northern Irish playwright Christina Reid. To examine the male gender practices within the Northern Irish Protestant community, and its interconnection with Unionist ideologies, this analysis makes use of a theoretical understanding of masculinities as a creative power with no allegiance to the male body, but its ability to both affect and be affected (MCDONALD, 2018; HICKEY-MOODY, 2019). Furthermore, to examine the fictional imagery of the Ulster State, this research mobilises Benedict Anderson's (2006) concept of “imagined communities” to contend the hypothesis of interdependence between nation-state imagination and gender pedagogies. This research reads male characters in both plays as semiotic devices that host transcendent ideals of what constitutes a “real” Protestant man in Unionist terms. The analysis demonstrates how the current assemblage of affects generated by the Ulster masculinity exhausts men’s bodies of their generative creative power, thus drastically reducing their gender experiences to the embedded values of serving the dynamics of the sectarian state of 1980s Northern Ireland. This investigation concludes that the two selected plays offer alternative ways, at the time of the production, of representing Protestant working-class masculinities by shifting away from canonical archetypes of loyal men, and, in turn, offer a picture of the destructive expenses of the masculine performativity within the realms of Unionism and Loyalism ideologies. Thus, Reid’s plays, as demonstrated here, contribute to the identity reimagination and political and cultural mitigation that are crucial to change the symbolic social-psychological scenario of a sectarian Northern Ireland.

Keywords: Northern Irish Drama, Christina Reid, Masculinities, Gender Studies.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF INVESTIGATION

The thesis presented here stems from the field of Northern Irish Drama studies to explore the interplay between Unionism and the gender politics of masculinities in two plays written by Northern Irish playwright Christina Reid. The corpus of this research encompasses *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989) and *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), both featured in the Methuen Contemporary Dramatists series (1997). To discuss the male gender practices within the Northern Irish Protestant community and its interconnection with Unionist and Loyalist ideologies, this study is theoretically grounded on social and psychological theories of masculinities (CONNEL, 2005; MCDONALD, 2018; HICKEY-MOODY, 2019). To explore the fictional facet of the “Ulster” State, often safeguarded by Protestant male characters in both plays, I rely on Benedict Anderson's (2006) concept of “imagined communities”. This concept shifts one’s focus from ideological and material conditions of nation-building to the cognitive dissemination of nationalism. To do so, I explore how the Northern Irish theatre scene of the 1980s has dealt with polarised communities of Protestants and Catholics as well as the political and cultural crisis marked by the violent sectarian conflict known as the Troubles: a partisan conflict between the years of 1968 to 1998, between Unionists, essentially composed by Loyalist Protestants, who wanted Ulster province to remain part of the United Kingdom, while Nationalists, mainly Catholics, desired a unified Ireland, that is to say, Northern Ireland to be part of the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) saw the conflict as a war for national independence, while the Ulster Volunteering Force (UVF) addressed actions promoted by the IRA as terrorism. Marked by street fights, bombings, gunman attacks, roadblocks and prisons without trial, the confrontation had the characteristics of a civil war. About 3,600 people were killed and more than 40,000 were injured before a peaceful solution came to fruition, involving the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland (MULHOLLAND, 2002). An end to the conflict was only officially reached in 1998, with the Good Friday Agreement, or the Belfast Agreement, leading to a power-sharing agreement in the country.

Although terms like Unionism and Loyalism might be, at times, interchangeable within the self-identification of Protestant individuals, I rely here on Coffey’s understanding of Unionism as a political identity for those who want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, whereas Loyalism conveys an Unionist political positioning by yielding “tacit or actual support to the use of physical force by paramilitary groups” (2016, p.12). In Chapters 2 and 3, this distinction is necessary so that one can recognise moments of

renegotiation of identity to what concerns violent deeds perpetrated within the Protestant communities represented in *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989) and *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989). As the textual and cultural analysis of both plays demonstrates, the revisionism of loyalties is often enabled by female characters. However, in certain moments I intentionally use the terminologies of Unionism and Loyalism as synonyms. Those are textual instances in which I recognise a non-rupture from the cultural and political matrix of what is expected of a “real Protestant man”, that is, moments when characters' gendered performances are aligned to the cultural and political prescriptions of Unionism followed by the deployment of Loyalism.

When the partition of Ireland occurred, the majority of the population in the North were Protestants (COFFEY, 2016). After the establishment of the Irish Free State (1922), Northern Protestants felt that the emancipated Catholic majority in the South threatened their status and wealth. In Northern Ireland, the Catholic minority was often denied housing and voting privileges, resulting in an unequal government that benefited Protestants. As Coffey states, “Catholics were placed in slum housing, given the least paying and most dangerous jobs, deprived of equal educational and employment opportunities, and denied voting rights and equal representation in the Northern Irish Parliament” (ibid., p.12). Also according to Coffey, despite the fact that the conflict frequently splits along religious lines, it is not a theological battle. It is rather a multifaceted battle over culture, history, ethnic identity, territory, civil rights, and British control in Northern Ireland. In this vein, Mark Phelan (2007) addresses this intricate picture when he states:

Although implacably divided on the constitutional issue of partition, the patriarchal nature of Nationalism and Unionism meant they were ideologically in sync on social issues, most notably that women's position was in the home. The political consensus was reinforced by religious orthodoxy as the social teachings of the Protestant and Catholic Churches also converged in promoting women's primary duties as home-makers and mothers, focusing their interests and energies on the domestic sphere. (p.117)

Phelan's statement ponders macro-political implications in the interplay of Nationalism and Unionism. By examining both ideological systems, it is possible to recognise a mutually benefited party, that is the economic order and its institutions. The necessary antagonistic relationship existing between Nationalism and Unionism is unveiled here by Coffey and Phelan as a patriarchal mechanism of maintenance of material conditions in a given economic reality. Moreover, the present study advocates that Nationalist and Unionist enactment happens at the expense of a regime of body control that is intricately connected to how nations are fictionally constructed. Thus, Nationalism and Unionism are taken here as

ideological mechanisms that operate within geographical, social, and political delimitations of sovereignty. This study considers to what extent masculinist projects contribute to the exploitation of the body's capacity to affect and be affected. By doing so, this research furthers the understanding of how Reid's selected plays, in their contextual moment of production, contribute to an alternative representation that discloses the core of the sectarian state in Northern Ireland, that is, the mutually destructive politics of antagonistic identities.

Theatre promotes collective and communal experiences in a shared space. It may also be seen as a mirror of social life. However, theatre by itself does not create collective awareness of a nation, but it allows its community to see a momentary reflection of this awareness on stage. Christopher Murray (1997) historicises Irish and Northern Irish drama and theatre to demonstrate their pivotal role in defining and sustaining national consciousness. By building upon the assertion made by Martin Esslin, that theatre is "the place where a nation thinks in front of itself" (1978, p. 101), Murray asserts how theatre holds up a mirror¹ to the nation. The reflection offered by the theatre does not give back reality but rather images of perceived reality. In this sense, this mirror's reflection is two-sided because it presents a contemplation of an image between actuality and possibility. Through this intricate reflection, theatre can offer the possibility to communities to "find its bearings" (p. 9) within the ritualisation of their national identities, thus opening a space to negotiate "terms of belief, identity and freedom." (MURRAY, 1997, p. 6).

Theatre hosts considerably evocative and political performances of gender. A given character in a play becomes a semiotic body in front of other bodies. In his seminal essay, 'Semiotics of Theatrical Performance' (1977), Umberto Eco argues that the theatre, among other arts, is a *locus* "in which the whole of human experience is co-involved, [...] in which human bodies, artifacts, music, literary expressions (and therefore literature, painting, music, architecture and so on) are in play at the same moment" (p.108). In this sense, theatre with its manifold elements constitutes a potent semiotic assemblage of cultural ways of existing. In this study, I pay attention not only to the characters' lines but also to songs, props, and body movements described in the stage directions. I see those as essential elements that give an account of the representation of gender performativity of men and women in both plays. The

¹ I am aware of the metaphorical connotation of the mirror as a constant trope in Northern Irish and Irish theatre historically preoccupied with unresolved identity questions. The mirror's double-sided reflection discussed in this thesis resonates with the allegorical representation of the "cracked mirror" in plays as *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), by J. M. Synge, and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), by Brian Friel. In a cracked mirror, individuals are unable to see themselves clearly. The fragmented reflection indicates the impossibility of achieving accurate means of representation, as the momentary reflection of reality casts the fragmented image between actuality and possibility.

semiotic assemblage I am here to unpack introduces the idea of bodies as semiotic devices, no longer only “world object among world objects” (ibid.). The protestant characters in the two selected plays are not just isolated representations of the existence of bodies and their specific intersectionalities, they rather refer us to a specific community, with its corresponding social class, and its collective effort to maintain forged idealised imageries of a cultural and political identity that is strongly dependable on gender constrictive conventions.

Bearing the notion of theatre as a *locus* of production, as actuality and possibility, Reid’s selected plays, namely *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989), and *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), expose the tensions in the social-psychological landscape of Northern Ireland during the significant political and cultural crisis marked by violent sectarian conflicts. However, Reid’s playwriting is not limited to the actuality of her time and space, as her two plays discussed here also invite readers and spectators to re-think what it means to “be” a man in the current operating gender system within Protestant Loyalist/Unionist communities. By doing so, Reid challenges the hegemonic national identity of Protestant communities by renovating the ways of Protestant working-class identities are represented in drama. Furthermore, I argue that Reid’s work not only promotes a cross-community dialogue but also accommodates discussions concerning internal tensions of gender violence and self-detriment facets of Protestant Loyalist/Unionist identities, thus contributing to the reimagination of contested spaces in Northern Ireland.

Hence, theatre in the Republic has undoubtedly contributed to the shaping of Irishness during the Irish Revival from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century (SINGLETON, 2010). Such literary movement recovered Celtic and Folk mythology as a potent means to forge alternative images of Irishness that countered the British Imperialist stereotypical notions of an Irishman as a drunken, violent, and primitive subhuman. However, it was only in the 1980s that critics interested in Irish drama started to pay attention to the substantial body of dramatic work rooted in the conflicts in Northern Ireland (ROLL-HANSEN, 1987). Although Northern theatre has historically been overlooked in the Irish theatrical canon, a few Northern Irish male playwrights have found major success in Irish theatres, such as Brian Friel, Stewart Parker, Gary Mitchell, and Owen McCafferty. Nonetheless, their female counterparts have been disregarded far more than their male counterparts. Northern Irish female playwrights have been doubly obliterated from the Irish canon, since their location, as well as gender, has placed them “beyond the pale of a meta-narrative of Irish theatre historiography that has been profoundly Dublincentric in nature” (PHELAN, 2011, p.124).

In the contemporary theatre scene of Northern Ireland, Field Day Theatre Company emerged as a potent rival to the Irish theatre scene in the 1980s. Field Day, founded by playwright Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea, had a major role in presenting new interpretations of the conflicts in Northern Ireland, for instance, with the fictionalisation of the atrocities of Bloody Sunday in *The Freedom of the City* (1973). However, for Roll-Hansen (1987), in the midst of this male-dominated Belfast drama, female playwrights, such as Christina Reid, Anne Devlin, and Marie Jones, were still confronting the gender exclusionary status quo in Ulster theatre. Belated academic attention to female playwriting is now demonstrating how these women brought much-needed revitalised dramatic approach to the human and social background of the Troubles.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Charabanc Theatre Company was one of the most prominent Irish theatre companies in Northern Ireland. The company prioritised the experience of women in society and built a remarkably extensive grassroots touring circuit, producing thought-provoking and approachable works through community interaction. The company coherently promoted theatrical activities honouring its name, as Charabanc is the name given to open-air touring buses in the early twentieth century. Charabanc was created out of five Belfast women actors' dissatisfaction with the lack of work for women in theatre in Northern Ireland. At the time, Eleanor Methven, Marie Jones, Carol Scanlan, Brenda Winter, and Maureen McAuley were encouraged by playwright Martin Lynch to create their own play about Belfast women when they decided to present their own production in 1983 (COFFEY, 2016). They aimed to perform in the Catholic and Protestant working-class neighbourhoods in which they grew up. Charabanc members opted to start their investigation by looking into the lives of their mothers and grandmothers to find answers to issues regarding Northern Ireland's economic, cultural, and political foundations. As Carol Martin (1987) ponders, the issue of mill workers proved to be the ideal subject for Charabanc, as for decades the linen industry in Northern Ireland employed most women, both in Protestant and Catholic communities. DiCenzo (1993, p. 178) affirms that Charabanc's drama helped to create a collective audience, thus resulting in a sense of solidarity between performers and the audience. For instance, *Lay Up Your Ends* (1983), the company's debut play, looked at how sectarianism and bad working conditions in the early twentieth-century linen mill industry oppressed women from both communities.

Much of the theatre produced in Ireland and Northern Ireland has been concerned with coming to terms with how their history has been imprinted on individuals, influencing and conditioning their social interactions within their own communities. According to

Anthony Roche (1994), “[t]he best contemporary Irish playwrights are engaged in a search for dramatic means to reinterpret by re-imagining that past. All offer alternative narratives whose aim is liberation, a setting free of ghosts” (p. 235). Nevertheless, when theatre deals with heightened political, social and religious tensions in Northern Irish history, such as the Troubles, the difficulty to distinguish the intertwined past and present events become challenging. Likewise, Lynda Henderson (1988) calls attention to some of the preoccupations of modern Irish theatre and how Irish and Northern Irish playwrights seem to be “fond for lament”, not moving beyond the past, beyond history. She states that many of their plays “find their creative stimulus in the taproots of the memory of wounds” (p. 18). Moreover, Henderson questions the dangers of not exploring memories that can help to heal the wounds of history. While Henderson questions the status of theatre in Northern Ireland, advocating for a theatre of hope rather than despair, Richard Pine (1989) sees theatre and performance as political constituencies, and thus criticises Henderson's questions by not considering the cultural and political triggers of such memories. In Pine's opinion, Northern Irish theatre “is concerned with the abrasions caused by the lack of adequate political drama and by the playwright's commitment to sing the drama of madness, perplexity, indignation, hurt” (p. 20). Whichever preoccupation with the past, to “lament” or “heal” the wounds admits the possibility of examining the role of history and memory in theatre writing and making. Contemporary theatre in Northern Ireland has been focusing on the particularities of the conflict with a desire to see how such complex historical and cultural moments have been tackled by those individuals and communities represented in plays.

1.2 CHRISTINA REID AND 1980S NORTHERN IRISH THEATRE

Christina Reid (1942-2015) was born in Ardoyne, Belfast, in one of the few Protestant families to live in a primarily working-class Catholic neighbourhood. She was brought up and taught to embody a very specific set of values and labels - Protestant, Unionist, working-class woman —which held a strong influence on how she should relate to her community (ABEI JOURNAL, 2004)². As she grew up, words like “us” and “them” became more complicated to be perceived, the concept of “otherness” became clearer to her as she understood the sectarianism in Northern Ireland. According to Reid, “[e]verybody was working-class, but I was brought up to believe that there were two types of poverty

² KURDI, Mária. Interview with Christina Reid. *Abel Journal*, v. 6, p. 207-216, 2004.

—Protestant, which was respectable, and Catholic, which was not”³. Reid became acquainted with the craft of telling stories through family gatherings at her grandmother’s house. She enjoyed going to local theatres with her family and writing short stories when young, however, the push to start playwriting was in a later moment of her life, as she states:

But I did not start writing plays until I was nearly forty, and a lot of that was to do with my mother dying —when she was only fifty-eight. One of the things she told me at that time was: "Don't forget the old stories, tell them to your children". (Ibid. 2004, p. 207)

In plays like *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), Reid explores the conundrums of identities very familiar to her, coming from a Unionist family. In the play, she depicts the protestants that hold on tight to the idea of being “more British than the British” (*My Name*, p. 265), but that are at the same time proud to be Northern Irish. Reid speaks about the conspicuously gendered environment in her community: all the men were members of the Orange Order, while women were responsible to take the children and cheer their men parading on the Twelfth of July. Reid recalls these symbolic parades in protestant families in the following terms:

I remember what a show-off I was when my father was the Grand Master of his Orange Lodge and the Orangemen came to our house accompanied by a flute band, before going to the parade. I didn't question what the divisions were really about then. Children don't. The questions came gradually and more insistent the more I grew up. (ABEI JOURNAL, 2004, p.207)

The fact that Reid grew up in a site heavily affected by the Troubles gave her a singular perspective on knowing what it was like before the conflict, and subsequently how life changed during and after the Troubles, and additionally, how both Protestant and Catholic communities were affected in the post-peace process (TRACIE, 2018, p.11). Then, as an adult, Reid lived most of the time in London and was always concerned with the misrepresentation of her hometown, Belfast, by British media. Most of the British media coverage in the 1980s relating to Northern Ireland focused almost exclusively on the violence existent in the delicate relationships within Northern Ireland’s communities. In an interview with Belfast Telegraph, Reid stated that such a tendency to portray Northern Ireland through its violence was becoming, in her own words, the “flavour of the month” (TRACIE, 2018, p.12). Yet Reid’s plays reject this inclination of portraying Northern Ireland exclusively through its violence so that people are not lost from sight, making it possible to hear the voices that are constantly muffled in the narratives of the Northern Irish conflicts. On this,

³ Ibid., 207.

Reid's position about her plays being labelled as “Troubles Plays” becomes clear when she states:

I think a good play must be about people and not just about a situation. But I am not one of those writers who say “Oh, I never write about the Troubles,” as if it were a badge of honour because, I think, how can you write about Belfast as if the Troubles don't exist? I am a storyteller and all my plays tell a story. (ABEI JOURNAL, 2004, p.208).

As a matter of fact, Reid is stated among a list of playwrights who contributed to an understanding of national conflicts in Northern Ireland in the work of *The Theatre of War* by Heinz Kosok (2007). However, Reid's plays not only enhance contextual knowledge of warfare and its impact on the Northern Irish communities but also allow a shift of attention to how historical narratives are perceived by different gender and social locations. Furthermore, one could argue here that Reid's plays also deal with a rather more understated conflict, one that takes place at the individual level, and that seems to look into coming to terms with peace, rather than war.

I move on now to consider scholarly works that tackled women playwrights' contribution to contemporary Northern Irish theatre. Even though at times some of the works to be presented here do not address Reid's works, by providing an overview of the emergence of scholarly criticism about women's theatre, I bring into consideration the scholarly effort of contesting the male-dominated theatrical canon in Northern Ireland that precedes this thesis. Further to that, I discuss how the present research cluster of masculinities and literary studies is tackling the “gendered” issue in Northern Ireland.

Philomena Muinzer, in “Evacuating the Museum: The Crisis of Playwriting in Ulster” (1987), presents a comprehensive analysis of playwriting in Northern Ireland in the 1980s. By the time Muinzer's article was published, Reid had already written three plays, *Tea in a China Cup* in 1983, at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast, *Did You Hear the One About the Irishman...?*, written in 1985 and produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London, and *Joyriders*, written in 1986 and produced by Paines Plough Theatre Company also in London (REID, 1997). Muinzer looks at a number of women playwrights from Northern Ireland in the 1980s, but interestingly Reid is not included in her analysis. As stated by Tracie, “[...] Reid was routinely overlooked in critical examinations of Belfast theatre in the 1980s and early 1990s.” (2018, p. 4).

Melissa Sihra's collection *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation* (2007) retrieves women's contribution to the Irish and Northern Irish theatre, contesting a century of a male-dominated literary canon. Marina Carr, responsible for the

collection's foreword, states that "[t]he joy of this book is the naming of these vanished women." (CARR in the foreword of SIHRA, 2007, p. 6); some included playwrights are Margaret O'Leary, Dorothy Macardle, Helen Waddell, Alice Milligan, Teresa Deevy, and Patricia O'Connor. Unfortunately, Reid is, once again, not among the playwrights discussed in the collection. However, Sihra's work offers critics and scholars the possibility of reconfiguring what it means to be Irish and Northern Irish, allowing the stories being told to collectively construct a narrative of how women took part in social and political affairs in their communities. As Carr states, "Let us hope the plays themselves will stand the brutal test of time. This will be the next stage of the journey. But for now the naming, the announcing, the retrieval is the thing." (CARR in *ibid.*, p. 5). Another example of scholarly enquiry is Lisa Fitzpatrick's (2005) work on disrupting metanarratives in Northern Irish theatre. Fitzpatrick examines how works by three women playwrights, namely Anne Devlin, Christina Reid, and Marina Carr, disrupt the hegemonic narratives, making room for theatrical productions that exist outside the mainstream dramatic tradition in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The focus of Fitzpatrick's analysis is on the playwrights' interventions into dominant identity narratives of postcoloniality, nationalism, and loyalism. Fitzpatrick states:

These texts explore the problems for women in finding a space for unfettered speech and autonomous action, as they seek to escape, fully aware that moving out of the shadows means losing other valuable things. (FITZPATRICK, 2005, p. 326).

Fitzpatrick takes Reid's plays as examples of works that explore the dynamics between cultural and political frameworks in the Loyalist community and tackle the exclusion of women from positions of power in Northern Ireland. Fitzpatrick focuses her discussions on how *Tea in a China Cup* (1983) contributes to a better understanding of the importance of the public community in the formation of protestant identities.

Alongside the scholars who have provided significant analysis of Reid's work is Rachel Tracie's book *Christina Reid's Theatre of Memory and Identity* (2018). In her work, Tracie chronologically puts Reid's plays in context as an attempt of filling the gaps left by works that have overlooked Reid's contribution to the Northern Irish Theatre. According to Tracie, Reid asserts a sense of national identity that has been surpassed and offers a way of understanding Northern Ireland through the perspective of women, especially the mothers and daughters of protestant families; staging women's role as bearers of the community's memory. As evidenced here, Reid's plays tend to focus and be explored on the realms of Ulster Protestant female experience, as her works frequently portray the gender and social positions occupied by women, a location often conceived by exclusionary practices. On the other hand, differing from previous scholarly inquiries, the analysis proposed here seeks to explore how

Reid's plays can help scholarship on masculinities in the Northern Irish context. Hence, now I move to consider the current status of research about the "gendering" of men in the literary Northern Irish research cluster.

An examination of the "gendering" of men in Northern Irish literature is tackled by Caroline Magennis (2010) in *Sons of Ulster*, in which Magennis discusses the critical attention to Northern Irish novels and their lack of gendered approaches. Although her book recognizes the recent engagement of scholars to masculinities studies, according to her, the focus of such investigations has been mainly on poetry rather than on novels—and here one could perhaps add theatre. Magennis states that there is no one definable "Northern Irish masculinity" but, rather, a plurality of ways of performing masculinities that are measured against hegemonic masculinity as it varies in different social contexts. Furthermore, Magennis traces back how the concept of hegemonic masculinity has changed as Northern Ireland went through the Troubles, as she states:

In post-conflict Northern Ireland, the codes of hegemonic masculinity have changed, as can be evidenced in the reaction to perpetrators of sectarian violence. Once seen as defenders of home and family, they are increasingly constructed as mindless thugs by the Press and expanding bourgeoisie. (MAGENNIS, 2010, p.7)

Magennis makes a careful analysis of key moments of the Troubles and the difficult process of peace that followed in both Republican and Loyalist communities. According to the author, in Northern Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic churches have promoted conservative discourses that dictate ways of behaving, especially related to family configuration and sexuality.

Similarly, scholarly attention to masculinity emerges in the work of Brian Singleton (2010), in which he questions what kind of men and representations of manhood have been canonised in Irish Theatre. Although focusing mainly on Irish rather than Northern Irish theatre, his views also prove useful here. Singleton affirms that Irish theatre has always been gendered since its idealisation at the end of the nineteenth century when the nationalist project sought to recover its mythical past as icons for the emerging project of a nation. Such recoveries of heroes were accompanied by gender "roles" differently attributed to men and women. When discussing the state formation of the Republic, Singleton ponders how the Protestant population, which since the partition in 1922 had considerably decreased in the South, have been excluded from the narrative of possibilities for the future of the Irelands. Singleton moves on to consider how the economic boom in the Republic affected the Unionists' expectation of a failed free State, as Singleton states:

Unionists had to radically rethink their position in relation to both countries. Trapped in a mire of political stagnation and ruled colonially from London, Northern Ireland

as a state was for the first time being left behind economically. (SINGLETON, 2010, p.16).

Furthermore, the peace process initiated in 1994 was mainly articulated by a strategy of the Nationalist Sinn Féin party and the IRA while dealing with what Singleton defines as the “barefaced and exasperated strategy by both the UK and US governments.” (p. 16) to ensure economic investments and political progress. In the meantime, Unionists had to negotiate their survival while “most of the real drama was taking place in the streets of Armagh, Belfast, and Derry in the form of riots, explosions, murders, and protests.” (p. 16). In the midst of this scenario, Singleton recognises the work of community theatrical groups such as Charabanc and how it brought to the stage the lives of women battling to hold families together while a civil war was taking place on the streets. In this context, Singleton cites playwrights Christina Reid and Anne Devlin and recognises how their works, from separate sides of the sectarian communities, expose the exclusionary practices of both Unionism and Nationalism. In Singleton's book, however, although Reid's contribution to Northern Irish theatre is acknowledged, it is not scrutinised.

1.3 CORPUS: IMAGINED ULSTER AND MASCULINITIES

The two selected plays for my analysis convey a social and political picture of Protestant – and at times Catholic – communities in the 1980s and 1990s in Northern Ireland. However, the issues brought into light by such texts still resonate in today's Northern Ireland: a country in which historically divided communities are still trapped in a time warp, constantly re-enacting mythical views of the past. Edna Longley (1990) argues that masculinist ideologies such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Nationalism and Unionism, have exercised and continue to exercise a stronger hold in Northern Ireland than in the Republic, as she states, “Ulster’s territorial imperative has produced a politics which pivots on male refusal to give an inch.” (p. 141). Although rigid definitions of gendered subjects have been put under pressure, and advances on gender egalitarianism in culture and politics might represent a sense of “changing times” in many western countries, a considerable gap in gender liberation still prevails in contemporary social life. Such is the case in countries like Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Beyond mapping out the gendered violence in which economic and cultural systems function, there is a need to address the very roots of this system that conditions bodies by dictating gender performativity that is intrinsically connected to the interests of a “nation” and its political agendas. I move on now to demonstrate how the

current understanding of a nation-state⁴ and its project of maintenance, that is, its nationalistic ideologies, are intricately dependent on a gender regime that prescribes hegemonic forms of masculinities.

The embodiment of transcendent values endorsed by the nation-state plays a fundamental role in the materialisation of a sense of identity and belonging. To discuss Northern Ireland through a process of national imagination, I draw here on Benedict Anderson's work, *Imagined Communities* (2006). Anderson historicizes the conception of a nation and explores it as an imaginative process: one that takes place first at the symbolic level. The imaginative characteristic of a nation should not be taken as an attribution of fakeness but rather as an understanding of an abstract object which is both true and fictional at the same time. The acknowledgement of a nation as an imaginative process allows Anderson to ponder how envisioned nations affect the social strata, as he states, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). This sense of horizontal comradeship is also an effect of the grammar of nationalism, which assumes the pronoun “we” through a series of various kinds of media and rhetoric that help to forge a unitary image of a group of people. The rhetoric of the nation homogenises collective issues: our struggle, our past, our future, our land. However, despite this universalising effect, the collective historicised experiences of a nation are not shared horizontally among its participants, that is, the language of nationalism blurs intersectionalities of race, gender, and class. Similarly, in the current gender arena, the subjects that subscribe to hegemonic forms of gender practice do not share patriarchal dividends equally. Perhaps here we could advance Anderson's conceptualisation of nation-imagination as a process strongly dependable on hetero-male projects of an imagined brotherhood, in which even in the smallest nations, its members will never know their fellow members, but are nonetheless willing to die for a common cause. The maintenance of a given imagined community, in this case, Ulster, is dependable on the continuous commitment of those who are willing to preserve their communities as imagined. In this line of reasoning, a nation could be seen as a pledge of comradeship that has allowed, throughout centuries, men to kill in the name of their countries, causing immeasurable deaths, and creating common enemies in communities.

⁴ A nation, as an imagined community, is a group of individuals who share a language, a culture, a common history, and often a common geographical boundary. A state is a legal organisation with formal institutions of governance that rules within a territory through the deployment of its sovereignty. A nation-state is the combination of these two concepts, and it means that the state's territory corresponds with the territory of a given nation. HOBBSAWM, Eric J. **Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality**. Cambridge university press, 1992.

In the same vein, Cynthia Eloë (2014) discusses the interwoven set of values between nationalism and masculinity. According to the author, “nationalism [as in this case, unionism] typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope” (p. 93). The pact of fraternity demanded by the imagining and acceptance of a nation is deeply marked by the gender positions established in the patriarchal regime. Joane Nagel (1998) also affirms that the culture of nationalism is envisioned to emphasise and resonate with masculine cultural themes. Terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist since they seem so thoroughly tied both with the nation and to manliness (NAGEL, 1998). The “microculture” of masculinity in everyday life, that is, what is expected of a “man” in his immediate social interactions, articulates very well with the demands of nationalism, particularly its militaristic side. However, understanding the sense of nationalism in Unionist terms is an intricate chore. ‘Ulster’ has fought Republicanism in Northern Ireland to remain part of the Union, but not to be controlled by England. In addition, the men of the 36th Ulster Division, an infantry division of the British Army formed by mainly Protestant Northern Irish Volunteers during the First World War, (a division constantly praised by protestant characters in Reid's plays) embodied the mythologisation of protestant Unionist and Orange agenda: to sacrifice themselves for the right to remain “more British than the British.” (*MY NAME*, p. 265). The myth of the Battle of the Somme brings bitter ambivalence to the protestant communities in Northern Ireland. When the First World War was declared against Germany, the 36th Ulster Division ventured along with the British troops to defend the Empire. By July 1916, 5,500 “men” of this division were killed or severely wounded (SMITHEY, 2011). I put men between quotation marks because many of these Ulster soldiers were sixteen-year-old boys who were found dead in the battlefield with forged birth certificates in their pockets (ibid., 2011); which made them eligible for volunteering to fight for the British Crown. The bitterness of the Ulster division's sacrifice comes from the fact that Ulster faced, four years later, in 1921, the partition of the Irelands into Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Northern Irish Unionism, as practised by men of the Orange Order and Loyalist associations, represents a paradoxical practice of British Imperialism. It seeks to enshrine the empirical nation by maintaining their loyalty to the United Kingdom and preserving their British identity, but still differentiating them from Great Britain and often despising those who flee Northern Ireland to go to England, as Reid's plays depict. As it will become clear throughout my analysis, the Orange Order is an indispensable institution to those who seek to understand how projects of masculinity are intertwined with the political and cultural Unionist

agendas. The Orange Order or Loyal Orange Association is an all-male fraternal organisation named after the Protestant Dutch William of Orange, who defeated the British Catholic monarch King James II, in what Protestants contemporaneously refer to as the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688. It is one of the most significant historical moments yearly re-enacted on the Twelfth of July by Orangemen across Northern Ireland.⁵

Northern Ireland and the Republic have historical religious-oriented and antagonistic masculinities, that is, gendered practices shaped according to the interest of religious and political discourses within Catholic and Protestant litanies and assemblies. Undeniably, these two religious institutions have had a great influence on politics in both Stormont and Oireachtas⁶, and thus contributed to social conservatism on both sides of the border (BRADY et al., 2012). Ian Paisley, a former Northern Irish loyalist politician and Protestant religious leader, represents a clear embodiment of the interwoven complexity of Unionist rhetoric in relation to religion, gender, and politics. During his public life, Paisley frequently reinforced the authority of men in the community and was thus seen as an ambassador of the traditional Protestant values in the Northern Irish political scenario from the 1950s until very recent times. This is why Sara Edge (2014) argues about the influence of Paisley’s discourses in forging shifting masculinities for a post-conflict Northern Ireland. Moreover, Ulster Unionists and Irish Nationalists have both grown considerably militant in the twentieth century, which has consolidated a model of militarised masculinities that dominated the political and social scene in both countries. De facto, militarised forms of masculinities are encouraged by martial societies, in which a specific set of values is displayed as essential, such as bravery, martyrdom, patriotism, and obedience. The set of practices deriving from these values becomes, then, an essential feature in the maintenance of the gendered political system. More precisely, in the case of Northern Ireland, the constant idea of threat Ulster faced with the proposition of Home Rule has contributed to the binary construction of “Us” and “Them”, which rightly fits an antagonistic system of Britishness in opposition to Irishness.

Lee A. Smithey (2011) explores the slow contentious process of transformation in conservative Unionist and Loyalist organisations (in the Orange Order and other volunteering organisations) to abandon practices of sectarianism. Smithey’s analysis marks a tenuous change in the subjective redefinition of the Ulster mentality of “not giving in an inch”, and developing less polarised collective identities. According to him, working-class Protestants

⁵ Information retrieved from the official Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland’s website, available on: <https://www.goli.org.uk/about-us>. Last accessed 15 December 2021.

⁶ The parliaments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, respectively.

faced great challenges in adapting to new political and economic circumstances, as they now required new working skills to survive in the emergent economic reality of Northern Ireland.

On this, Smithey states:

A sustainable peace depends on the ability of even the most ideologically committed organizations and individuals to develop new interpretations of themselves and adversaries that make space for dialogue, cooperation, and coexistence. By delving into the contemporary experience of Protestants involved with Unionist and Loyalist organizations and activities, we find an uncharted and difficult process of renegotiating the past, present, and future that is central to contemporary peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. (SMITHEY, 2011, p. 10)

The emergent values promoted by the governments of Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and the Republic have forced protestant communities to reimagine themselves in less violent ways. By doing so, they could cultivate political and cultural capitals in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Seemingly, it is becoming frequent to see a shift in protestant political positioning as some of them still stand in loyalty to the Crown, and the freedom of religion, but no longer endorse paramilitary organisations and their violent agendas. More recently, Rachel Tracie (2018), after a twenty-year gap without visiting Belfast, describes the changes that took place in the city since her last visit. Her comments on the physical divisions between the Catholic and Protestant areas give an idea of how a younger generation in Belfast desires to be known for something beyond the Troubles. Peace walls still stand, although its murals have been painted with less violent and more inspirational scenes. Sectarianism is still materialised in the barbed wired Peace Wall that divides the predominantly Catholic and Nationalist Falls Road from the Protestant and Unionist Shankill Road; the households on both sides remain protected by metal panels, expressing the fear of violence that has never left those communities. Although both plays analysed here portray the social and political landscape of Northern Ireland in the 1980s, the current political scene in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in the midst of Brexit, poses new challenges to the renegotiation of Unionist identities.

In this contemporary scenario, both national and international attention is directed towards a possible rise in violence in Northern Ireland. Before and after the referendum, Brexiteers failed to realise that residents of Northern Ireland saw the European Union in a distinct way. To this, the Irish economist Lucinda Creighton (2019) explains that Northern Ireland's citizens have long felt economically and politically marginalised from their British counterparts. While a substantial part of Unionists favoured Brexit, 55.78%⁷ of Northern Ireland's population wished to remain part of the EU based on their awareness of its economic

⁷ Full results for Brexit vote retrieved from The Irish Times, available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/brexit/results>, last accessed July 05, 2022.

advantages (CREIGHTON, 2019). To Creighton, this awareness comes from the fact that Northern Ireland is a recipient of considerable EU financing programs that are present in the daily life of working-class people in Northern Ireland. These contemporary geopolitical changes put pressure on Protestants who are now left to reimagine their loyalty to the Union. The present political juncture is read by research director of Institute for British-Irish Studies at UCD Jennifer Todd (2020) as a decisive opportunity for the Unionist movement to reflect on "the type union it wants and the price it is ready to pay for it" (p. 350). Even though the plays analysed here precede this new geopolitical conundrum, the social and political landscape of 1980s Northern Ireland provides a picture of the mitigation of loyalties that are currently under the spotlight of Brexit discussions on Northern Ireland.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

With this study, I wish to further literary criticism that recuperates women's contribution to the Irish and Northern Irish theatre and contest the male-dominated literary canon that still leaves the works of women playwrights understudied. With that in mind, I engage with the rising effort of researchers, such as Phelan (2007), Sihra (2007), Coffey (2016), and Tracie (2018), to name a few, to name "these vanished women." (CARR in the foreword of SIHRA, 2007, p. 6). Part of my interest in Reid's theatre is due to the influence of the Irish Studies research cluster (NEI) in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the Department of Modern Languages at UFSC. Therefore, this study is also grounded on UFSC's literary studies' commitment to researching Irish and Northern Irish literature. Notably, NEI's most recent engagement with Reid's theatre is present in the unpublished translation into Brazilian Portuguese of *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* by theatre translator and dramaturge Alinne Balduino P. Fernandes. *Meu Nome, Posso Te Falar o Meu Nome?* received a digital rehearsed reading in December 2020 and is currently being produced as a radio play to be launched in 2022 together with NEI's newly created digital archive and website.

The original discussions of masculinities in Reid's two plays also contribute to the scholarship of masculinities that are concerned with the urgent task of unveiling and understanding the gendered violence of highly encrypted identities. It is, therefore, a political aspiration of this research to disclose the accumulation of gender fiction of embodiments that results in severely wounded and traumatised individuals.

1.5 A MASCULINITIES THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Everyday life is an arena of gender politics, not an escape from it.

Raewyn Connell (2005, p. 3)

This section seeks to conceptualise the notions of masculinities that constitute this study's theoretical framework. First, I historically introduce the concept of masculinity and its initial discussions to later discuss more up-to-date masculinity scholarships.

The conception of gender we have today is not a result of social consensus, but ideological conflicts in Western culture. This study proposes an understanding of masculinities based on the notion that gender is not biologically predetermined, but historically and culturally constructed (BUTLER, 1996). North-American historian Joan Scott (1986) reviews the use of the word 'gender' in an epistemological turmoil, a moment of variation from scientific to literary paradigms among social scientists. Scott advocates for the concept of gender as a necessary historical tool capable of analysing the organisation of material and symbolic social life and powered relations among the "sexes". Hence, gender categories operate on epistemological and ontological regimes that govern our intelligibility of sex, gender, and sexuality (BUTTLER, 1990). Accordingly, Scott's definition of gender intertwines two propositions: firstly, gender as an "constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes", and secondly, "gender as a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (SCOTT, 1986, p. 1067). Ergo, gender order is a system that is fundamental to understanding the distribution of power in social relations, playing a significant part in social stratification and maintenance of the material conditions of a given society.

A cornerstone understanding of masculinities emerges in the work of Raewyn W. Connell, a sociologist from the University of Sydney. In *Masculinities* (2005), Connell discusses the main currents of 21st-century research on masculinities (namely, clinical psychoanalysis, social psychology, and gender role theory) and demonstrates how they fail to come to a coherent science of masculinity. Connell ponders how prior theoretical efforts to understand masculinities have failed due to their singular and exclusionary approaches of surmising "masculinity" as a coherent and fixed object of study. Furthermore, Connell's work advocates that masculinity, as a relational system, depends on a set of overlapping specificities that will constantly demand adjustment over time and place. That is, the "models" of manhood we have in our societies are constantly being interpolated by economic, political and cultural demands. In this line of thinking, masculinities are multiple, patterned

social practices, with internal and external complexities and contradictions that relate to gender practices within a privileged position in the gender hierarchy.

In this sense, to understand masculinity as a pattern of practices, it is necessary to understand gender practices as a product of history, and a producer of history simultaneously. To this, Connell defines the following:

[m]asculinity, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage in that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (CONNELL, 2005, p. 71)

Here Connell considers the relations between the male body and masculinity by contesting that it is no longer possible to excuse men for not being able to perform “fairer” gender practices due to some masculine “inner” nature. Thus, the insidious masculinist discourse of “true masculinity” is an idea that is engraved in the male body as something that promotes a false “essence” to the subject. This “essence”, in Connell's framework, is perceived as a key element in the process of legitimation in which systems of hegemonic masculinities thrive. Furthermore, the body should not be taken as a fixed object, but rather one that is going through constant physical processes. In this line of thought, the reality we live in is generated by practice, which inevitably involves the body. About this, Connell states that “[t]he constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained” (2005, p. 54), and in fact, this vulnerability is key to the elaboration of a theory where bodies are regarded as carriers of social agency, and thus have will in shaping the courses of social conduct. In a nutshell, Connell's conceptualisation of masculinities helps us to see the world we live in as formed by body-reflexive practices in the domain of gender politics.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has considerably influenced contemporary research on masculinities, and substantial literature shows how it became a useful tool to rethink men, gender, and social hierarchy (CONNELL; MESSERSCHMIDT, 2005). In a systematic review on the use of the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” Connell and Messerschmidt evaluate the main criticisms that have been published about hegemonic masculinity since the early 1990s, ranging from sociological, psychological, post-structuralist, and materialist fields (WETHERELL; EDLEY, 1999; DEMETRIOU, 2001), to offer a contemporary reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In its initial conception, introduced by a series of reports examining social inequality in Australian high schools (KESSLER et al., 1982), hegemonic masculinity was understood as a pattern of practices that endorsed men to dominate other women and men. Although only a small part of a given group

could enact hegemony, never completely, it would in a way be a normative model for all men in a group, as hegemony embodies the current ruling collective values. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, “[h]egemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion” (2005, p. 3). Therefore, hegemony emerges as a normative model of “manhood”, which corresponds to particular historical and cultural circumstances in constant renovation. Beyond anything static, hegemonic masculinity should always be analysed as a momentary “balance” of social forces in gender relations. Similarly, Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest we should see hegemonic norms as defining a subject position in discourse that is strategically adopted by men. Bearing that in mind, the fluidity in hegemony is attested when men adopt different masculinities based on their interactional needs, for instance, when they engage with hegemonic norms to obtain specific results, while at other times they might distance themselves from hegemony to seek safety.

However, more recent criticism has pointed out the problematic understanding of masculinity and its attempts to transform it into an epistemological system based on transcendent ideals, even when those differ from patriarchal ones. For instance, the so-called “soft masculinities”, in which gender practices of more sensibility are encouraged, still operate in opposition to a violent patterned practice, thus maintaining a system that restricts the body’s action based on dictating moral values. To develop this idea better I will now discuss how more recent masculinities scholarships are advancing Connell’s theory on masculinities, thus proposing a more generative and liberating masculinity theory.

McDonald (2018) opens up an alternative discussion of masculinities that moves away from moral transcendent judgements of good or bad, hegemonic or non-hegemonic, to advocate for an understanding of masculinity as a creative power with no allegiance to the male body, but its ability to both affect and be affected. To understand McDonald’s theoretical proposal, one needs to acknowledge refuted arguments that concern the nature of gender. For instance, the prominent affirmation of Simone de Beauvoir that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, has been massively productive for feminists to discuss how cultural meanings are attributed to anatomical facts. However, Post-structuralist feminist scholars, such as Butler (1990) have contested the essentialist idea that one becomes a gender, or that one is a “given” gender. Butler’s formulation of the concept of “performativity”, for instance, allows one to see gender as something that is done or performed, rather than ontologically experienced. Advancing this idea, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari’s state, “there is no becoming-man” (2005, p. 322), which implies that men are not constructed

through the immanent experience of becoming, but through transcendent ideals that are produced in a retroactive judgement of what constitutes men. Furthermore, McDonald asserts that transcendent ideals of masculinity are ideals that produce an illusion of an "outside" meaning, an ideal that needs to be reached through embodiment. In this sense, hegemonic patterns of masculinity are transcendental ideals that create an abstract criteria of what bodies can "be" and "do". However, ideals that are transcendent can never be fully embodied. It is precisely the "outside" aspect of these ideals that imprisons men to seek constantly, through the repetition of their performativity, the resulting "essence" of being a "real" man. As transcendent values can never be fully achieved through performativity, McDonald argues that a more productive approach to masculinities would be to embrace the uncertainty of becoming, rather than trying to find more suitable values to produce better types of masculinities.

To explore the generative project of considering the creative power of bodies, scholars such as McDonald (2018) and Hickey-Moody (2019) retake Deleuze and Guattari's discussion on Spinoza's theory of affect and immanence. For Deleuze and Guattari, Spinoza's *Ethics* is an "ethology" of the best relations possible for the human body, that is, a guide for going beyond epistemologies which are grounded on illusions of a moralistic world-view. In *Ethics* (1996), Spinoza defines affect as, "affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections" (p. 70). Therefore, this study will mobilise the concept of affect as an increase or a decrease in the capacity to act of a given body. Affects emerge through "bodies and contexts rubbing up against each other" (HICKEY-MOODY, 2019, p. 47). It occurs within a pre-cognitive process in which involved bodies become more or less competent in their capacities for affecting and being affected. Affects can arise from the interaction between bodies but also from ideas. Such as the discourses that inform gender practices. Spinoza's shift from the prioritisation of the mind over the body, which counters Descartes' division between body and mind, focuses on the body and what it can do. How it affects and is affected by other bodies, not only humans, to maintain a positive environment for survival. The body is not passively ruled by the mind, but rather moved by the action of its own intent. For Spinoza, the mind is rather constituted by the affirmation of the existence of the body (GATENS, 1996). For McDonald, Deleuze insists on Spinoza's potentiality to rethink our existence because his work of *Ethics* bypasses a crucial question of our subjectivity: we supposed our existence is caused and not an effect.

The political agenda defended by this understanding of masculinities warns that there would be little revolutionary force in a gender theory that aims at replacing masculine practices for “better”, or “healthier” ones. On this matter, McDonald (2018) comments that “[...] as long as there are predetermined expectations grounded in transcendent ideals for what a body should be, then our creative force will be limited and constrained.” (p. 12). Hence, as long as any gender practice emerges from a set of expectations, bodies will be restrained to what they could creatively be. Moreover, to consider the creative force of bodies’ performativity, one needs to embrace the dynamics of the uncertainty of becoming, rather than restricting the body into rigid forms. To put an end to the frustration of never reaching a “hegemonic” ideal, which often leads to violence, all bodies need to be liberated from the demands of embodying restrictive transcendent ideas about what one should be.

A masculinity theory informed by Spinoza’s *Ethics*, as read by Deleuze and Guattari, would not prescribe what effective powers and affects are better for men, but rather inquire if given affective powers or affects are generative or restrictive in relation to the body’s capacity. Each affective power and affect must be explored as modes of existence in specific given contexts. To this, McDonald advocates that scholarships on masculinity need to move from canonical frameworks of masculinities, namely, Whitehead (2002), Reeser (2011), Eevers (2014), Connell (2005), to an ethology of masculinities that maps out the relation between masculinities and their affective power to bodies and nonhuman life. Such ethology would see masculinities as an assemblage of material powers and capacity of the body, instead of simply a set of practices interpolated by transcendent ideals. Thus, with the presented masculinity theoretical framework, this study will acknowledge the alliance established between masculinity and the body as a historical, political, and cultural phenomenon, rather than an inherently innate relationship. Therefore, I will make use of the concept of masculinities (MCDONALD, 2018; and HICKEY-MOODY, 2019) that forward an understanding of man as a fictional body that is intricately connected to regimes of body control affected by economic and political demands. When scrutinising the gender performativity of male characters in *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989), and *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), I seek to unfold the cultural and political implications which happen at the expense of the male body’s capacity to affect and be affected.

2 **HARDLINE PROTESTANTISM IN *THE BELLE OF THE BELFAST CITY***

This chapter puts forward a literary and cultural analysis of Christina Reid's play, *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1986), focusing on the multifaceted relationship of masculinity (MCDONALD, 2018; HICKEY-MOODY, 2019) and the Unionist institutions as well as the religious discourse within Protestantism in Northern Ireland. The play selected here conveys a compelling picture of the relation between gender, the family and politics within the Loyalist community. I will seek to explore the psychological striation, that is, allocated spaces by external parties, of affect in the contemporary Protestant male subjects. To examine the “war mode” of the “Ulster Mentality”, I raise discussions regarding the nature of authoritarianism as an intricate relation of masculinities and fascist desire which are propagated within Loyalist discourses. To this, the present chapter aims at responding to the following questions: What is the contextual set of affects present in the masculine performativity of the male characters in *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1986)? And further to this, what religious and political mechanisms are employed to preserve and reinforce dictating pedagogies of gender embodiment within a system of transcendent values?

The Belle of the Belfast City (1986), hereinafter referred to *The Belle*, tells the story of the Dunbar family. Reid exposes here the tensions of three generations of a Protestant family that comes together during an anti-Anglo-Irish loyalist demonstration. Set in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in November 1986, the play centres on the intransigence of hardline Protestantism and its impact on the domestic environment, particularly one that is predominantly run by women. What becomes apparent through the plot is a clash between a matriarchal protestant family and its gendered countering positioning against the male-dominated Northern Irish community. The Dunbar family's matriarch, Dolly, the grandmother, lives with her daughter Vi, who helps her run the family shop. Additionally, immediate members of the family are Jack and Janet, Dolly's orphaned nephew and niece, who had been fostered by the Dunbar family after their parent's death. Rose, Dolly's youngest daughter, fled Belfast to pursue her career as a journalist in London. Rose is a single mother of Belle, a child whose phenotypes differ from the nearly all-white population of Belfast. Moreover, one recurrent visitor to Dunbar's shop is Davy, a deaf young man who is considered a close family friend. Davy is only able to communicate via sign language with Vi, who has been taught some signs by Davy's mother. The diversity present in and surrounding the Dunbar family is unusual when compared to a standard nuclear Northern Irish family. This diversity, thus, yields dramatic tensions due to the restrictive ideologies prevalent in the play's social and political context.

The Belle of the Belfast City was first produced by The Lyric Theatre in Belfast in May 1989. Although discussing *The Belle's* production is beyond the scope of this analysis, it may be relevant to consider the cast employed in the premiere of the play at The Lyric. John Hewitt plays Jack, the main male character, while the other five male characters, namely, Davy, Tom Bailey, Issac, Peter, and Customs Man are all played by the same actor, Richard Howard (*THE BELLE*, p. 178). Such a casting decision, if not contingent upon a limited budget, could refer to masculinist projects as disengaged from the male bodies represented in the play. Speculatively, I argue that such theatrical arrangement could be seen as a potent parody or critique of the non-essentialist nature of gender practices that have been naturalised for an embodiment of Protestant men in their community. The naturalisation of gender is taken here rather as a result of discursively constrained gender performances that through a process of accumulation of fiction, of what the male body should “be” or act like, result in the formation of a fictional body limited in its bodily affective capacity (HICKEY-MOODY, 2019). Therefore, as discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the following analysis of *The Belle* will seek to explore masculinity as an accumulation of fiction that generates action, rather than a state of “being”.

The play opens with a scene in which Rose and her daughter, Belle are about to start their visit to Belfast. It is a special trip because this is Belle's first time in her mother's home city. Later we learn that bringing Belle to Belfast has long been avoided. Rose justifies never taking Belle because they could not afford it, but Belle promptly questions her mother by referring to their financial stability and frequent trips to other countries around the world. This is a subtle detail that foreshadows the family's concern with the prevalent racist culture in Northern Ireland, and its possible resulting harassment of bringing a black child into the family's surroundings. Thus, the Dunbar family has shared an unspoken agreement to have Dolly, Vi, and Janet fly to London instead – this is referred to in moments of exposition of the play, which refer to events that happened before the present of the play. Rose and Belle are at Belfast airport waiting for the bus to take them to the family shop, however, the first sign that the political scenario of 1980s Northern Ireland inflicts this narrative is present when they learn their bus has been indefinitely delayed due to a Loyalist protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Among the leading voices in the protest, the iconic figure of Ian Paisley emerges followed by Dunbar's family member, Jack.

In Act One, Jack questions Vi about Rose's arrival. Vi is surprised that he knows about Rose's trip to Belfast since it was kept only between the women in the family. Such secrecy sets the tone of how women in the family feel towards Jack. In Scene Two, Jack learns that

Rose is bringing Belle with her. In their dialogue, Jack's disapproval of non-traditional family configurations and his stronghold on the sanctity of matrimony is explicit as he shows discomfort to meet Rose's daughter, a result of an "unholy" union. Moreover, Jack enquires Vi about Belle's characteristics "What's she like, this daughter of Rose's?", Vi replies, "Like you. Clever." (*THE BELLE*, p. 189) Vi starts commenting on Belle's interest in Irish drama and history, but Jack does not show interest, and instead wants to know how she looks and what her political inclinations are. Nevertheless, Vi, knowing about Jack's intentions, manages to deviate from any of these topics.

In Act One, Scene Two, Rose and Belle finally arrive from the airport. Davy, who is in the shop helping Vi, has a strong reaction when meeting Belle. Vi states, "He's all of a dither because he's never seen nobody with dark skin before, except on the television." (*THE BELLE*, p. 191) Belle is surprised and asks for further clarification; her mother, Rose, says, "There aren't many like you in Belfast, Belle. And those that are, are well-to-do. Restaurant owners, doctors, university lecturers, overseas students. They don't live around here." (*THE BELLE*, p. 193) While Belle is curious to discover that there are no black "ghettos" in Belfast, she catches Davy signing to Vi. What no one seemed to know is that Belle knows sign language. She then gets into the conversation between Vi and Davy, saying "No Davy, I'm not from Africa. I'm from England. And my mother is from Belfast and my father is from America. I think that makes me an Anglo-Irish Yank." (*THE BELLE*, p. 193) As it will be later reinforced, in the 1980s Northern Irish cultural context, discussions about racial and ethnic diversity are very limited among working-class people like the Dunbar family. Davy's misattribution of African ethnicity to Belle is a trace of an identity whose capability to understand the other is based on distorted racial knowledge. Davy's line in this scene serves as a diagnosis of how subjects in this community have their affordances of relating to other bodies diminished, especially to bodies that differ from the predominantly Caucasian population in Northern Ireland.

As it will be evidenced throughout this chapter, the gendered perspective offered by the female characters in *The Belle* are crucial to understand the hindering affective power, that is the power to affect and be affected by other bodies, of the current assemblage of masculinity towards men and women within the Loyalist/Unionist community. Tracie (2018) has already investigated the gendered experience of women in the Dunbar family, I will rather explore the dictating gender pedagogies towards the male bodies represented in the play. I pay special attention to the main male character, Jack, who embodies the transcendent values of the Protestant Unionist community. Furthermore, I draw on secondary characters such as

Davy, Peter [Janet's husband], Tom Bailey [Jack's acquaintance, an English reverend who wants to buy the Dunbar's shop/house], and Issac Standaloft, a Northern Irish Protestant preacher, as they bring insights on the dynamics of masculinity among men and their correspondent resonance onto the political and cultural scenario of 1980s Northern Ireland. Rather than looking at what masculinity “is” through the analysis of the male characters in the play, I explore what masculinity “does” to these men and their affective power towards the women characters around them.

2.1 MAYBE IT WAS TOO DEEP INGRAINED IN HIM

I don't like you nephew Jack [...]. Does he always talk to Janet like that?

Belle (*THE BELLE*, p. 195).

I start my analysis of the construction of Jack's masculinity and identity through Dolly's comment, in Act One, as a response to Belle's questioning, cited in the epigraph above. Belle refers to Jack's condescending and controlling tone when addressing his sister, Janet. When talking about Jack's obsession to control his sister's life, Dolly replies, “I thought I'd put a stop to all that years ago. But maybe it was too deep ingrained by the time me and Joe got them. Their father was a Presbyterian Minister, you know”. Furthermore, when describing Jack's mother, Dolly states, “An oil *targe*⁸ of a schoolteacher she was. You know the sort. Goes to church on Sunday, an' prays to God to give her strength to beat the kids on Monday.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 196) Dolly's understanding of the violence suffered by Jack and Janet goes beyond material elements of physical violence. According to Dolly, both children were raised being beaten into the ground with words like “sin, the world and the devil”. Jack's parents made it clear to him that his job was to be the man of the house and at any costs “protect his sister from temptation” (*THE BELLE*, p. 196). Dolly's comments about Jack's upbringing provides an idea of the kind of context in which his gendered identity has been constructed and what “duties” are expected from him. Accordingly, Hickey-Moody (2019) states, “[...] context is crucial for ethics, and for assessing gendered affects, especially once we consider that bodies also include discourses and other non-material bodies” (p. 51). So, if we consider Jack's body as an accumulation of restrictive and prescriptive discourses, such as a punitive religious system, authoritarian gender role in relation to women, and other transcendent values such as bravery, toughness, and obedience, what results from this process

⁸ Derogatory Northern Irish word for an aggressive older woman.

of interpolation is a child emotionally wounded and deprived of its bodily generative affective force. Further in Act One, Dolly states that Jack, “doesn't like bein' touched”⁹ (*THE BELLE*, p. 196), and for her that might be an explanation of why he never married. As future interactions between Jack and other characters will tell, he is in a state of emotional starvation, unable to establish an affective relationship with anyone in his family, not even his own sister, Janet. The fluidity of his masculinity is denied by a static gender embodiment of practices that express courage, leadership, protectiveness, strength, power, control and command; values that are strongly connected to the “Ulster Mentality” of being constantly under Catholic threat.

In *The Belle*, Jack is presented as a politician. He is not only individually committed to achieving hegemonic patterns of masculinity, but he also advocates for the enshrining of men's limiting social and political possibilities through Unionist legislation in Northern Ireland through his political positioning within his community. His masculinist performance is oriented by techniques to subjugate and control bodies that are necessary to maintain a sectarianist disciplined community. The political investments of the body are in accordance with complex reciprocal relations with economical purposes. The relations of power and domination that interpolate the body's capacity to affect and be affected are clearly observed in the gender performativity of men in *The Belle*. For instance, Jack's stage descriptions characterise him as very neatly and expensively dressed and wearing tinted glasses. He moves silently but gives the impression that all his movements are “carefully thought and controlled” (*THE BELLE*, p.182). I argue that this almost ventriloquist description of Jack's behaviour provides a critical standpoint to understand how pedagogies of gender practices inflict on his character. His movements are thought and controlled by him, but there is a limited subject agency in his performance. Following Foucault's definition (1982) of the subject under the realms of the bio-power regime, there are two meanings of a subject may be considered: “subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.” (*SUBJECT AND POWER*, p.781). In this line of thought, we can see Jack's character as a “docile body”, as he is his own surveillance guard “thinking” and “controlling” his movements, responding accordingly to an interpolating corporeal governing regime mediated by religious fundamentalism and extreme right-wing Unionism. His

⁹ Contemporary audiences might in fact deduce from this line that Jack was a victim of child abuse, existent on a large scale within both Protestant and Catholic schools and churches at the time in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. It is however unlikely that the audiences at the time of the play being performed would have been aware of this systematic institutional violence, as documented by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, available on <https://www.reuters.com/article/nireland-abuse-idUSKBN15421M>, last accessed July 10, 2022.

masculinity of unquestioned commitment to his role as a Unionist Loyalist Protestant man corresponds to a corporal technique that seeks to maintain, in a sectarian community like Northern Ireland, the Unionists' right to define cultural and political norms, as well as to condemn those who deviate from such norms.

When questioned about the violence in past Protestant demonstrations, Jack promptly blames Catholics, and the local police, but not Protestants, because according to him, "We are a respectable people" (*THE BELLE*, p. 190). The constant objectification of the other, coupled with a self-recognition that relies exclusively on comparison to this image of the other, leaves no room for self-reflection nor self-criticism about the responsibilities in the violent political infliction perpetuated by both communities. This behaviour is naturalised through Unionist ideologies that shape the current gender assemblage to Protestant man. As "[a]ll acts/objects/bodies are, in fact, assemblages themselves and are extensions of context as much as they can also be singularized and seen to have individual agency" (HICKEY-MOODY, p. 13), the actions promoted by his cultural and religious context diminishes Jack's possibility of individual agency. Besides understanding the cultural and historical circumstances that play a role in Jack's identity process of interpellation, I move on to consider the set of affects that are promoted to male subjects in Jack's context. I argue that these Protestant men are left unable to recognise the destructive consequences in their attempt to maintain their location in the gender order.

The libidinal investment, that is, the libidinal energy invested in some idea or person or object, that interpolates the subject through a process of aggregation is a key aspect of the social and political production of masculinities, as men in the patriarchal system overcode their aggregations as they are moved by the desire for social power accumulation. Here, I would like to propose a reading of this libidinal investment within Protestant Loyalist masculinities, that is, the repression of sexual energy aligned with authoritarianism, as a fascistic desire. Peter (2020) reads fascist desire through Deleuze and Guattari as:

[a] latent force that operates within neoliberal global capitalism that thrives on the free flow of goods even at a time when borders have become the basis for greater territoriality and militarized borders that divide the population along racist lines to affirm the menace of white-only and other forms of ethnic nationalism. (p. 6)

With this definition in mind, one can affirm that fascistic desire operates in the ideology of "us" and "them" which aim at obliterating the other while at the same time hindering the desiring subject. Understanding the relation of masculinities and fascist politics demands an approach that explores not only the historical processes of the Unionist community but a psychological explanation of how authoritarianism affects the contemporary Protestant

Unionist/Loyalist subject in a post-liberal imaginary democracy. Peters (2020) explores the conundrums of “the fascism in our heads” when he ponders:

Why do people seek their own repression under authoritarian regimes when it is clearly against their own self and class interests? Why do people crave an authoritarian figure, a transcendent authority behind which they can mask their repression of all-powerful biological impulses that percolate through to the rational mind often accompanied by violent outbursts? (p. 3)

While this system of “affective ideology” is anchored in emotions rather than arguments, I understand that a society structured on the basis of sexual repression generates psychological repression on its citizens. In a subversive strategy to deflect the functioning of societies of control, the liberation of bodies and their sexual freedom comes to a pivotal aspect to propose an ethical-political life. On this, Peter states, “Fascism is thus not simply an ideology in the sense of being part of a cognitive schema; it is anchored in the body, in desire and the emotions” (p. 4).

In Act Two, Scene Four, Janet tells her brother Jack that she is fleeing Belfast to finally have a life of her own. Leaving behind her husband and all the bigotry and violence perpetrated by men in her surroundings. Jack promptly defends himself, “I am not a violent man. I abhor violence”, to which Janet objects, “You love it, Jack. You need it. It excites you. Violence is the woman you never had” (*THE BELLE*, p. 244). In the introduction of this thesis, I advocate for the understanding of the body as a producer of creative affective power. Here, one can advance that the subject's desire plays a crucial role in the production of human energy that is intrinsically related to the production of social reality. The Independent Ulster, desired by Loyalists, such as Jack, is a desired social reality achieved only through a totalitarian flight for “freedom” for, of course, an exclusive part of the population, the Protestants. However, the battlefield marked in every barbed wire in the city of Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland, when scrutinised through a politics of masculinities, becomes rather a battlefield within men themselves. An internal battle strategically deployed by the political and cultural institutions that shape the sectarian Protestant Unionist/Loyalist subject.

When Rose and Vi are left alone in the family shop, Rose questions Vi for selling a magazine called “Ulster”, which according to her is a “load of racist propaganda” (*THE BELLE*, p. 198). Rose replies by saying that the Ulster Defence Association, which the magazine supports, is not against “the blacks”. In Rose's discourse, we see again the distorted discourses about racism in *The Belle's* cultural context. In the 1980s Belfast, other growing ethnic identities were also being racially discriminated against, such as Irish Travellers, Asians, and Eastern Europeans (MARRANCI, 2004; MARRANCI, 2003). However, Rose's

concern towards the local paper “Ulster” and its influence on the Protestant community raises a discussion about the implications of a community that is informed exclusively by a biased source, entirely Unionist-sided.

In the introductory chapter, I discuss the nation as a fictional process that happens at the expense of a masculinity project. Here I draw again on Anderson's conceptualisation of an imagined community and its birth through the dissemination of novels and newspapers. To Anderson, these mediums “provided the technical means for “re-presenting” the kind of imagined community that is the nation” (2006, p. 25). The periodised circulation of newspapers, such as the Unionist and Loyalist “Ulster”, dramatically convey an image of Northern Ireland as being one homogeneous social organism —experienced by Unionists— consistently moving through time. Similarly, the “Ulster” newspaper can be read here as a gender pedagogical tool. To Hickey-Moody, “Media discourses and institutional expectations teach gender ideals every day, making assemblages of masculinity that interpolate bodies through systems of affect” (2009, p. 58). The affects promoted by the Unionist discourse present in its news media, including the Ulster newspaper, are a result of a collective masculinised memory that seeks to protect Unionists’ right to signify a sense of universalisation of the protestant community, by promoting single narratives that signify Catholics as a threat to the Unionist agenda. These single-narratives present within both Catholic and Protestant communities promote violent responsive affects. Within the protestant community portrayed in *The Belle*, Protestants who are seen as dissidents of the Unionist cause, or have grown to practise inter-community personal or professional relations with Catholics, are shamed through community rumours or even formalised media to disseminate this information. For instance, Ulster's newspaper column “Did you know”, works as a surveillance¹⁰ mechanism that threatens to expose those who “renegotiate” their loyalties. Rose comments on this column’s bigotry as a series of unreliable information for Protestants about possible IRA spies, Protestants hiring or doing business with Catholics, or accepting working men from the Republic of Ireland. While Vi does not endorse these speculative narratives, Rose calls her attention by saying, “Do you never worry, Vi, that you might sell this distorted information to a customer who'll go out of this shop and shoot an innocent [...]” (*THE BELLE*, p. 199) Later, Vi discloses that she pays a paramilitary Loyalist group to

¹⁰ (The surveillant characteristic of the “Ulster Magazine” examined here resonates with Michel Foucault’s disciplinary sciences discussed in *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison*. Foucault contends that mechanisms of surveillance generate docile bodies whose behaviour are continually shaped to ensure the internalisation of prevailing views and values of a given society). See more in: FOUCAULT, Michel. **Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison**. Vintage, 2012.

“protect” the shop against vandals. But to Rose, this illegal security service is more like a scam, as she states, “They [the paramilitaries] tell their vandals not to break your windows” (*THE BELLE*, p. 198). However, In Act One, Scene Three, when Vi seeks assistance from the local police, she has a clear response about the institutionalisation of such paramilitary practices, as the police officer states, “Think of it [paying the “safety” fees] as doin' your bit to keep the peace, [...] It's a cheap price” (*THE BELLE*, p. 199). While Vi does not endorse the paramilitary organisations, her loyalty to Unionism is clear as she demonstrates her concern with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, as a political drawback that gave too much power to Catholics. The highly complex political and social fabric in Northern Ireland is projected in such a way that leaves very little room for mitigation of the Protestant Unionist Loyalist identities. Vi puts an end to Rose's questioning by saying, “It's all very fine and easy livin' in London and makin' noble decisions about what's right and wrong about how we live here” (*THE BELLE*, p. 199).

While Jack's family and community refer to him as a politician, Rose refers to him as a “gangster”. On this, Rose states, “He's well connected with the Protestant paramilitaries here [Belfast], and other right-wing organisations in the United Kingdom” (*THE BELLE*, p. 199). Jack's identity, and its political subjective positioning, is an accumulation of affects that are crucial to the maintenance of Northern Ireland's sectarian state. Jack's affective power strongly influences his sister, Janet, who recently left her husband, Peter, and returned to Dolly's house in secret. Peter is a catholic police officer at the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In Act One, Scene Two, when Jack learns about his sister's marital struggles, Jack demonstrates his long-held opposition to his sister marrying a Catholic by stating, “I knew no good would come of that marriage. Sneaking off to a registry office instead of standing up and declaring themselves without shame in the eyes of God.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 185) Jack then moves on to discuss Peter's Catholic community and its impact on the political scenario in Northern Ireland. According to him, “[i]t's the likes of him [Catholic] who've infiltrated the Royal Ulster Constabulary [RUC].” (*THE BELLE*, p. 185). Here, Jack's comments are in accordance with influential rhetoric within Unionists that the RUC had betrayed the Protestant's trust by supporting the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. Such agreement was taken by Protestants as a breach of Ulster “sovereignty” because it granted the Republic of Ireland an advisory role in Northern Irish affairs. As a response to Margaret Thatcher's signing of the agreement, Protestants members of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) gathered to shout “Ulster Says No”. In spite of the massive Protestant opposition, the agreement was enforced, generating the resented rhetoric “Smash Sinn Féin”, the Irish

Republican Party, in the following two decades.¹¹ The growing rhetoric of Ulster needing to resist politics that aimed to share political power with Catholics [through mediation of the Republic of Ireland] is attested in Vi's comments on the importance of having Jack as a prominent speaker for the Protestant community. According to her:

We need someone strong to speak for us. To tell the British government that we won't be handed over to a foreign country without a fight. That we won't be patted on the head and complimented on our loyalty and patriotism through two world wars, but now it's all over, thank you very much, and your loyalty and your patriotism are an embarrassment to us and our American and European allies. We are bein' sold down the river because England doesn't need us no more. [...] We are as much a part of Great Britain as Liverpool or Manchester or Birmingham. How would they feel if they were suddenly told that the Dublin government was to have a say in the runnin' of their country? (*THE BELLE*, p. 220).

Vi's political views express a clear picture of the contextual gendered ideology that men are the exclusive bearers of political power in Northern Ireland. When she expresses the need for “someone strong”, this implies that such a leader should be a man, and in her family and immediate community, Jack is the most prominent political figure. As I have been arguing, gender performativity is pivotal to understanding how the Protestant community act out certain ways of gender experiencing that are in accordance with the necessities of a “war-mode” promoted by Unionism. In this state of war, men have a leading role at the expense of their own lives. Accordingly, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state, “war maintains the dispersal and segmentarity of groups, and the warrior himself is caught in a process of accumulating exploits leading him to solitude and a prestigious but powerless death” (p. 357). The current pedagogy of masculinity in the Ulster mentality of being constantly in war, re-enacting conflicts held by their ancestors, such as the Glorious Revolution of 1688, empties these men's bodies of generative creative power. This assemblage of masculinity reduces their gender experience to the embedded and processual values that serve not to an ethically gendered life but to a delegitimation of plural forms of experiencing masculinity.

In the play, Vi explains to Belle that people who live their whole lives in Belfast are quite aware that one cannot freely go to certain places in the city. For Protestants, for instance, places like West Belfast are “forbidden” areas, known to house predominantly Catholic neighbourhoods. This physical segregation also contributes to a distorted image of their neighbours. The only time they walk through Catholic neighbourhoods is when marching on the Twelfth of July so as to reaffirm their majority in number and political power over Catholics in Northern Ireland. Rather, Protestant images of Catholic neighbourhoods are limited to the ones conjured in Unionist songs and stories. Furthermore, Reverend Ian

¹¹Source: BBC News NI: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-56951136>, last accessed May 15, 2021.

Paisley's litanies are another constituent in the maintenance of the Protestant single-narrative about Catholics. Paisley's political speeches disguised as homilies held strong influence in the politics of Northern Ireland (EDGE, 2014), by constantly reaffirming that protestants need to vote for the Unionist Party at any cost as a means of keeping the Republican Party out of the political scene. Rose, in her discourse, presents an alternative narrative conveying a conflicting political picture in which a third of the Northern Irish population (Catholics) were denied a say in how their country should be run. Vi then states that she is not opposed to Catholics having a say, but her comments fall on the Unionist rhetoric of Catholics as a threat to the Ulster interests, as she states, "They [Catholics] don't want to share power. They want to take it" (*The Belle* 221). What Vi seems to be unable to recognize at this point is that in the given Unionist positioning, they are also not willing to offer power-sharing. On this, Rose states, "Northern Ireland was created as a Protestant State for a Protestant People, and if they agree to power sharing, they'll have to do away with the very reason for the state's existence" (*THE BELLE*, p. 221). Here I argue that Rose seems to be demanding self-reflection from her own community, trying to acknowledge the similarities between both Protestant and Catholic destructive politics. For instance, Rose draws on the particularities of the Independent Ulster defended by Jack and his peer. She states:

Their right-wing Protestant Church is in total agreement with the right-wing Catholic Church on issues like divorce and abortion, on a woman's right to be anything other than a mother or a daughter or a sister or a wife. Any woman outside that set of rules is the Great Whore of Babylon. (*THE BELLE*, p. 221)

At this moment, Rose's sister seems to agree on the conservatism of both communities. However, Vi justifies her alignment with the Loyalist cause in the following statement, "So, the choice is the devil or the deep blue sea [...]. Well, in that case I'll stay with the devil I know [...]" (*THE BELLE*, p. 221). Insistently, Rose questions Vi for her incoherence when voting always on Unionist candidates even when not agreeing on their violent domestic terrorism agendas. Rose states, "I'd like to see the people here voting for, and not against, in every election. Sooner or later, Protestant or Catholic, we have all got to take the risk." (*THE BELLE*, p. 223) Clearly, Rose is the only character in *The Belle* who brings a revisionist historical and political narrative into the family's household. Thus, her awareness of the political mechanisms of violence within both Catholic and Protestant communities presents a great threat to the social dynamics so strongly defended by Jack and other Protestant men around him.

2.2 THE TYPE OF LOYALTY YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT IS OF SOME OF THE PROTESTANT PEOPLE

One evening in the Dunbar's shop, Jack appears with a friend from London, who is interested in buying the family's property. The friend in the case is Reverend Bailey. Anxious to speak to Vi alone, Jack awaits the perfect opportunity, but to his discontent, Rose is with her. Because of Rose's political activism as a journalist in London, she quickly recognises Reverend Bailey as soon as he enters the room. Rose makes sure to disclose Reverend Bailey's real intention of doing business in Northern Ireland. We learn that Reverend Bailey and his wife, Mrs Bailey, are linked to political activities in the UK. Rose states the following about them, "When Mrs Bailey isn't in court defending the British right to racism, she advises the Ulster Unionist at Westminster on how to break the law within the law in order to keep Northern Ireland Protestant, Orange and White." (*THE BELLE*, p. 226) When Reverend Bailey states that his interest in Northern Ireland is due to his confidence in Protestant Loyalty, Rose counters him by saying, "The type of loyalty you're talking about is of *some* of the Protestant people." (*THE BELLE*, p. 227). Jack then tries to weaken Rose's influence on Vi, forcing her to tell her real plans of being in Belfast. Rose then says that she is there to work secretly along with other journalists to investigate the connections between the National Front, the British Friends of Ulster, and the Democratic Unionist Party. The presence of British extremist political organisations in Northern Ireland such as the National Front had a significant influence on the enforcement of national unity among Protestant Loyalists as a response to the burgeoning Irish Republicanism during the years of the Troubles. Accordingly, Durham (2012) states:

The Troubles offered the hope that the British extreme right might at last gain a significant following, not only through its fight against the black and Asian presence on the mainland but also from its determined support of Northern Ireland. But as the NF would find, there was scant interest in the loyalist cause on the mainland. (p. 197)

From the 1960s onwards, the National Front paid special attention to Loyalists in Northern Ireland as allies on the "onslaught of Irish Republicanism as part of a communist offensive" (DURHAM, 2012, p. 197). However, the Ulster Defence Association banned the participation of the National Front in Northern Irish politics because of its known "Neo-Nazi" leadings, and thus the NF's application for membership in a United Ulster Unionist Council was also refused. Nevertheless, the NF continued to intervene in Ulster's politics in a secretive way. Reverend Bailey is a character that brings forward this clandestine intervention of British fascist political movements in the conflict of Northern Ireland during the years of the

Troubles. In the play, as Reverend Bailey insists on referring to Northern Ireland as Ulster, Rose bursts out:

You are as ill-informed as most of the English about this country. This is Northern Ireland, not Ulster. Not Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan. The so-called Ulster Unionists gave those areas with a Catholic majority to the South in 1920 in order to create and maintain their own false majority. (*THE BELLE*, p. 229)

Reverend Bailey responds to this conflicting historical and political perspective by saying that Rose has been reading her daughter's history books, clearly mocking revisionist approaches to Northern Irish history as a “fad”. Then, Reverend Bailey demonstrates his knowledge about detailed information regarding Rose's daughter, Belle. As soon as Bailey starts speaking of Belle, Vi interrupts him by saying, “Get out of this house.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 229). Jack tries to intervene, But Vi says, “I know a threat when I hear one [...] And nobody threatens our Belle, nobody! She's my sister's child with the same ancestors as me [...]. She is family”. To this, Jack replies, “She's not family! She's...” In perceiving Jack’s hesitation, Rose completes his sentence, “A black bastard?” (*THE BELLE*, p. 229), and Jack agrees. In this moment of their dialogue, Jack's veiled racist behaviour becomes explicit and he is thus isolated from the Dunbar family. No longer welcomed, Jack and Reverend Bailey are about to leave the family shop when Rose warns the Reverend, “If you are going to join the war here, Thomas Bailey, never forget that loyalty to one's immediate family will always take precedence over loyalty to the Unionist family.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 229). Scene One from Act Two is a compelling interaction helpful to understanding how identities and their corresponding affects can be mitigated. Although Vi states clearly her commitment to the loyalist political stand, she is able to re-negotiate part of her unionist identity as Belle, Rose's daughter is threatened by Reverend Bailey. Vi states, “I'm British, an' that's what I'll fight to stay as long as there's breath in my body. But I'll do it respectably and with dignity. I won't be associated with the dictates of criminals” (*THE BELLE*, p. 236). Furthermore, another example of Vi’s mitigation of her Unionist loyalty happens when she no longer decides to support the upcoming strikes. She chooses to open the family shop instead of making a compact with “Civil disobedience aided and abetted by thugs.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 236).

2.3 DAVY'S DISABILITY: A GODSEND HEADLINE FOR LOYALIST POLITICS

Davy Watson's character, initially regarded by Jack as a “halfwit”, becomes a valuable political body for the Loyalist propagandist agenda. Davy is an admirer of Jack and of his position in the Loyalist movement. In Scene Two, when Jack comes to the family shop, Davy

asks Vi to convey his message to Jack, “He [Davy] says, God bless you, John Horner, and God bless Ian Paisley. He says you're the boys'll see Ulster right.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 184). Vi then forwards to Jack Davy's mother's preoccupation with having her son participate in Loyalist protests. Vi asks Jack to persuade Davy not to join the future political events, “He's deaf. His sight's poor. He shouldn't be in a crowd like that. It's dangerous”, to which Jack replies, “He has faith in me because of what I believe in. I can't weaken that loyalty [...]. Every good Protestant must go.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 189). The protest referred to by Jack is a Loyalist demonstration against the first anniversary of the signing of the “accursed” Anglo-Irish Agreement. To Jack, every Loyalist man, woman, and child must go to the street and show the British government they will never defeat the Ulster Protestant Loyalty to remain British. Vi rebuts by saying that Davy is unable to hear grand speeches. According to Vi, Davy is attracted to these demonstrations because of the excitement of flags and banners and the crowds. She states, “The violence excites him.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 190). To Vi, Davy's functional diversity diminishes his capacity to reason about the political implications involved in participating in Loyalist protests. However, to Jack, precisely because Davy is “unable” to question and reason his devotion to the Unionist cause is what makes him a loyal man. On this Jack states, “simple people like him are truly the people of God”. Jack then moves on to consider Davy's loyalty to Unionism as a miracle, as he states, “God works in mysterious ways. Ours not to reason why. Don't you [to Vi] consider miraculous that he can neither hear nor speak, but he knows instinctively what we're fighting for.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 190). Vi counter's Jack's insight on Davy's intrinsic loyalty as a natural gift by saying that Davy knows things because he lip-reads the television and reads the papers, and instead of thinking about Davy as God's work, Vi brings attention to the devotion of his mother to teach him to read and communicate via sign language. Vi states, “That's the miracle of her love.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 190) Nonetheless, Jack still refuses to convince Davy not to join the protest. This conversation between Jack and Vi foreshadows dangerous consequences if Davy goes to the Loyalist protest, which proves to be the case in Act Two of *The Belle*.

While Jack initially refers to Davy as a miracle, a work by God, Jack's condescending judgement of Davy's social and political power is explicit in other moments of the play. Jack refers to Davy as a “halfwit” and fails to judge Davy's potentiality of reasoning and acting. In *The Belle*, Davy's character represents the body of a young man that is deaf, but we are not given more information about his disability. However, Jack's interaction and comments about Davy express to a great extent how his project of masculinity leads him to compare and read disabled bodies and their potentiality solely through the contrast of an idealised body, that is

one without disability. The regime of domination of bodies, to which masculinities respond directly, has a matrix of intelligibility that recognises bodies exclusively through the body's workforce and force of procreation. Bodies with disabilities, when operating through this dictating matrix, have their capacity to affect and be affected denied. Rather, the system of knowledge that induces Jack's understanding of Davy's body as inherently limited is an effect of delegitimation that neglects bodies' capacities according to their uniqueness. However, Davy's body and its social and political value to Jack and his corresponding Loyalist interests change due to coming events. Belle is forbidden by her mother to join the Loyalist protest. Rose's prohibition advances her concern about Belle's safety due to the racism so long ingrained in her mother's home city. Nevertheless, Belle manages to "sneak off" from the family's shop, and asks Davy to take her to the protest. Janet, learning that Belle had run away, goes after Belle and Davy. While the three of them are on their way to the protest, a group of youngsters, wearing National Front T-Shirts and "Union Jack" flags around their shoulders, circle Belle and start harassing her because of her skin colour. Davy, by now is very fond of Belle, gets extremely nervous and tries to stop the harassers. According to Janet, Davy starts acting "like a madman". During the incident, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the local police force, comes in and takes Davy into their Land Rover, disregarding Janet and Belle's explanation about what was happening. Davy is taken into custody by the RUC and is physically and emotionally tortured. Shortly after, Janet seeks help from her brother Jack, who is about to give a speech to his fellow Loyalists. After listening to Janet's story about Davy's incident, Jack reluctantly offers to help to rescue Davy. Jack uses his contact within Loyalist organisations to manage to get Davy back to Dunbar's family household. At this moment in the play, Jack shifts his nonchalant attitude towards Davy's incident when he realizes the prospective political attention of publicising Davy's torturing by the RUC as an attack on the Unionist community in Northern Ireland. Due to this emergent political utility, Davy is seen by Jack as if he were a sacrificial lamb for the sake of the Loyalist/Unionist political interests. Davy becomes an influential headline for advocating against the RUC and its treatment of Protestant Loyalists.

Later in *The Belle's* last scene, the Dunbar family is together in the house commenting on the violent actions of protesters who were "singin" and "shoutin" and smashing shop windows belonging to Catholics. Janet comments that the violence was nonsensical that even Protestant shop owners had their premises damaged by protesters. When Davy is finally brought in by Jack, Rose ponders, "What a godsend to distract attention from the violence of your gangsters today. I can just see the headline. 'Brutal RUC interrogation of innocent,

retorted Loyalist'. A heaven-sent piece of propaganda in your favour." (*THE BELLE*, p. 247) Furthermore, when Jack asks if Rose thinks the RUC should "get away with it". Rose responds:

No I don't. No more than I thought they [RUC] should have been allowed to get away with it when they did that [torturing] and worse during the interrogation of suspected IRA terrorists. But that never bothered the Unionists at all, did it? In fact, you were all for it, as long as it was being done to the Catholics, innocent or guilty." (*THE BELLE*, p. 247)

Jack promptly responds, "They're all guilty. Potential traitor every one." (*THE BELLE*, p. 247) This scene conveys the strategic process of political worth aggregation to male bodies within the dynamics of "Ulster mentality". The attribution of political worth present in this scene has no allegiance to the body's necessity but to the maintenance of material conditions that sustain the sectarianism in Northern Ireland. Amidst these dynamics of body control, I now examine the interpellation of the religious facet of the Protestant Loyalism which is so ferociously defended by Jack.

2.4 GUARD YOUR MOTHERS! GUARD YOUR DAUGHTERS! GUARD YOUR SISTERS!

Jack is excluded from the network of emotional support existent among women in the Dunbar family. When he learns that secrets about his sister Janet have been kept from him, he states, "Women! That's always the trouble with this house. Women having secrets, whispering, gossiping." (*THE BELLE*, p. 193) Based on this passage, I would like to argue that the dynamics of his masculinity diminishes his affective power to a level in which he is unable to bond emotionally with women in his family. Especially those whose gendered practices challenge the patriarchal conventions, whether by refusing to exclusively play the gendered roles as obedient mothers, sisters, or wives or by contesting, through their loyalty, the violent rhetoric within Unionist/Loyalist discourses.

The religious education in Jack's community teaches men that women are to be distrusted at all times as the bearers of "mischief" and "sin" from their birth. Janet and Rose's reminiscing about their childhood provides an example of the gender pedagogy commonly promoted by Northern Irish Protestantism. In their memory, Dolly takes them to an event at a friend's house in what seems to be a religious service led by the Protestant preacher Issac Standaloft. The preacher's speech is specifically addressed to women in the protestant community, as he states:

Be unadorned. Be modest. Be chaste. Be not the foul instrument of the downfall of men. Your souls belong to God. Your bodies are his temple. Only your lawful wedded husband may worship and enter therein, not for pleasure, but purely for the procreation of God's children. But first, you must cleanse that temple of the original sin of your worldly birth. (*THE BELLE*, p. 223).

Such religious gendered ideology institutionalised by the Protestant Church in Northern Ireland is also correspondingly expressed in Jack's lamentations throughout the play. For instance, in Act One, Scene Three, Jack states, "Women! Women! Temptation! Deception! You're the instruments of the devil. The root of all evil." (*THE BELLE*, p. 205) Nevertheless, to the women in his family, is it precisely Jack's presence and his religious Protestant rhetoric that induces female guilt into their bodies and household. For instance, one night, the women in the Dunbar family want to celebrate Dolly's husband's death anniversary by drinking wine, and they hope Jack will not come to the family gathering. On this, Dolly states, "With any luck Jack'll not turn up and we can all get bluttered without him sittin' there like Moses makin' the tribe feel guilty." (*THE BELLE*, p. 219). This gendered role of guardian of women's conduct and faith, internalised by Jack and his male peers, is an essential masculinised pattern to be explored in the assemblage of masculinity in this context. Both Catholic and Protestant litanies share common tenets of Christianity and have thus embedded in their respective communities stories and litanies that dictated gendered patterns for both men and women. I now move on to consider the interplay of Protestantism as a religious identity and its current affective power onto the assemblage of masculinity in Jack's context. Such enquire seeks to understand how religious masculinised patterns exercise control over male/female bodies and constitutes the investment of their libidinal psychic energy.

The assumptions one makes about religion and its pedagogy are intrinsically connected to the politics of gender and sexuality (HICKEY-MOODY, 2019). Since the late eighteenth century, the Protestant religious institution in Ireland has had a pivotal influence at propagating idealised cultures of masculinity in the Unionist community. However, it would be an unjust radicalisation to justify men's violent actions solely through their identification with religion. In this vein, Buckley (2010) advocates for an understanding of the Ulster Protestant culture not exclusively as a divisive and full of enmity religion, but rather as an ambivalent religious culture which can also enable human creativity, which in historical, religious, and territorial given circumstances, can facilitate citizens' responses to ever-changing political scenarios. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the ambivalence of Ulster Protestant culture promote sectarian violence, expressed through masculinity patterns. The violent patterns put forward by this religious and political community are not only of a

symbolic nature, but also of a material one, displayed through bombings, assassinations, and physical hostility to anyone who might oppose their political views. These physical and emotional responses are what allow a gender project to live and be expressed through a set of practices generating limiting bodily affects. Moreover, these affects cannot be exclusively read as promoted by religious litanies, as “[m]en’s violent assertion of their power is not a religion. It is a gendered performance of anger.” (HICKEY-MOODY, 2019, p. 10). This anger so commonly referred to as an “innate masculine characteristic” is read here as a psychological striation of affect, that is, an affect that is produced through the misappropriation of internal body productions, such as emotions. The way the Unionist community has constructed its “sovereignty” over Catholics and other minorities in Northern Ireland is vital to understand how pedagogies of gender are formed to justify bodily practices.

Hickey-Moody defines affects as “products of connectedness [...] made through bodies and contexts rubbing up against each other, acting on each other, thinking and being together.” (2019, p. 47). Bearing this in mind, we can read bodies as changeable accumulations of actions, relations and interests; that is, bodies that are strongly constituted by contextual affects. The emotions that serve as catalysts of violent masculinities are originated by confused ideas, such as a “registration of affectus” and “coordination for thought”, which limits men's capacities to affect and be affected on a set-up of body-reflective experiences. Twenty years ago, Butler (1990) already urged us to recognise the body's agency in the midst of a complex process of interpolation of gender performativity. Hickey-Moody’s understanding of masculinity as an assemblage of affects allows us to dissect Butler’s idea of performativity into its constituents and affective variants, which can increase or decrease the innate creative force of bodies. The relationship established between one’s body among other bodies and forms of life is seen here as potent indications of what kind of body regime is at play, that is, if performativity is being informed by generative or restrictive affects.

In the last scene, Jack is rehearsing his speech to address the Loyalist Protestant community for the following protest against the Anglo-Irish agreement. The stage directions describe his state as that of “masturbatory ecstasy” (*THE BELLE*, p. 241). As Jack delivers his speech, we learn its main theme – a call for unity against a common enemy:

Today, the internal feuding within the Unionist family is ended. No longer divided, we shall not fall. Strong and reunited we stand. Unafraid in the face of our common enemy. We are at war with the British government, and our ranks will never be broken again. We will never submit to the conspiracy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. [...] Guard our women. Guard our children. Lest they succumb to the insidious evil festers and grows in our land. [...] Guard your mothers. Guard your daughters. Guard your sisters and your wives. (*THE BELLE*, p. 242)

The “masturbatory” exaltation described in the stage directions can serve as an indicative investment of the psychic energy that is an affective product of Jack's “masculine” performativity. This aspect of masculinity – being the guardian of women's body and faith – becomes an affective and performative expression that is one of the foundations of Protestant masculinity. For instance, Jack's ideological view of his role to his sister is explicitly defended by him when he states, “I am the guardian of your faith” (*THE BELLE*, p. 205). This affirmation puts forward an understanding that his religious role is directly linked to the expectations of his gender identity. Masculinity here is largely produced in the religious litanies, both Catholic and Protestant, through the promotion of the father figure, who controls and subjugates men's and women's bodies.

Janet provides an insightful perspective to explore the influence of the institutionalised religious discourses on the practices of masculinity as well as their resulting hindering affects on women. In Act One, Scene Three, “reality” seems to be suspended, or perhaps brought to a minimum level of ideological masquerade. Rose is alone on the stage in a state described as if she “[t]alks to herself as if in a dream.” (*The Belle* 208). After reminiscing about her childhood, Janet states, “I'm tired of being the sister of a devil [Jack] and the wife of a saint [Peter].” (*THE BELLE*, p. 208) Here, she expresses her anguish of being violently coerced by the two men in her life, Jack, her brother, and Peter, her husband. Then, Jack and Peter join the stage and stand with Janet. Peter starts singing an old English folk song, sung as part of a ring game, called “Green Gravel”. The song's lyrics unveil a gender pedagogy addressed to young women that starts by praising the “fairest young damsel”, a beautiful unmarried woman, whose “natural” pursuit is getting married and constituting a family. However, as the song progresses, it announces, “Your true lover's dead”. After this stance, girls playing this game are taught to grieve their deceased “husbands”. Through this “playful” narrative, young Northern Irish girls are to understand their subjective existence as dependable to their bond to or lack of men. Through songs of this sort, gender pedagogies are reinforced and passed on through generations. Thus, serving as a mechanism to maintain the gender dynamics of girls having their social recognition as either unmarried or married or widows. In *The Belle*, Peter's character and its gendered location invest him with the symbolic power of being the signifier of Janet's social status. Hence, in the given gender order, all possible kinships are conceivable exclusively within a phallogentric heteronormative signifying perspective of attribution of social status and self-worth. Further to that, in this scene, Peter's singing serves as a trigger for Janet to start reminiscing about her unfulfilling fifteen years of marriage.

As Janet digresses, we learn that she married Peter because he was “everything Jack was not”, that is, “Quiet, gentle, and kind” (p. 210). Nevertheless, such initial positive attributions to Peter's conduct might lead to the misreading of his masculinity as “healthier”, or conveying less hindering affects in the gender arena. As I have advocated in Chapter 1, the theoretical framework of masculinities defended here does not limit its discussions for a solution to problematic masculinities by promoting non-hegemonic practices. Regardless of Peter's gendered “positive” portrayal, his gender practices cannot be easily taken as “healthy” by those around him, especially his wife, Janet. The making of his assemblage of masculinity does not differ considerably from Jack's, who occupies the “devil” side of Janet's good and evil dichotomous comparison. That is, both Jack's and Peter's projects of masculinity operate within a system that interpolates their gender performativity in accordance to transcendent values, thus resulting in restrictive gender practices.

In Act One, Scene Three, Janet externalises her long-held anxiety about sex as she draws on her first nuptial night with Peter. On Janet's honeymoon, she wants to “exorcise” Peter to “find out it wasn't an act of sin and shame and pain and guilt.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 210) However, as soon as Janet is touched by Peter she turns away. Peter, to her relief, says there was nothing wrong with not having sex on their first night. Additionally, the fact that the word “sex” is never uttered by either of them expresses the restrictive discursive affordances in a society of body control on the pleas of its religious dogmas. Nevertheless, what Janet considers the ultimate failure of her married life is the fact that she had lived fifteen years of celibacy with Peter. As the years passed by, Janet had learnt that Peter was the one relieved that night, as she states, “It was years before I realised that you were relieved, that you didn't want... Had never wanted... that you were content with things that way.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 210) However, with this insight, a burden is taken off Janet's mind. She realises that by not having children, she would be spared from the dispute between her Protestant family and Peter's Catholic family over their children's religious education: a struggle commonly experienced by inter-community couples in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Peter's character has a secondary role in the plot of *The Belle*, he is a foil character to Jack. Regardless of his limited appearance, featuring only in a small dialogue in Act One, Scene Three, his presence in the play conveys a social reality of inter-community family configuration in Northern Ireland. According to Morgan et al.:

The intensity of the emotions which a marriage between a Protestant and a Catholic can evoke, and the scale of the ramifications which can affect the couple, their families and many religious, social and political groups and organisations,

encapsulates the cross-currents and contradictions in the Northern Irish situation. (MORGAN et al., 1996)¹²

Janet remarks that Peter's mother expected him to become a priest. However, to Janet, instead of joining the clergy, Peter decided to do something more “positive” towards peace and reconciliation, that is, marrying her. However, Janet's reflection on her marriage also conveys her discontent with being used in Peter's “mission” of reconciliation between “us” and “them”. Likewise, when Peter is questioned about the reasons that drove him, an Irish Catholic, to join a sectarian force like the Royal Ulster Constabulary, he responds, “It will always be a sectarian force if Catholics never join.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 210) Differently from the other Protestant male characters in *The Belle*, Peter is the only man in the play who seems to be putting forward a political agenda of conciliation between communities in Northern Ireland. However, his gendered practices are still perceived by Janet as coercive. Accordingly, Janet describes her experience of reality as if she was, “Out of the frying pan into the fire. A devil and Saint are the same things. Afraid of women. Afraid we'll tempt you. Afraid we won't. They say there are no women in Ireland. Only mothers and sisters and wives.” (*THE BELLE*, p. 209-10) Furthermore, she puts forward a critique of Peter's ability or interest in playing the traditional religious husband figure, which is looking after his wife and fulfilling their duty of procreation.

Janet appears to hide from everyone the fact that Peter never wanted to have sex with her, partially, because within the dogmas of Protestantism, a marriage without procreation is a failure, but also because the disclosure of her husband's “lack” of virility would cause a demasculinisation of Peter among his peers. In Scene Three, Janet confines to Rose her “sinful” deeds while visiting Belle and Rose in London. Being overseas, Janet finds her way of exploring her sexuality, after fifteen years of celibate marriage, with a young man. Such adulterous conduct is condemned as sinful by the Protestant community and, thus, is kept in secret among women in the Dunbar family. After Janet's remarks about her married life, Jack starts quoting from St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, stating:

It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone, but also to the husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. (*THE BELLE*, p. 209)

¹² No pages could be retrieved from the publication of this digital reference.

Reid's decision to insert biblical intertextuality from the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians is a potent example to understand the institutionalisation of religious ideologies of gendered bodies within the Protestant community, as well as in the Catholic doctrine.

Such passage alludes to the theological pillar of the Christian Church as to what concerns the models of marriage. In this “mutual” consensual relationship, neither man nor woman possesses their bodies and desires, rather both bodies are subjugated to a spiritual realm. This system of belief operates on the symbolic order producing constrictive idealisations of what men and women should be and act like. Furthermore, to Žižek (2013), St. Paul's writing is crucial to understanding how the tenets of Christianity were formulated and directed to a political project of elevating “Christianity from a Jewish sect into a universal religion (religion of universality)” (p. 10). Žižek calls our attention to the fact that St. Paul was not part of Christ's “inner circle”, that is, Paul was not one of the twelve apostles. Žižek suggests that when Paul draws on the institutionalisation of Christ's teachings, he occupies the Judas's symbolic position “by not caring about his [Jesus'] idiosyncrasies, by ruthlessly reducing him to the fundamentals, with no patience for his wisdom, miracles, and similar paraphernalia.” (p. 10) Judas' symbolic position taken by Paul is a metaphoric substitution to the absent place among the twelve disciples. However, the necessity of such substitution directs one to the dynamics of Paul's foundational tenets for his Christian Church: “only through Judas' betrayal and Christ's crucifixion could the universal Church establish itself” (ŽIŽEK, 2013, p. 18). That is, Christianity's journey to universality is only feasible at the expense of the murder of particularity.

Thus, the production of human beings as religious subjects is intrinsically connected to the possibilities of experiencing a gendered life, which is limited to the prescriptive transcendent values pleaded by the church. Furthermore, ideologically, St. Paul's writings are based on the theological assumption that God ordains human governments, and that Christians should respect and obey the governments of their jurisdiction. Christian lawful behaviour, then, is conditioned not only by God but by the political apparatus of the State. In the case of *The Belle*, the corresponding state is an “imaginary community”, that is the Protestant Ulster, which coexists in the same geographical space as Northern Ireland. Governing authorities, both at the community and national level, are thus subjected by the divine to legislate in the name of God. On the symbolic level, this is the intersection where Protestantism and Loyalism clash. Furthermore, as discussed before, the iconic image of Protestant religious leader and Loyalist politician, Ian Paisley, reinforces the hegemonic patterns of masculinity that are imbricated in both the religious and political realms. Similarly, Jack's cultural and

political identity is subjugated to the never-reaching libidinal investment of performing the hegemonic patterns of masculinity in his community. Foucault, in “The Subject and Power” (1982), historicizes the different ways in which our culture produces human beings as subjects. According to him, philosophy’s current biggest challenge now is not finding what we are, but rather refusing what we are. Foucault proposes an exit from the increasing web power of subjection, stating that:

[T]he political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state's institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (p. 785)

Ulster, as a parallel state endorsed by Protestantism, plays a significant role in the maintenance of a belief system that claims the possession of something more eternal than the body, the soul. While Jack's identity is subjugated within the realms of Protestant Unionism, when he defends the “sovereignty” of the Ulster state, he is also, in his mind, defending God's will. Moreover, the key to St. Paul’s theology – so present in Jack's religious rhetoric – is repetition:

Christ is the redemptive repetition of Adam. Adam has fallen, Christ has risen again; Christ is, therefore “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45–49). Through Adam, as sons of Adam, we are lost, condemned to sin and suffering; through Christ, we are redeemed. This, however, does not mean that Adam’s Fall (and the subsequent instauration of the Law) was a simple contingency – that is to say, that, if Adam had chosen obedience to God, there would have been no sin and no Law [...]. (ZIZEK, 2013, p.81).

Zizek's readings of the dynamics of Christianity help us understand how gender practices in *The Belle*, representing Belfast’s social and political reality in the 1980s, are deeply restrained by conceptualisations of sex and gender as religious fictions crystallised in the Protestant communities. Moreover, in the characters’ discursive interactions analysed here, we are offered a crystallisation of the masculine symbolic signifier, that is, the ideological mechanisms that introduce meanings, and operate in the Protestant community in Northern Irish society. We arrive at the despotic signifier which finds its way into the words of Jack, Peter, Davy, Reverends Bailey and Isaac. Their discourses carry representations, models, and images of how a system of transcendent values of a cultural and political group preserves and reinforces dictating pedagogies of gender embodiment. In turn, they inflict limiting conditions of knowledge production which are necessary for the maintenance of their respective community. In this epistemological dynamic, the production of knowledge generates values that are embedded with institutional power in Northern Ireland, more specifically in the Protestant Church, Ulster Unionist Party, and the Orange Order. The State as an intermesh of

these institutions is a result of a defensive mechanism that embodies and reinforces these representations. In this sense, idealised projects of masculinities can work as a political *locus*, that is, an apparatus to promote politics that are vital to the maintenance of states such as the “Ulster” defended by Protestants. In the following chapter, I examine Christina Reid's play, *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), to explore the self-detriment facets of the assemblage of masculinity in the Protestant Unionist Orange Order, that is the restrictive gender practices that leave hindering affects to Protestant man in the play.

3 NOBODY NEVER SEEN ME CRY: MASCULINITIES IN *MY NAME, SHALL I TELL YOU MY NAME?*

This chapter discusses the construction of masculinities in Christina Reid's play *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989), hereinafter referred to as *My Name*. The play consists largely of two monologues between a grandfather and granddaughter, Andy and Andrea. The two voices combined represent the construction of Unionist masculinity and a critique of it. In my reading on *My Name*, I analyse how the play presents Unionist masculinities not only as a set of ideas, or an imagined identity or community, but as a notion that is upheld by affects, to which I argue, serves to becloud an economic reality, of working-class exploitation in the Orange Order community in Northern Ireland. I first give a brief synopsis of the play in terms of structure and content and then focus on the following issues: Andy's account of his upbringings and its resonance to a politics of restraining masculinity; the interconnection of a pedagogy of masculinities and the “Ulster mentality”; and the implication of “carrying” the tradition and its consequential bodily costs to Protestant men. By doing so, I seek to raise a discussion about the interconnection of the pedagogy of masculinity and the Unionist Loyalist political and economic agenda.

Differently from *The Belle*, in which a political and religious Loyalist scenario predominates, in *My Name*, we are offered an additional glimpse at the multifaceted construction of the Protestant identity in Northern Ireland, more specifically in its depiction of Andy, an intransigent Orangeman from Derry. Thus, the following subsections intend to answer the following question: To what extent does the current project of masculinity within the realms of the Grand Orange Lodge community condition Orangemen to limited body affects? And how do these affects serve as a political strategy for the maintenance of the Ulster state, as imagined by Unionists like Andy?

My Name deals with the shadows of the Great War and conflicts involving Northern

Ireland through a grandfather-granddaughter relationship: Andy, a former soldier who fought in the Battle of the Somme; and Andrea, a young woman trying to make sense of where she came from and who she is becoming. Moreover, I argue that *My Name* could be regarded as a psychological drama—in which characters select their memories to recount particular events or situations. By doing so, the two characters in *My Name* convey contrasting generational and gendered visions of 1986 Northern Ireland: a year full of events linked to the Troubles.¹³ Furthermore, as this analysis seeks to demonstrate, *My Name* explores the internal conflicts of individuals amidst the external circumstances, such as the strong polarisation of politics and religion existent in Northern Ireland, and more specifically, how a traditional Protestant family deals with the tensions of a sectarian state.

Structured in duet format, Andy and Andrea reminisce about the same events. They are on opposite sides of the stage, relatively close to each other. Yet, through their monologues, we understand that they are not in each other's presence. Nonetheless, the issues presented by their internal monologues are in constant synchrony. In addition to this, the stage directions inform that Andrea is in Holloway Prison, London, and Andy is in an Old People's Home in Derry, Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the use of voice-over¹⁴ introduces a second layer to the monologues, conveying two alternative subjective and temporal perspectives to Andy and Andrea. We, readers, are offered a juxtaposition between past and present. The play presents what would be the actual voices of the past, which could be interpreted as flashbacks or echoes of the characters' minds. In this theatrical arrangement, the continuous shift of memories allows Andrea to bring into light a historical revisionist tone in the present time of the play as if amending Andy's version of the events. For instance, as when Andrea notes, "I didn't learn to walk and talk all on the same day. But that's how I remember it. Perhaps because the two events were joined in his memory." (*MY NAME*, p. 254). In contrast, Andy recounts the same childhood incident as "I learned you to talk, and I learned you to walk", as he later asserts, "[y]our old granda learned you how to make your way into the world." (*MY NAME*, p. 254). With regard to *My Name's* memory juxtaposition, Tracie (2018) argues, "[b]oth Andy and Andrea are in the location of their present, but their dialogue is rooted in

¹³ 1986 Northern Ireland started with an attack attributed to the Troubles in which James Andrew McCandless, 38 years old, and Michael Williams, 24, both Protestant members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, were killed in an ambush claimed by the I.R.A as a message to The Associated Press in London 'To Demonstrate Our Capacity'. At the time, the event was assumed to be a sign of a renewed campaign against the British security forces in Northern Ireland. source: New York Times, issued on January 2nd, 1986, entitled "I.R.A. Ambush Kills 2 Ulster Policemen" Available at: www.nytimes.com/1986/01/02/world/ira-ambush-kills-2-ulster-policemen.html

¹⁴ In *My Name*, Reid makes a clear distinction between the dialogues which take place at the present of the play, those yielded by both actors on stage, and the recounted memories, which are introduced through the use of voice-overs.

the past, and it is only in the past that the two characters interact” (p. 95). I further explore some of the passages of memory juxtaposition because in my understanding they display the gender pedagogies, that is, the processes of teaching and learning about cultured ways of experiencing gender that are in dispute by both characters in this play.

My Name starts by making explicit reference to its title when voice-overs from both characters recite the following lines (*MY NAME*, p. 254):

Andy (V.O.) My name, shall I tell you my...
 Andrea (V.O.) Name.
 Andy (V.O.) It's hard, but I'll...
 Andrea (V.O.) Try.
 Andy (V.O.) Sometimes I forget it, that's when I'm...
 Andrea (V.O.) Shy.
 Andy (V.O.) But I have another, I never forget. So ...
 Andrea (V.O.) Easy.
 Andy (V.O.) So...
 Andrea (V.O.) Pretty.
 Andy (V.O.) And that's...
 Andrea (V.O.) Granda's Pet.

The responsibility of carrying one's name is a recurrent issue throughout the play. The opening poem of *My Name* introduces the sort of relationship established between the two characters. As a family member, Andy, a father figure, plays a dominant role in Andrea's upbringing. Both used to share a relationship of fondness, as it is presented by Andy's voice-over when Andrea was a child, “You're just perfect. You're my joy. The light of my life.” (*MY NAME*, p. 253). This fondness is also reinforced by their affectionate poem. Notably, in their reciting, Andrea finishes her grandfather's sentences and accepts the role of being “Granda's Pet”. Similarly to what I discuss in *The Belle* about the gender pedagogies within folkloric songs recited by girls, in *My Name*, Andy's playful reciting instructs his young granddaughter that whenever she may forget her name, she can be recognised by means of her kinship to him. Here, Andrea's subjectivity does not exist in isolation, but only in relation to Andy's, who represents the phallic signifier in the current gender order.

Within these dynamics, Andrea is only granted the recognition of her existence through the social role of being the “Granda's Pet”, or by carrying her family's name. Curiously, when Andrea is born, on Andy's sixty-ninth birthday, her mother decides to name her after her grandfather, Andy, who according to Andrea, “didn't sober up for three days afterwards” (*MY NAME*, p. 255), thus reinforcing the implications of carrying someone's name. However, after several recollections, which both of them hold onto dearly, Andy foreshadows a rupture in their relationship when he states, “She never put a foot wrong. (Small pause.) When she was a child.” (*MY NAME*, p. 255). Andrea, in the present of the day,

is no longer dear to his grandfather. By following the traces of this rupture in their relationship I seek to explore how Andy's account of himself provides an understanding of the construction of masculinity in his social-political context. I argue that his masculine performance debilitates him of the affective power to find a common ground with his daughter and her menacing political position towards his gendered and political ideologies. Through this theoretical inquiry, *My Name* seems to work on the arduous task of finding a piece of common ground between two people who have grown apart.

Andrea reflects on her relationship with her grandfather, “I love you, even though I have grown to loathe everything you believe in.” (*MY NAME*, p. 275). As the play unfolds, Andrea starts to challenge some of the labels imposed by Andy, which are the same as those preached by the Protestant community, such as the place allocated for women—that is inside the house—, and being solemnly responsible for the family's well-being. For instance, Andrea decides to attend university in London over Belfast, and when in England, marries an Anglo-Pakistani man. These two actions are considered a personal and political betrayal to her grandfather and the Protestant Orange Order, thus “pushing” Andy to disown her. On this, Andrea states, “He was hurt at me even considering that anything in England could be better than anything in Northern Ireland. It’s one of those paradoxes of the Ulster Protestant Mentality—being more British than the British, but at the same time, believing that anybody leaving the Province for the Mainland [...] is letting the side down. [...] Betraying the cause.” (*MY NAME*, p. 265). Exploring this so-called “Ulster Mentality” referred to by Andrea is key to understanding the interconnection between the patterns of masculinity and the Unionist political agenda. Thus, the following subsection focuses on Andy's account of himself and his affective response to Andrea's inquisitive rhetoric as a valuable narrative about the gender dynamics that informs his identity, which is indissociable from the “Ulster Mentality”.

3.1 THAT MADE A MAN OUT OF ME

A compelling starting point to understand the Unionist matrix set of values that foregrounds Andy's condition is when Andy gives an account of himself and the “kind” of man he believes to “be”. One of his first comments regarding his masculine identity takes place when he reproaches the way his grandsons are being raised. Andy affirms that their mothers are too “soft” on them. The grandfather then reflects on his upbringing as an example of how boys should be “made” into men. To this, Andy states, “[m]y mother used to beat the livin’ daylight outa me if I as much as said a word outa place. Made a man of me. That an’

the Army.” (*MY NAME*, p. 255). At first, it can be evidenced in Andy’s lines that “education” through violence made him a man. An upbringing based on “beatings” conditions subjects to navigate their emotions through violence. De facto, the association of violence and masculinity has long been evidenced (CONNELL, 1987), however, there is more to it than just an acknowledgement of a masculine “feature” or systematic “pattern”. Although hegemonic forms of masculinities can be supported by physical force, it is a mistake to recognise hegemony exclusively as physical aggression, as violence can perpetuate ways of thinking. Rather, performing hegemony can be seen here as a strategic means of “ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion.” (CONNELL and MESSERSCHMIDT, 2005, p. 3). Therefore, hegemony emerges as a normative model of “manhood” that corresponds to particular historical and cultural circumstances in constant renovation.

In addition to this, understanding hegemony as multiple and never fixed challenges the idea that dominance in gender relations is simply a matter of privilege, but a complex process of costs and benefits, causing consequences for both enactors and refusers of hegemony. Andy’s persona and its current masculine performativity should be analysed as a momentary “balance” of social forces in gender relations. Hence, Andy’s masculinity does not represent a type of man in the Protestant community but is instead a position men occupy through social discourses that are present within it. Furthermore, Andy reaffirms his masculinity by sharing the “education” he received, stating that the constant “beatings” he suffered *made* him the man he is at present. Here, Andy’s perception about what “made” him a man resonates with a collective cultural understanding that places the category of gender as an achievable “essence”, as something ontologically experienced. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, this false “essence” of gender, which is an effect of a specific set of body-reflexive practices, is perceived here as a key element in the process of legitimisation to which bodies committed to hegemony strive through their performativity. In addition to this, I question, given Andy’s cultural context, what political and economic interests are met with the assemblage of practices dictated to Loyalist and Unionist Protestant men? To this, Andy gives us a hint in the second aspect of his initial lines when he says that the army was fundamental to his masculine formation.

The duty call of military forces can be seen as a decisive moment in the process of masculinisation of a man, which can be when one decides to enlist or to “reaffirm” a pledge of protecting the nation against internal and external threats. In Chapter 1, I discuss how the process of nation imagination intersects with a project of masculinity, generating a common

set of values that dictated a given assemblage of gender performativity for men. In the same line of thinking of Anderson's discussion of a nation's imagery maintenance, that is, through a synchronised continuum propagation of its unity, I argue further that the momentary balance of gendered power uses a similar mechanism to maintain its gender hierarchy. The gender order governs systematically the narratives or “fables” that circulate the life of men to construct masculine archetypes such as “heroes” or “warriors”. Throughout *My Name*, Andy recites several times the names of his comrades who died in the Battle of the Somme. For instance, when he takes a photo of his division from his tin box, he states:

Man, there were the days with the lads in France. Real men. Heroes. Ulster Protestant Orangemen. We'll never see their like again ... Joseph Sloan, Billy Matchett, Isaac Garson, Samuel Thompson, Hugh Montgomery. (*MY NAME*, p. 255).

Further to that, Andy also makes sure to teach little Andrea to memorise their names. By doing that, Andy acts as a safeguard of the honour of their heroic participation in the war. However, the adult Andrea, in the present of the play, introduces a more revisionist reading of the Ulster Division's participation in the Battle of the Somme:

Pale faces in a sepia photograph in his old tin box. Just a handful of the five and a half thousand Ulstermen who died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. [...] My grandfather was one of the two survivors from our road in Derry. He went to hell and back when he was just twenty three years old. (*MY NAME*, p. 256).

The older Andrea, who according to the stage directions knows now “what she didn't know in 1969”, re-signifies Andy's glorification of his war comrades as “a Litany of the Glorious Dead” (*MY NAME*, p. 256).

Such gendered archetypes generate affects that are crucial to reinforce the political standpoint so repeatedly guarded by Loyalists, that is, the right of Ulster to remain British. On the same line of reasoning, the entanglement of cultural and political projects in identity formation is discussed by Michael Ignatieff in *Blood and Belonging* (2006), as he states, “In Northern Ireland, [...] ethnicity, religion, and politics are soldered together into identities so total that it takes a defiant individual to escape their clutches.” (p. 394). However, the unity among Protestants, regardless of their religious engagement or political association, has resumed to a singular issue: the preservation of the Union. For instance, differently from Jack in *The Belle*, Andy does not ground his stances on the religious spectrum of Protestantism, rather, his perspective on being a “real Protestant” is predominantly conceived through the political positioning of being against Catholics, Nationalism, and Communism; three categories intermeshed into a common enemy that threatens the Ulster “imagined” by Protestants. To this, Andy conveys his community's collective reasoning behind the imagery

of Protestant's enemy as a single category when he states, "Turncoats and Communist. Catholic throwbacks, [...]. Popery. Bad blood. Nationalism. Communism. Same difference" (*MY NAME*, p. 261). To understand this stagnated historical moment that many Protestants like Andy experienced and constantly re-enact, I move on to consider the historical circumstances which have shaped the hegemonic patterns of masculinity in Unionist men in 1980s Northern Ireland.

Granted that not every man in a given community is benefited from the same patriarchal dividends, it becomes necessary to understand the economic and political singularities belonging to the hegemonic form of masculinity to which Andy's performativity advocates. In this intricate context of post-partition of the Irelands, Brian Singleton states:

This was a picture of the result of colonialism in which the working classes were divided and the one group (Unionists) were led to believe that they were the privileged that had first call on jobs and housing. Jobless, and with little or no economic power, and now in relative peace-time without any social agency or a clearly defined paramilitary enemy, the new working-class Protestant male could only exist by creating the conditions of furthering the patriarchal project by the subordination of women and other males. (2011, p. 17)

On this, the theatrical props in *My Name* also aid in the construction of neoliberal subjectivities and Unionist identity representation. Andy's walking stick, for instance, is a potent symbolic prop that represents the pride of being a lifetime working man. Andy believes that his former boss, Sir John, "a real gentleman", made him proud by presenting him with the walking stick. The ironic truth, which is disclosed by Andrea, is that Andy's mill co-workers organised a collection to pay for his walking stick as a special gift for his retirement. On Andy's last working day, Sir John, who contributed with just a single pound to the purchase, descended from his "carpeted office" to give a brief speech on loyalty in the workplace, praising the workers who served his father before him and now serve him. Andy's workmates, wishing to buy the best walking stick in the shop, had to ask Andy's daughter in secret to make up the difference for the ten shillings short. When Andrea discovers the truth about the purchase of her granda's stick, she questions him, "Who paid for your walking stick, granda?" (*MY NAME*, p. 263). That is the first time little Andrea hurts her grandfather, that is, by questioning things that must not be questioned. Her mother warns her "it wasn't a question of knowing. It was a question of pride and loyalty" (*MY NAME*, p. 263). These passages demonstrate the interconnection of "masculine" values of pride and loyalty as necessary to the maintenance of the political economy in which the Protestant working class does not find the means to revolt against their masters. In this given economic social context of Northern Ireland post-partition, the Unionist Protestant working-class are taught that they must work

hard, even under sordid conditions, while expecting very little from the state. The bodily processes that Andy's character experiences, especially in his masculine performance, are evidenced as we analyse his stubborn refusal to accept any sort of assistance from his local council.

As an elderly man, Andy is entitled to social programs like “Free Home Help” and “Meals-on-Wheels”. However, Andy is extremely offended when his older daughter suggests he consider social assistance from the State. To this suggestion, Andy promptly replies, “My country gives me medals. Honoured me. I never demeaned that by lookin' for a hand-out [...] I'll have none of that carry on! I have five daughters. They were brought up to know where their duty lies.” (*MY NAME*, p. 260). Andy associates social assistance with failed masculinity; with failing to fulfil one's role as that of a strong, independent man who can either take care of himself or has women to look after him. Additionally, Andy makes this association explicit when he states the following about people who seek social assistance:

Entitled! That's the trouble with the world today. People thinkin they're entitled to charity from the cradle to the grave. [...] From the day I come back from the Great War, till the day that I retired from the Linen Mill, I never went sick once. Not even when oul knee was that sore I could hardly walk, let alone work. I never used my war wound as an excuse to lie in my bed and live off the state. (*MY NAME*, p. 260).

To avoid a “failed” masculinity, men who attain hegemonic patterns pay a steep price of alienation in neo-liberal societies like Northern Ireland. For instance, Andy's walking stick and its purchase story can be seen here as a metaphor to understand the “crippling” assemblage of affects generated by the power regime that governs Unionist Protestant masculinity. The commodified workforce pacifies the male body to a status of obedience, or “loyalty”, as Andy's former employer states. A life of heavy-working so commonly known by working-class people is endorsed by the masculinist archetypes of the “breadwinner”. Thus, instead of critically inquiring about the means of their work exploitation, men are taught to be proud of their “loyalty”. Moreover, the constant menace brought by strong polarisation between Catholics and Protestants also adds to the pressure that Protestants have to “watch out” for Catholics in the work market competition for jobs.

Andrea hurts Andy again when she decides to pursue a major in Drama in England. Her grandfather immediately disapproves of it saying that she should train for a “proper job”. She tries to persuade him by stating that she gets a passion for arts after him. Andy's recollection of this conversation with Andrea triggers him to recall how his artistic dreams have been deferred as a child. When Andy was a young boy, he won a writing competition. Andy wrote a piece about his young widowed mother, who earned their living through

ironing handkerchiefs. The grandfather remarks that every time her mother was done with ironing, she would wrap the handkerchiefs in brown paper, which were beautifully arranged according to Andy. However, after the local newspaper announced Andy's winning, Andy's mother gets in a "terrible state about everybody knowin she ironed handkerchiefs at home to make ends meet." (*MY NAME*, p. 265). Andy then realises the wrapping brown paper was not a means of keeping the handkerchiefs clean, but to hide them from neighbours. This bashfulness about one's economic reality is something that Reid refer to when she states, "[e]verybody was working-class, but I was brought up to believe that there were two types of poverty—Protestant, which was respectable, and Catholic, which was not." (*ABEI JOURNAL*, 2004, p. 207)¹⁵. The Protestant pride of thinking their economic situation has nothing to do with the same economic struggles faced by working-class Catholics is indicative of how these conducts are strategically deployed as a proper "Protestant conduct" in order to maintain a disunited working-class in both sides of the sectarian communities.

These working-class Unionist men, who had experienced drastic changes in their country's system, were now no longer subservient to the British Crown; nevertheless, they turned to "their" own women, their wives, sisters, and mothers and other subjected and subordinated groups of men, such as Catholics, immigrants, to occupy their costly power places in the gender order. This can also be evidenced in Andy's xenophobic attack towards Andrea's husband. Andrea, when telling Andy about her plans to get married and even the fact that she got pregnant out of wedlock, has no problem getting her grandfather's approval, who seems to have accepted the fact that she found a partner overseas. However, as soon as Andrea gives away her husband's name, Hanif, Andy immediately asks "What the hell sort of name is that?" (*MY NAME*, p. 270). Interestingly, the changing point in their harmonious conversation is disrupted when someone's name is told, reinforcing again the meaningful implications carried through names. What follows is that Andy knows that Hanif is not "entirely" an Englishman. Without further clarifications, Andy starts to insult Andrea's soon-to-be husband, "He's an Argy! [...] A half-caste! A nig-nog! [...] Get back to England and keep your black bastard there with you." (*MY NAME*, p. 271). This is the moment in the play that their bond is completely lacerated. Andy expels Andrea from his room, saying "I'll have none of that carry-on in my family [...]. You have a name to upkeep! We are respected in this town." (*MY NAME*, p. 271). Andy's inability to overcome his eugenic ideology costs him his relationship with his granddaughter, as they never see each other again.

Further in the play, Andrea also questions her grandfather's narrative of the Ulster

¹⁵ Kurdi, M., "Interview with Christina Reid", *The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies*. Vol. 6, June 2004, p. 207.

Protestant Division's participation in the Battle of the Somme. In her youth, Andrea becomes friends with Eddie Reilly, the grandson of Edward Reilly, Andy's former war comrade. However, in Andy's perception, Reilly became a traitor for turning down his medal and joining the Labour Party. Here Andy's "Ulster Mentality" conditions his reasoning about the personal positioning of class politics as incompatible with the Ulster identity. Reilly is immediately banished from the Orange community as a consequence of its premises: if one steps even a bit out of the alliance, he or she is considered an outsider, an enemy. Reilly's grandson, Eddie, presents Andrea with a different version of the Battle of the Somme. Andrea later ponders a countering narrative in which the Ulster Protestant Divisions were sent in first, "[h]igh on alcohol and Ulster Protestant Pride." (*MY NAME*, p. 261). Curiously, here Andrea compares the pride of soldiers from the Ulster Division to being in a drunken state as if their pride gave them joy at the expense of blinding them to their realities. To Andy, such comments are seen as mockery, and extremely offensive to the memory of those who died so Ulster would remain British.

Nonetheless, Andy described his division's participation in the battle as "A Glorious Victory. Their Finest Hour. An inspiration for painters and poets." (*MY NAME*, p. 256). In this extract, Reid seems to place this meta-artistic comment in Andy's monologue to criticise the hegemonic narratives that have served as "inspiration" for Northern Irish painters and poets. However, *My Name*, as has been evidenced so far, counters this propensity and offers literature of a different kind, one that propels people to think critically about their culture and its collective memory. The constant fear from Unionists of losing what was conquered by his division during the First World War, makes Andy be in a state of vigilance for any threat; re-enacting conflicts every time his memories are contested. The men of the 36th Ulster Division embodied the mythologisation of Protestant Unionist and Orange agenda: to sacrifice themselves for the right to remain, as Andrea states, "more British than the British" (*MY NAME*, p. 265). The Battle of the Somme, regardless of its traumatic and horrible consequences, was seen as a victory from the Unionist Protestant perspective. While Andy addresses it as a "Glorious Victory", Andrea insists on a more revisionist view of the battle, as she states, "just a handful of the five thousand Ulstermen who died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme". Andrea then moves on to consider the losses on all sides of the confrontation, as she states, "the total number of dead, British, French and German, was one-point-two million." (*MY NAME*, p. 256). In this extract, I argue that different ways of remembering and narrating the Somme, presented here by Andy and Reilly, generate different sets of affects to deal with the traumatic experience of going to war and the possible

resignification of its costs. For instance, Eddie's grandfather does not display disrespect towards his war comrades. As Andrea tells us, he survived and "wept" every time he told this story to his grandson. On the other hand, whenever Andy speaks of the hardships of the war, he continues to take great pride by saying, "nobody never seen me cry" (*MY NAME*, p. 256). Here, Andy's response is again evidence of the affective deprivation that conditions his body. His masculinity performativity limits him to a suppressing channel of mediating his feelings.

A clear-cut example of the costs of Andy's limited affective power is evidenced when he is driven to wreck part of a precious photograph of his division stored in his tin can. After Reilly returns his war medal, Andy shows his disapproval by removing Reilly from the photo of his war comrades. Since they had their arms around each other, Andy had to cut himself out of the picture in order to remove Reilly. When questioned by Andrea about the reason for not being in the picture, Andy tells her "Cause I took it, that's why." (*MY NAME*, p. 261). Andy's inability to accept Reilly's revisionist positioning drives him to "modify" his original memory and his precious picture. In a metaphorical way, the cost of removing his friend from the photo is only possible at the expense of his self-annihilation. I argue that this self-annihilation alludes also to the cost of Andy's masculine performativity within the political dynamics of "Ulster Mentality". This detrimental cost experienced by Andy is read here as a diminishing bodily capacity to be affected and to affect others. These limited bodily affects generated by Andy's masculinity have strategic ways of propagation and preservation through different generations. I move on now to consider the role of "carrying on the tradition" in the perpetuation of gender pedagogies endorsed by the Orange Order.

3.2 CARRYING ON THE NAME, CARRYING ON THE TRADITION

In *My Name*, the past, as forged by Protestants like Andy, is constantly reenacted by those who are still faithful in performing traditional rituals, parades, and services. One example is when Andy refers to an already deceased Orange member, Billy Matchett. In Andy's words, Matchett was the best Lambeg drummer his road had ever seen. The Lambeg, a large drum beaten with curved bamboo canes, is an instrument strongly associated with the Orange tradition and the Twelfth of July Parade celebrations. We learn in the play that when Matchett dies, The Orange Lodge pays for his headstone, by doing so, according to Andy, the Order "done him proud" (*MY NAME*, p. 258). Just as one carries the name, "wee" Billy, Matchett's son, takes over the beating of the drum as he grows up. Andy resumes this transfer of role by saying, "Carryin' on the name. Carryin' on the tradition. Which is how it should

be. That's what life's about, child [referring to Andrea]. Knowin' who ye are, an' what ye come from." (*MY NAME*, p. 258). In this way, the past and the regimes of truth that have governed it are reaffirmed and endorsed in the present. Young Billy also pays the price for the ultimate honour in the Unionist community, that is, to die in the name of God and nation during the evacuation of Dunkirk, in the Second World War. He is "Cut off in his prime", just like his father before him; to this Andy states, "God's good and life goes on" (*MY NAME*, p. 258). In the voice-over, Andy recalls seeing "wee" Billy beating the Lambeg drum during a Twelfth of July Parade, and he moves on to say "Go on, ye boy ye! Yer granda'll never be dead as long as you're alive" (*MY NAME*, p. 258). Just as Connell (2005) describes the importance of the body for the performance of masculinity, it is also evidenced that ideal masculinity is not limited by it, but is a model that can continue to exist even when the enacter ceases to exist. Such is the case here with the "carrying the name, the tradition". As long as young Billy beats the drums he is reaffirming the values taught by his father. Like this metaphor of beating up the drums and carrying on the tradition, the assemblage of masculinity in Andy's context depends heavily on the continuum of restrictive gender performativity to forge its materiality. That is why in both political and gender spectrums, "being" a real Protestant man and carrying the tradition, if one questions the smallest part of this system, whether by rethinking historical events or ceasing the beating of the drums, one is immediately expelled by their peers for disclosing the vulnerability of their imagined community. Thus, as long as a major part of Protestant men continue to "beat the drums", the patriarchal order and the nation's sovereignty are still going to echo to future generations, and by doing that, maintaining a project of masculinity that diminishes the creative power of bodies. Hence, Andy's Unionist Protestant community is intricately dependable on hegemonic forms of masculinities to circulate its ideologies. The practices of those who are aligned with the Unionist agenda are the very effect of an ontological regime that seeks to protect its very existence.

On this topic, Michael Ignatieff, who has undertaken anthropological field research in an Orange community, states:

The sashes, the bonfires, the burning Popes and Tricolors, the Lambeg drums, the marching bands, the Red Hand flags, the songs: in all my journeys, I've never come across a form of nationalism so intensely ritualized. At one level, the reason for this is obvious. Here Britishness is ritualized because it is up against its antithesis and nemesis: Irish Republicanism (2006, p. 440).

Along this line of reasoning, Andrea is the one who identifies the costs of this "intensely ritualised nationalism" that is practised within the realms of the Orange Order. In *My Name*,

Andrea revisits the memory of seeing “wee” Billy beating the drums on the Twelfth of July. Differently from Andy, who praises Billy's commitment to “carrying on the tradition”, Andrea states:

Wee Billy was a huge, fat, sweaty man. The Lambeg Drum was strapped to his chest. He had been beating the drum for a long time, and his hands were bleeding. The blood trickled over the tattoos on his arms... Ulster is British; No Surrender; Remember the Somme/Dunkirk/the Relief of Derry. (*MY NAME*, p. 258).

Andrea's perception of what carrying the tradition does to Billy's body is a potent path to think about the hindering bodily consequences of performing the hegemonic patterns of masculinity dictated by the Orange Order. Billy's body is carved with tattoos that engrave in him the ideologies of his community. Here, the “Ulster Mentality” is represented again to produce conditioned male bodies that “carry the tradition” at their own life's expense. But the hindering aspects of such performativity are also attained at the symbolic level through the discourses that inform the gender practices of Protestantism. Just as Billy keeps beating the drums of tradition regardless of his bleeding, men in his community symbolically “bleed out” their bodies' capacity to affect and be affected by those around them. “Becoming” a man in these terms inevitably demands renouncing the body's necessity to seek the “*Ethology*” discussed by Spinoza, that is, the path that abandons moralistic worldview to seek the best relations possible for the human body, and here presented as an alternative path to masculinities.

Ignatieff (2006) characterises Ulster's Loyalism as nationalism that “dares not speak its name” (p. 440). In this vein, the so-called “Ulster mentality” is intricately operating in a subjective borderland of Britishness and Irish nationalism. The necessity to re-negotiate and mitigate parts of Unionist and Loyalist tradition is vital to move from a fragile post-conflict Northern Ireland. To remain a “real” Protestant man, Andy needs to tear up his bonding with his granddaughter and others who were dear to him, precisely because the countering narratives presented by them, if accepted, would dismantle the materiality on which his subjectivity relies on. In addition, Reid's decision on the props for each character reinforces the political stances present in *My Name*. Andrea's only props are a paper pad and a pencil. Those two objects can be seen as indicative of her attitude of constantly engaging in the task of revising, questioning, and countering her memories in comparison to her grandfather's perspective. On the other hand, Andy's props are a walking stick and an old tin box full of photographs that serve as memory triggers for his monologues. Andy's tin box, in comparison with Andrea's paper pad and pencil, represents a much more stagnated approach to the past. While Andrea can revisit her past and question the meaning and veracity of events, Andy

consolidates conduct that is encouraged in his community, that is, not to question things. I argue that this little tin box could be seen as a metaphor for the restraining project of masculinity that conditions Andy's character and its performativity. Questioning any aspect of his past as well as the collective memory of his community would be fatal to his own identity as a Loyal Protestant Orangeman. Accordingly, towards the end of the play, Andrea speaks to herself but addresses her grandfather:

You must have moments of doubt. You must have. You're stubborn and you're proud, but you're not a fool. Loyalty. Patriotism. Them and Us. You daren't question what all that has done to you, because once you question even a small part of it, you end up questioning it all. And to do that, would be to negate your whole life. Everything you've lived and survived by. (*MY NAME*, p. 275).

Returning to Ignatieff's definition of Ulster's Loyalism as nationalism that “dares not speak its name” and bearing in mind the very title of this play —*My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?*— I ponder: perhaps along this necessary journey of revisiting, questioning, and re-signifying, men like Andy will dare more generative ways of telling their names.

4 CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, I have sought to explore in both *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989) and *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1989) some of the conundrums present in the relationship of masculinities and Unionism within the Protestant community in 1980s Northern Ireland. What my analysis has shown is that the project of masculinities represented by the male characters in *The Belle* and *My Name* is a result of discursively constrained gender performativity. These male performances, when scrutinised as an accumulation of fiction about what men should “be” or act out, lead us to the crystallisation of a false essence of gender. The ontological experience, analysed here through textual evidence, provides a profitable understanding of the production of masculine archetypes that are informed by economic and political regimes. Furthermore, I have argued that Protestant masculinities result from the formation of a fictional body that is limited in its bodily affective capacity. Both Jack and Andy, the male protagonists in *The Belle* and *My Name*, have learned through gender pedagogies how to “be” men through extremely violent upbringings at the symbolic and physical levels. Jack's and Andy's cultural and political identities are subjugated to the never-reachable hegemonic masculinity that exhausts both bodies at the expense of their inherent bodily creative forces.

In Jack's case, for instance, his body is an accumulation of restrictive and prescriptive discourses generated by a punitive religious system. While in Andy's case, I have demonstrated the predominant influence of tradition within the realms of Unionism that informs his performativity hand in hand with a set of transcendental values such as bravery, toughness, and obedience. By investigating their masculinities, I examined the pre-existing conditions that inform both subjectivities to bodies severely wounded emotionally, and deprived of their bodily generative affective force. Notably, the scope of Jack's and Andy's lives is reduced to serve the Unionist cause. The ultimate cost induced by the conditioning system on which their performativity operates is what makes them unable to find a common affectionate bond with those around them, mainly the ones that no longer subscribe to the same ideologies.

The alienation of the self in Andy's case is simultaneously the requirement and cost of performing what is expected from his immediate community, which is the Orange Order. Instead of seeing himself as a body full of creative force, able to build upon affect and affect others around him, Andy devotes all his libidinal investments, that is, his bodily capacities, to affect or act upon being affected, to his role in the Orange Order. Andy's possibility of mitigating his identity to find a common ground with his beloved Andrea is not feasible if one is strongly committed to carrying on the tradition, and to reproducing and maintaining restrictive gendered ways of living. Rather, his body becomes a profit machine, an appendix of discourses that conditions his force to the dynamics of a project of masculinity that has no allegiance to the body's necessity, but to the maintenance of the Ulster state as "imagined" by Protestants. By "body's necessity" I mean the demanding exercise of reconsidering the historical, political, and cultural conditions that inform these bodies' creation, and furthermore, seeking generative ways of experiencing gender within their communities.

Through the dialogue established with Anderson's concept of "imagined communities", I have explored the similarities between the mechanisms of preservation of Ulster, as a nation, and the masculinity informed by the "Ulster Mentality". The analyses in both *The Belle* and *My Name* demonstrate that the embodiment of transcendent values of gender performances endorsed by the nation-state plays a fundamental role in the materialisation of a sense of identity and belonging. Both systems make use of a synchronised continuum propagation of its unity, by dictating political stances and gender performativity that help to forge its very materiality. Moreover, the gender order governs systematically the narratives that circulate the life of Protestant men to construct masculine archetypes at the expense of their bodies. The current "crippling" assemblage of affects generated by the Ulster

masculinity exhausts these men's bodies of their generative creative power, thus reducing their gender experience to the embedded and processual values that do not commit to an ethical life. These meticulous gender mechanisms leave men, like Andy and Jack, blind to their reality, workforce exploitation, and hindering bodily consequences. Veraciously, this very system of masculinity production teaches men to derive a certain pride and joy from the costly processes of performing these masculine patterns. In other words, the ideology that informs their practices operates not on the level of reasoning or religious belief, but the level of restrictive affect, which then imprisons men with a non-rupture behaviour that preserves the very power dynamics that oppresses them. The rhetoric of the nation homogenises collective issues while it simultaneously conditions its participants to unequal experiences in communal life. By having identities shaped through the dynamics of nation-state imagination, Protestant men in these plays are left unable to productively navigate intersectionalities of race, gender, and class. As I have advocated before, the maintenance of a given community, in this context, the Ulster state, is only feasible through the continuous commitment of those who operate solely through the masculine practices scrutinised in this study.

The selected plays here offered alternative ways, at the time of the production, of representing Protestant working-class masculinities. The political critique presented here is indicative of the potentiality of a theatre that evokes a collective assessment of the detrimental facets of Protestant masculinity. As I have argued before, theatre as a communal space can foster a mirror of social life that has its reflection between the realms of actuality and possibility. More than documenting these masculine archetypes, *The Belle* and *My Name* trail a path to a theatre-making and writing engaged with the potent role of identity reimagination and the political and cultural mitigation that is crucial to changing the symbolic social-psychological reality of a sectarian Northern Ireland. In conclusion, this study has indicated that Reid's plays, *The Belle* and *My Name*, put forward a criticism of the hegemonic narratives of representing men in the Protestant community. By shifting from the canonical archetypes of loyal men as "inspiration" for Northern Irish painters and poets (*MY NAME*, p. 256), Reid rather offers an honest picture of the destructive expenses of these masculine performativities that are committed to "carrying the name, the tradition" (*MY NAME*, p. 258). In both political and gender spectrums, "being" a man is dependent on re-enacting the past and carrying the tradition. In *My Name*, this is metaphorically portrayed in Andrea's memory of Billy's "beating of the drums" while his fingers bleed. In the plays discussed here, male bodies are represented as a locus that hosts the consequences of violent Unionist ideologies. The male Protestant body, in this sense, is carved by the effects of ideologies that are not

committed to life, but to a nation-state of sectarianism. Thus, as long as Protestant men, like Andy and Jack, keep beating the drums of tradition, regardless of their bleeding, men in their community will continue to “bleed out” their bodies' capacity to affect and be affected by those around them.

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