TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES: LENGUA, LITERATURA Y CULTURA

“IN DREAMS BEGIN RESPONSIBILITIES” IRISH POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. COMPARATIVE STUDY OF U2’S “SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY” AND W. B. YEATS’ “EASTER, 1916”

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Abstract

The present work attempts to analyze the influence of Irish political events in artistic expression, focusing on two particular works: “Easter, 1916” a poem by William Butler Yeats and “Sunday Bloody Sunday” a song written and composed by the Irish rock band U2. Both works are inspired by critical political events in Irish history: the Easter Rising, Belfast Bloody Sunday and Bloody Sunday, 1972. The poem was published in 1921 while the song was released in 1983.

A detailed analysis of the historical events that inspired both works was performed by studying different academic sources focused on these historical incidents. Thereafter, the artistic works were examined to identify how the authors represented these events in their respective works. Close readings and analytical studies published in books, peer reviewed journals and magazines were used to investigate influences, structure, and elements contributing to rhythm, metre and meaning of each of the works.

Finally, a comparative analysis was performed to examine and contrast common and divergent elements.

The results of the present study show that, although the two works studied here were published more than 60 years apart, they are remarkable in the number of elements they have in common. These elements include defense of antiviolence, use of military elements to question the pursuit of peaceful ends by violent means, use of religious allusions and references to question the ability of man to judge others and the use of rhetorical questions to emphasize the endurance of the Irish people through a long-standing division along political lines.

Keywords: W. B. Yeats, U2, artistic expression, political influence, Irish conflicts

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1. Introduction

1.1. Justification

According to Aristotle, “the aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward expression”. Humans process reality in many different ways; throughout history interpretation of reality has changed significantly according to many factors: currents of thought, science, religion and of course, individual perception. Through art, mankind has been able to represent the unique imprint that a given fact or issue may have on a particular individual at a given moment in time. But even more interesting, art is not only able to convey what the artist intended, but also completely new thoughts and feelings in the “receiver” that are foreign to the creator.

Ireland’s history is a story of relationships, relationships between civilizations, nations and communities, a story that pursues the acquisition of its own identity. The road to modern Ireland is an uneven path that has shaped the country’s character and that has transferred its preoccupations to artistic expression.

The present work aims to analyze the outlook of three historical events in Ireland’s history through the eyes of art. These events are the Belfast Bloody Sunday of 1921, the Easter Rising of 1916 and Bloody Sunday 1972.

1.2. Objectives

The aim of this work is to contrast and compare W. B. Yeats’ “Easter, 1916” and U2’s “Sunday Bloody Sunday” to showcase the pervading influence of the conflict between Protestant-Unionists and Catholic-Separatist on Irish artistic expression.

The specific objectives of this work are the following:

- To analyze how historic elements have been integrated in each of the chosen works of art.
- To assess other potential sources of influence on each of the works.

- To compare the poetical devices, rhythmic and acoustic elements of both works.
- To compare the elements used to convey meaning in each of the works.
- To discuss other academic assessments of the two chosen works.

1.3. State of the art

1.3.1. Historical events

The present work will analyze how specific events in Irish history are represented in two individual works of art and how these works are preoccupied with themes that are central to Irish power struggle and pursuit of identity. In order to achieve this, the following paragraphs will briefly review the historical events that inspired Yeats' "Easter, 1916" and U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday".

1.3.1.1. Easter Rising

By the turn of the 20th century, the promise of an Irish Home Rule had failed twice. The results of the 1910 general election, however, significantly changed the landscape. The results of the election gave a fairly equal distribution of seats among conservatives and liberals in the British Parliament; consequently, the support of the Home Rule Party became essential to allow the liberals to remain in office. However, the path to Home Rule was still hindered by the House of Lords, who had veto power. Pushed by King George V, the 1911 Parliament Act was passed to solve a two year-long standing conflict between the liberal government and the House of Lords over the "People's Budget" leaving the upper house without veto right and thus opening a real avenue for the approval of Home Rule.

In 1912 the government introduced for the third time a Home Rule Bill for Ireland that would become law in 1914. Unionist in the north of the country were, however, not in favor of Home Rule; reasons underlying this opposition included their belief that Ireland would be unable to manage the economically successful

north region, and fear that the Catholic Church would gain influence in the Irish Parliament. This opposition took not only constitutional approaches to oppose Home Rule but also threatened to use violence by means of the newly formed Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

In the south, the Irish Brotherhood (IRB) and other associations of volunteers commonly known as the Irish Volunteers made equally violent assertions and took steps towards establishing a more organized structure. However, upon the outbreak of World War I these differences were set aside, and the implementation of the Home Rule Bill was postponed until the end of the war.

In 1914 members of the IRB led by Padraig Pearse argued that while England was focused on the Great War a rebellion in Ireland had chance of success. Other volunteer groups, such as the Irish Citizen Army, formed by James Connelly in 1913 to defend striking workers from the police in the Dublin Lockout, were coming to the same resolution. These groups, already engaged in violent anti-war protests, were the heart of the Rising and some of its members were to become part of the military council of the IRB. One of the roles of the military council was to secure German support and weapons.

Shortly before the initiation of the Rising weapons arriving from Germany were intercepted by the Royal Navy and one of the leaders arriving from Germany was arrested. Short of weapons and of men, the rebels decided to move forward with their plan knowing that the chance of success were scarce.

On Easter Monday around 1600 men surrounded Dublin occupying a set of prominent buildings, fortified them, and waited for the British army to arrive. Connelly and Pearse led a group of men to the General Post Office where they raised the tricolor flag and Pearse proclaimed the Irish Republic. The British administration was somewhat cough off-guard; following the interception of the weaponry and arrest of Casement, one of the rebel leaders, they assumed that they had discouraged the rebellion. Pearse, Connolly and his men were able to hold their positions in Dublin for most of the week, but by Saturday the British Army was able to put down the rebellion.

The response of the military establishment in Ireland to the rebellion was to put thousands of suspects in internment camps in Britain and the leaders to be

tried by military court martial and sentence to death by firing squad resulting in the execution of 15 people. The crushing response of the British administration had a profound influence on public opinion that shifted to support the rebels in the aftermath of the Rising (Madden; McGarry).

1.3.1.2. Belfast Bloody Sunday, 1921

In the morning of November 21st, 1921 members of the original IRA broke into the houses of several undercover British agents and killed them in their beds. Members of the auxiliary police and soldiers of the Regular Royal Irish Constabulary fired upon the attendees of a football match in retaliation for the killings. Twelve people were killed and over 60 injured, in the subsequent stampede hundreds of peoples were injured. These events became known as the Belfast Bloody Sunday.

1.3.1.3. Bloody Sunday, 1972

During the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s tensions rose among Unionist and Nationalists with several branches of pacifist groups becoming increasingly violent. This period marked the beginning of “The Troubles”, a period of conflict that had its origin in long-term differences in political, class, ethnicity and religious causes. In simplistic terms, the long-standing differences between republicans, seeking the union of the Republic of Ireland, and the loyalists, that wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom, rose to levels that impeded a pacific coexistence.

The origins of this conflict can be set in the 17th century, when the English Crown granted English and Scottish settlers ownership of land in the north of the country forming the Plantation of Ulster as a means to anglicize the mostly Gaelic and Catholic region. The Plantation generated local conflicts that over time opened a schism between settlers in the north and the rest of the country. In the 19th Century voices advocating for greater independence of Ireland started to rise leading to the creation of nationalist and unionist parties; while the former sought to gain independence from the United Kingdom the latter preferred the country to remain as part of the Union. Although the differences among parties were not

inherently religious there was a cultural correlation between religion and politics, thus the supporters of the union were mainly Protestants while the factions leaning towards independence fell on the Catholic side (Ranelagh).

Prior to the outbreak of “The Troubles” attempts were made to appease both communities, but every action aimed at conceding improvements to one party was met with opposition on the other side. The pressure on both sides caused the reactivation of paramilitary groups; the IRA reemerged split in two parts, official IRA and Provisional IRA (PIRA) and so did the UVF. In addition, new associations such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) were set up to contribute to the defense of the loyalist community by resisting republican aggressions. The rise in violence further increased by the introduction of internment.

In January 1972 a civil rights protest at Magilligan Internment Camp was controlled using rubber bullets and gas, and just one week later another civil rights protest in Derry resulted in a riot that was contested by the Parachute Regiment. As a consequence of the response, 13 unarmed civilians were killed and 13 more injured, one on whom died in the next few days. These events were subsequently known as Bloody Sunday and were justified by the judge who concluded that there were strong suspicions that the killed civilian had been handling bombs or firearms. A second inquiry initiated in 1998 with conclusions released in 2010 found that the killings were “unjustified”.

In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday violence further escalated and the Direct Rule was introduced ending 50 years of self-government in Northern Ireland (Madden).

1.3.2. Yeats and U2 in the Irish Context

1.3.2.1. William Butler Yeats

William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin in 1865 into a Protestant Anglo-Irish middle-class family. He belonged to the Protestant minority that had settled and gained influence during the reconquest of Ireland by Britain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yeats’ family derived from landowning Protestants

that had settled in the northern part of the country that sustained themselves by trading and professional endeavors (Smith 21-22).

W. B. Yeats' grandfather, with whom he shared name, was a Rector of the Church of Ireland, John, his eldest son and the poet's father became a complete sceptic during the time he attended Trinity College. W. B Yeats' beliefs landed somewhere between his grandfather's faith and his father's religious skepticism (Ellmann 7). Susan Pollexfen, Yeats' mother, was not deeply religious, but she rejected her husband's skepticism. Politically, the Pollexfen's were Unionists while John was Nationalist (Ellmann 25).

When Yeats was two, his family moved to London, over the next fourteen years of his life his image of Ireland was shaped by his frequent visits to his mother's landowner family in county Sligo (Smith 24), where he would spend long periods of time while his father remained in London pursuing a career in painting after abandoning the legal profession (Ellmann 11).

Yeats' childhood was thus filled with contrasting influences. The urban setting of London and Dublin against the Irish countryside; his father's rejection of religion in the context of his mother's light religious beliefs speckled with local ghost stories. His father's Nationalism in spite of being of Anglo-Irish descent contrasted with the Pollexfen's Unionism. Yeats as a boy found solace in his solitude but as he grew his father's dominant character attempted to shape him (Ellmann 26). He refused to follow the family tradition of attending Trinity College alluding to the institution's old-fashion tradition, but, as he later recognized, his refusal had more to do with his failure to meet requirements in mathematics and classics rather than a belief that Trinity would hinder his artistic awakening (Ellmann 32).

After a brief flirtation with painting Yeats focused on poetry a medium in which his preoccupations can be identified. His father's skepticism and non-active nationalism evolved in Yeats into an interest in the occult and a vigorous form of Irish nationalism (Ellmann 45). Yeats nationalism was strongly influenced by O´Leary and his lifelong romantic interest Maud Gonne. While the former defended a dignified form opposed to violent actions the latter had a romantic view of the Irish cause that she shared with Yeats. Gonne and Yeats, however

differed significantly in the means that should be used to recover the rule over Ireland and on where the focus of nationalism should be set. Yeats main preoccupations where set on representations of Ireland through literature and the revival of Irish literature while Gonne partook in active political endeavors. In 1896 however, Yeats briefly joined the Irish Brotherhood, but became gradually disenchanted with Irish activism and thus turned back to his literary interests while Gonne's hatred for England increased (Ellmann 114-115). "Eastern, 1916" is well aligned with Yeats participation of Irish politics, while he recognized the need of Ireland to be self ruled and struggle for its own identity, he shows a romanticized view of the heroes and a profound love for his country that are intermingled with a lack of belief of what rebellion can actually do for the self-rule cause.

Yeats wrote "Easter,1916" between May and September 1916, but the poem wasn't published until 1921 in the collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Yeats).

1.3.2.2. U2

The Irish Rock and Roll band U2 was formed at a gathering in 1976 after one of the band members put up a note seeking musicians in a school board (U2 and McCormick 27). Unlike most bands in the history of Rock and Roll it is still composed of the four original members. Paul Hewson, known as Bono, is the lead singer and lyricist, David Evans, known as "The Edge", the lead guitarist, Adam Clayton plays the base and Larry Mullen, Jr. is the drummer. They attended and met at Mount Temple Comprehensive, a progressive, multi-denominational, co-educational school in Dublin. A very untraditional school for a very traditional country.

Bono is the son of a Protestant mother and a Catholic father; they fell in love at a time where the country was broken down along religious and political lines. Even though Catholicism was the majoritarian religion in Ireland Bono and his brother were brought up under the faith of the Church of Ireland while his father kept his Catholic affiliation. At the time, Protestantism was seen in Ireland as the religion of the former masters (U2 and McCormick 15). Politically, the Hewsons were measured, with ideas picked from left and right (U2 and McCormick 17).

Bono's life changed significantly shortly after the death of his grandfather and mother only a few days apart, in his own words:

"...and then there were only three men living on their own in a house" (U2 and McCormick 18).

Growing up in Ireland in the 70s Christianity was very much in everybody's life, but religion, at that time, was not only associated with a certain faith but was also a label with political connotations and more importantly that identified who your friends and enemies were. Bono, Edge, Adam and Larry were thus no different in this regard but attending a progressive school such as Mount Temple allowed them to have a less confrontational relation to religion. Upon the release of the album *Boy,* Bono, Edge and Larry were involved with the Christian group "Shalom". Their membership to this group made Edge question the conciliation between their religious beliefs and their life as rock stars. This tension between spirituality and rock became central early on and has been at the core of the band's artistic expression (Rothman).

However, U2's relation to religion and politics is far from simple. Growing up in Dublin during the Troubles made it difficult to disassociate both concepts, but at the end, a particular interpretation of religious thought that wasn't necessarily fully aligned with the traditional beliefs of the Church was the root of their pacifism and their yearn for a peaceful cohabitation among individuals regardless of religion and political views.

"Sunday Bloody Sunday" is the opening track of the 1983 album *War* (U2, Sunday Blooday Sunday).

1.4. Methodology

The first step in the present work was to relate the specific events that occurred during the Belfast Bloody Sunday, Easter Rising and Bloody Sunday to "Easter, 1916" and "Sunday Bloody Sunday" and how these events are represented in the forementioned works of art. For this purpose, emphasis was made on analyzing sources recounting the history of Ireland in general and the concrete events of this work in particular.

Thereafter the focus was shifted towards analyzing other potential sources of influence by studying in a systematic manner both works of art. For this purpose, bibliographic searches were made using academic search engines such as Google scholar, Microsoft Academic and BASE to identify works that may help understanding the sources of each of the works. Given the popularity of U2 regular google searches were also be performed to study potential non-academic sources.

Close readings and poetic analysis of each of the texts were used to analyze rhythmic elements, rhyme, and other poetic devices as well as the contribution of these devices to the overall meaning of each work.

Finally, relevant works identified using the above-mentioned data bases were used to discuss the findings of other scholars in relation to the topic of interest.

2. Development and discussion

2.1. "Easter 1916" and "Sunday Bloody Sunday" relation and reference of historical events.

Both "Easter 1916" and "Sunday Bloody Sunday" begin with a reference to the events that inspired them.

"I have met them at close of day"

begins the speaker of "Easter, 1916" while recalling the rebels of the uprising. He describes these Dubliners as ordinary people that he he met on the streets of Dublin and made jokes about because, as him, they were unimportant; they had no significance in the great order of things. By the end of the first stanza, the speaker recognizes a change from the ordinary to the extraordinary:

"All changed, changed utterly; A terrible beauty is born",

the rebels had been transformed (Smith 79). "Sunday Bloody Sunday", in contrast, kicks off with a reference to the feeling of horror evoked in the speaker when hearing about the news of Bloody Sunday:

"I can't believe the news today".

Both speakers begin their respective work by establishing a personal connection with the reader/listener, but this connection is established using different strategies. In the poem, the speaker showcases his personal relation to the rebels of the Easter Rising; in the song, the connection is made extending to the listener the horror perceived by the singer when hearing about the killing of 13 unarmed civilians, but neither of the works portray a detailed description of the actual events.

As the works evolve, the trend towards abstraction continues in *"Sunday Bloody Sunday"* by generating a series of war images that horrify the listener:

“broken bottles under children’s feet”/ “bodies strewn across the dead-end street”.

On the other hand, as Yeats’ poem proceeds the speaker walks the reader towards concretion. In the second stanza, the detailed description of the rebels ensures that they would be identified (Countess Constance Markievicz in line 17; Pearse in line 24; John MacBride in line 32) but by the fourth stanza guessing is no longer needed; the speaker calls them by their given name. Thus, the reference to the events of Bloody Sunday is used in the song to create a generalized image of violence and armed conflict that will be thereafter rejected.

The references to the Easter Rising, on the other hand, are very concrete and seek establishing a personal connection between the rebels and the speaker, between the speaker and the reader and consequently between the rebels and the reader. Yeats’ strategy may be understood in connection to his own position towards Irish politics.

Yeats asserted frequently that he refused to become involved in politics (Arkins 66) and although this can certainly be contested due to his temporary membership of the Irish brotherhood and his later role in the Irish senate, he had a skeptic view on the ability of modern democracy to organize society (Arkins 68). He believed that the ordinary man was easily manipulated by political parties and thus held that oligarchic organizations were better equipped to rule societies (Arkins 69).

Yeats’ promotion of the Irish revival and involvement with cultural nationalism may lead to the interpretation of him being a supporter of separatist claims, but his cultural views were not necessarily aligned with political ones. As such, Yeats agreed that Ireland should have more control of its own affairs without necessarily implying that a full break from the Union was needed to achieve this state of control. Thus, for Yeats, the connection to the rebels of the Rising made more sense at a personal level rather than on the political sphere, in other words, he recognized the heroic actions of the protagonist, as well as the senselessness of their sacrifice without necessarily agreeing with them.

In summary, these works contrast in the strategy used to represent the events that inspired them, but surprisingly these opposing strategies are used to convey a common theme in both artistic works, namely the futility of violence to solve conflicts.

Art is not a static entity and thus relations between art and reality can be reassessed with time to yield new interpretations. As mentioned above, “Sunday Bloody Sunday” was inspired by two very concrete events, but throughout time interpretation of the song has not been constant. The loose connection to the historical events (Cogan 80), together with the military rhythm (see 2.3) and references to battle led some parties to interpret the song as a rallying cry for the reunification of the Republic of Ireland (Phull). The band used live performances during the 80s’ to politically reposition their song and strengthen its association with antiviolence.

Some of the strategies used to reposition their work included the presentation of the song as a “non-rebel song” and establishing new connections between the imagery evoked by the lyrics and other violent events that would also be rejected (Marvilli). These associations were frequently introduced in the form of short films showcased during live concerts and speeches pronounced during the guitar riff between lines 28 and 29. An example of a new association established long after the first release of the song in 1983 took place on November 8, 1987 at a concert in Denver, Colorado. On that very same day, the IRA exploded a bomb in Enniskillen in a Remembrance ceremony held to commemorate British military war dead. An outraged Bono pronounced a speech[1], featuring “Sunday Bloody Sunday” in the background, deromanticizing the concept of revolution frequently associated to violent pursuits aimed at uniting Ireland (Phull).

In 2001 at a concert in Slane Castle, the band requested the audience to turn “Sunday Bloody Sunday” into a prayer for peace in Northern Ireland and

[1] “What's the glory, in taking a man from his bed and gunning him down in front of his wife and his children? Where's the glory in that? Where's the glory, in bombing a Remembrance Day parade of old age pensioners, the medals taken out and polished up for the day, where's the glory in that? To leave them dying, or crippled for life, or dead, under the rubble of the Revolution”.

remembered each of the individuals killed at the Omagh bombing at the hands of IRA by pronouncing their names out loud with “Sunday Bloody Sunday” echoing in the background (Morley and Somdahl-Sands 67). Other exercises of reassociation have aimed to link the song to chants (no more, no more, no more) that explicitly depict the band’s antimilitarism (Morley and Somdahl-Sands 66). But the antimilitary reassociations of the song have not been restricted to the Irish discourse; the song has frequently been used as a flagship for antiviolence in other contexts such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine or the 9/11 attacks (Morley and Somdahl-Sands 67).

2.2. Additional sources and references in “Easter, 1916” and “Sunday Bloody Sunday”.

2.2.1. Religious references

As mentioned in section 1.3.1.3, the conflicts around which this work is centered were not religious in their essence, however due to the intimate association between both parts of the conflict and a particular religious faith there is an identarian association between unionism and Protestantism and nationalism and Catholicism. This association is indeed so intimate that even the actual events seem to have been given religious connotations by the actors involved. This association is undoubtedly transferred into artistic representation in the form of imagery, as we will see below.

The sublime transformation that Yeats alludes to at the end of the first stanza indicates that something has been born anew; the ambivalence of the speaker towards the Rising is unequivocal throughout the poem, but by ending three of the four stanzas with the verse:

“A terrible beauty is born”

the speaker highlights that regardless of the horrible events that took place, the Rising yielded, at least to some extent, something beautiful. The biblical parallels to this concept are obvious, alluding to the resurrection of Christ on

Easter Sunday. Yeats makes use of this parallelism that was actually designed by the Pearse, who staged the uprising on Easter Monday pursuing Ireland's rebirth as a result of their own sacrifice (McGarry v).

Bono's intent when writing the lyrics of the song, as he asserts in an interview he gave for the "Louder Than Words: Rock, Power and Politics" exhibit in 2016, was to contrast the Easter Rising and Bloody Sunday, two tragedies that have obvious religious connotations to the resurrection of Christ [2].

The recurring image of a heart of flesh versus a heart of stone in "Easter, 1916" is used to reflect on the consequences of the rebel's actions. Were they blinded by the cause and failed to see the disaster that was to come? Much has been written on the intentions of the rebels of the Easter Rising; they knew they were short of men and weapons and very unlikely to succeed (McGarry). Why then this blood sacrifice? This metaphor, also present in the Bible,

"I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh"[3]

pinpoints to one of the main ideas of the poem that is also present in "Sunday Bloody Sunday":

"There's many lost, but tell me who has won?",

namely, the futility of violence as a means to reach peace. U2's song points out that man; numbed by TV, is unable to overcome the negative forces that lead mankind to violence; Yeats, rhetorically asks if "excess of love bewildered them" hence stripping man of the ability to withstand violent attitudes invoked by passion. This idea of powerlessness is further repeated in the song by alluding to the Scripture:

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[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_XfbHou88w&feature=emb_title

[3] Ezekiel 36:26

“We eat and drink while tomorrow we die”[4].

But rather than leaving the issue unsolved both works appear use the same strategy to overcome this sense of helplessness by pointing out that resolution is not up to man but is instead left to God:

“That is Heaven’s part”,

says the speaker in the fourth stanza of Yeats’ poem suggesting that it is God’s responsibility to judge whether sacrifice makes sense.

“To claim the victory Jesus won”,

proclaims the rock band towards the end of the song echoing Isaiah[5]. Ultimately, both statements lead to the rhetorical question that once again points to the theme of endurance*:*

“how long must we sing this song?”/ “O when may it suffice?”

How long must we suffer violence to reach the conclusion that it is futile? This existential question can be traced back to the Psalms where the question “How long”[6] resonates throughout the songs in the hope of spiritual reunion with Christ

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[4] 1Corinthians15:32; Isaiah 22:13

[5] “Where, O death, is your victory?”, Isaiah 25:8

[6] Psalm 6:3 My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?

Psalm 13:1-2 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Psalm 89:46 How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?

(Galbraith 198), hence further enhancing the idea that salvation is at the end of the struggle.

But where U2's song clearly ends in a hopeful tone (Galbraith 197), Yeats' poem is perhaps more obscure, while there is a clear intention of transferring the responsibility of judging to God the speaker cannot completely refrain from insinuating that perhaps some of the blame still resides within the rebels.

Both works are artistic representations or reflections on violent events in Irish history; military elements, such as rhythm and metre (see 2.3), are used to emphasize a message that appears to be inclined towards a pacific resolution of the conflict rather than a violent one. This change in associations, according to some scholars, echoes the change that occurs from the Old to the New Testament (Allen and Carlin 71)

Finally, to further emphasize the futility of violence, U2 borrows again from the scriptures to point that:

"trenches dug within our hearts",

have made their way not only to communities but also to families where:

"mothers, children, brothers, sisters", have been torn apart[7].

2.2.2. References to Ireland

"Easter, 1916" and "Sunday Bloody Sunday" evoke appalling events that are central to Irish history. Both works sought not only to emphasize the tragedy of a country whose inhabitants were unable to find a peaceful solution to a long-standing conflict but also to feature the love Irish people feel towards their country and its heroes, regardless of their shortcomings. Yeats uses the third stanza to

[7] For I have come to turn' a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household (Mathew 10:35).

celebrate the Irish landscape and to establish a sentimental connection to the reader by describing the beauty of the land. The landscape brings to mind the color of the grass, commonly linked to Ireland, and this color is thereafter used to make a metaphorical link to the fallen that will be remembered:

"whenever green is worn".

U2's reference to Irishness is perhaps more subtle; rather than using visual images, an acoustic reference is made by including the sound of the traditional Irish fiddle in certain parts of the song during live performances (Marstal 18).

2.2.3. Other sources

The concept of "terrible beauty" that ends three out of four stanzas is, according to Helen Vendler, borrowed from Blake's sublime (Vendler 20), as we will see below, change is an essential concept in this poem.

Yeats' contrasts the social change occurring both in the rebels and in society due to the Rising to the changing patterns of nature. While Yeats understands change in nature as a positive feature intimately associated with life, he is somewhat ambiguous regarding the social change provoked by the Rising; it may have given rise to heroes but at a terrible cost. The ending of the third stanza, precisely the one focusing on nature, is different from the ending of other stanzas, it lacks the words that associates change to the sublime.

2.3. Structure and form, poetical devices, rhythmic and acoustic elements.

"Easter, 1916" is to some extent an elegy; although it does not have the metrical form of a classical elegy (alternating hexameters and pentameters) the subject matter expresses a sense of mourning over the loss of the rebels of the Easter Rising. This subject matter coincides with the modern definition of elegy:

"a formal and sustained lament in verse for the death of a particular person, usually ending in consolation" (Harphan 92).

However, in contrast to most modern elegies, Yeats does not focus on the loss of one specific person but rather on the loss of a group of people. “Sunday Bloody Sunday” adopts the general structure of a lay sermon with repeating argumentative elements in the form of problem-solution (Cranny-Francis and Martin 308), this form is aligned with the message of the song as we shall see in section 2.4.

Yeats’ poem is composed of four stanzas, stanzas 1 and 3 are comprised of 16 verses whereas stanzas 2 and 4 are conformed by 24 verses, the structure of the poem is an explicit reference to the date of the Easter Rising. 16, refers to the year, 24 to the day of the month at which the Rising began and 4 to the month of April.

Most verses contain three stresses and the stress generally falls on the second syllable of each foot giving the poem a loose iambic tone (see 5.2), but there are many irregularities that break the iambic verse and contribute to enhance particular words, an example of this break in rhythm can be seen in verse 15:

“All **changed**, **changed ut**terly”,

where three consecutive stresses foreground one of the main themes of the poem: change.

The trimeter verse gives the poem a quick military-like rhythm that in Yeats became associated to nationalist themes (Vendler 17) but in this case can also be correlated to the rhythm of change (Vendler 17), juxtaposing the themes of nationalism and change.

“Sunday Bloody Sunday” has a very loose structure, lines have irregular length and the number of stresses per line varies from two to four (see 5.1). The rhythmic structure of the song is however not achieved through the pattern of stresses but rather through the rhythm of the drums. The syncopated beating of the drums throughout the song evokes, in more specific way than Yeats’ trimeter, a military march (Endrinal 94). This rhythmic structure serves to contrast the military tone of the melody with the pacifist message conveyed by the language.

This effect is further emphasized in live concerts where Bono frequently waves a white flag while engaging in a pretend military march evoking a military pursuit of a peaceful end (Marvilli). As mentioned above (see 2.1), the irony of using military elements to defend a non-military resolution to the underlying conflict has frequently been misinterpreted leading audiences to the conclusion that the band somewhat supports a military endeavor in Ireland. To further clarify this ironic element the song is frequently preceded by the line “this is not a rebel song” thus disengaging the military rhythm of the song from any potential support of an armed resolution.

The rhyme pattern of “Easter, 1916” is alternate, with some slant rhyme (see 5.2); “Sunday Bloody Sunday” is written couplets; the rhyme pattern and frequent repetition is aligned with its structure in the form of a lay sermon where they contribute to reinforcing the didactical nature that is frequently present in these types of discourses.

Alliteration by repetition of “b” sounds (“**b**roken”, “**b**ottles” v8, “**b**odies” v9, “**b**attle” v10 and “**b**ack” twice in v11) and “s” sounds (sibilance) (“**S**unday”, “**s**ing”, “**s**ong”) is frequent throughout U2’s song. The former alliteration, based on the letter “b”, is somewhat reminiscent of the sound of shots and contributes to the military-themed sonority of the song. It is also worth mentioning that the forementioned alliterations coincide with the main sounds of the title of the song “**S**unday” and “**b**loody” thus enhancing the importance of the relation between words and sounds.

This observation is in line with the findings of Endrinal (Endrinal), though his observations are focused on the sonority of the letter “b” and its relation to the tittle. He argues that the repetition of a “b” based alliteration accentuates the importance of the word “bloody” as an embodiment of violence sandwiched among two “Sundays”, the holy Christian day. To Endrinal, this points to a call for remembering the victims of the tragic events that the songs draws from and again that violence is not the way to settle disputes (Endrinal 95).

Sibilance and alliteration are also present in Yeats’ poem. Surprisingly, alliteration in “Easter, 1916” also relies also on the consonant “b” and serves to give sonority to the phrase “a terrible **b**eauty is **b**orn”. Sibilance is most evident

at the beginning of the third stanza: Heart**s, su**mmer, **s**eem, **s**tone, **s**tream, the "s" resounds throughout the first four verses of this stanza evoking the sound of a running spring precisely when the speaker focuses on the beauty and mutability of the Irish landscape.

The endurance of the Irish people to withstand violence in order to reach an end to the social and religious forces that kept the communities apart are indisputably central to the works analyzed here. In both cases the rhetorical "how long?" is used to explore this concept. Rhetorical questions are frequently used in lay sermons to pinpoint an important concept; "Sunday Bloody Sunday" makes extensive use of this device by asking not only how long must the Irish endure but also to question the meaning of violence. Perhaps the most striking similitude between U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday" and Yeats' "Easter, 1916" is precisely the use of the rhetorical elements to question the meaning of Irish sacrifice in the pursuit of peace.

One of the best-known poetical devices of "Easter, 1916" is the oxymoron that ends three of the four stanzas:

"Terrible beauty"

This oxymoron is a magnificent example of the theme of a poem summarized in two words, and underscores, again, the ambivalence of the speaker towards the Rising and the Irish attempt to resolve the long-standing conflict with England through armed rebellion. This oxymoron depicts Yeats' romantic influence and unites in one single poetic device two essential elements of the romantic tradition: sublimity and the archetype of the romantic hero.

2.4. Elements Contributing to Meaning

Meaning in art is achieved by the combination of several devices. Words and language are obviously important elements of meaning, but intention, tone, allusions, figures of sound, music, structure, color, images and symbols are other elements that certainly contribute to meaning in works of art. More importantly,

meaning is not fixed and depends not only on the elements used by the author but on the perception of the receiver.

The third stanza of the “Easter, 1916” makes a break in theme and form: not only the final two verses of the stanza differ from the ending of the rest of the stanzas but the theme changes from a social centered topic in stanzas 1, 2 and 4 to a nature and landscape-centered theme in stanza 3 (Vendler 20). The effect of this theme-change is a profound contrast between the “unnatural” change suffered by the rebels due to the Rising and the active and organic change of nature (Vendler 19). The inevitable change of the natural elements of stanza 3, the stream, the horse, the rider, the birds, the clouds is contrasted against the immutability of the stone, the only fixed element in stanza 3 that is not subject to the effects of time. By foregrounding the unchangeability of the stone, the speaker implies that the change suffered by the rebels’ heart (from flesh to stone) is different from the natural course; thus, giving rise to something unnatural (a terrible beauty) (Vendler 19).

Repetition is used in both the song and the poem to emphasize central ideas within the song and the poem. U2’s song doubles the word “Sunday” in the title, this repetition serves not only to highlight that the two violent events occurred on the Lord’s Day but by framing the word “bloody” by two “Sundays” a cycle is formed possibly indicating that at the end peace (God) will prevail.

Other repetitive elements in “Sunday Bloody Sunday” include the word “tonight” and the phrases “how long?” and “wipe your tears away”, elements that are central to the overall meaning of the song. “Tonight” and “wipe your tears away” give a hopeful tone to the song but the repetition of “how long” also indicates that the path to peace is a struggle to be conquered.

In contrast, there is only one repetitive element in Yeats’ poem, the two last verses of stanzas 1, 2 and 4, here again, as it was in the case the U2 song, repetition is used to emphasize the central idea of change already thoroughly analyzed throughout this work.

In a song the contribution of the music is commonly used to set a tone or to mark different sections of the narrative; where a poem relies heavily on language, imagery and rhythmic devices a song may add a further layer of complexity with

the melody. Among these features Endrinal highlights the absence of the characteristic echo/delay effect of Edge's guitar with the aim of delivering a message that is more direct and aligned with the political purpose of the song (Endrinal 94).

As mentioned in section 2.1 the speaker of "Easter, 1916" does not name the rebels until the end of the poem; but descriptions in the second stanza are accurate enough for the rebels to be pinpointed. These descriptions are preceded by demonstratives ("that woman…", "this man…") that serve the purpose of closing the distance between the rebels and the reader by enclosing them in the same space as the speaker.

In "Sunday Bloody Sunday" distances are measured by the pronouns "I" and "we". The speaker starts out by telling his experience, how he reacts to the news but when action is required, he includes the listener:

"how long must **we** sing this song"; "**we** can be as one".

3. Conclusion

Political and religious thought are essential to determine the identity of an individual. In Ireland, however, the long-standing conflict with Great Britain in pursuit of some degree of autonomy made these matters become central to national identity. Since the seventeenth century Irishmen have been broken down along political and religious lines, often disregarding the significance of what it actually meant to proclaim oneself a Catholic or a member of the Church of Ireland. The concept behind the label became blurry and was reassociated to matters of friends and enemies. Such a long-standing conflict had to necessarily permeate into the field or art.

Here two radically different artistic expressions are analyzed, a poem by William Butler Yeats contemporary to the Eastern Rising and well acquainted to some of the perpetrators and a song by Irish rock band U2. While both works may seem to be distant in terms of the vehicle of expression, they certainly have commonalities:

- Both works are inspired by political events that are central to the history of Ireland.
- The political conflicts that inspired them have religious associations, but religion can hardly be pinpointed as the real underlying cause.
- Both works recapitulate the religious undertones in the form of imagery and allusion.
- Both works make subtle references to Ireland.
- Both works question the use of violence to reach a peaceful reconciliation of the Irish people.
- Military elements are used in both works to emphasize conflict and the futility of violence.
- Acoustic elements such as alliteration and sibilance are used in both artistic representations to convey meaning.
- The song and the poem highlight the endurance of the Irish society to withstand centuries of conflict.

- Both works make use of rhetorical questions to tie together endurance and futility of violence.

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5. Annexes

The following annexes reproduce the song and the poem compared in this work. Stressed syllables are marked in bold and the lettering at the end of each verse indicates the rhyme pattern.

5.1. Annex 1: Sunday Bloody Sunday

1	I **can**'t be**lie**ve the **ne**ws to**day**	**A**
2	Oh, I can't **clo**se my **ey**es and **ma**ke it **go** away	A
3	How **long**, **how** long must we **sing** this **song**?	B
4	How **long**? How **long**?	B
5	'Cause tonight	C
6	We can be as one	D
7	Tonight	C
8	**Bro**ken **bo**ttles under **chil**dren's **fee**t	F
9	**Bo**dies **strew**n across the **dead**-**end** street	F
10	But I won't **heed** the **ba**ttle **call**	**G**
11	It puts my **back** up, puts my **back** up against the **wall**	**G**
12	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
13	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
14	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
15	**Sun**day, Bloody Sun**day**	**A**
16	Alright, let's go	H
17	And the **ba**ttle's just be**gun**	**I**
18	There's many **lost**, but **tell** me **who** has **won**?	I
19	The **tren**ches **dug** with**in** our **hearts**	**J**
20	And **mo**thers, **chil**dren, **bro**thers, **sis**ters torn a**part**	**j**
21	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
22	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
23	How **long**, **how** long must we **sing** this **song**?	B
24	How **long**? How **long**?	B

25	'Cause to**nigh**t we can **be** as **one**, to**night**	**D**
26	To**night**, to**night** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	D
27	To**night**, **to**night (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	D
28	Alright, let's **go**	**H**
29	**Wipe** the **tears** from your eyes	K
30	**Wipe** your **tears** a**way**	**A**
31	I'll **wipe** your **tears** a**way**	**A**
32	I'll **wipe** your **tears** a**way** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	A
33	I'll **wipe** your **blood**shot **eyes** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	K
34	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
35	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
36	**Sun**day, Bloody **Sun**day	A
37	**Sun**day, Bloody Sunday	A
38	And it's **true** we are i**mmu**ne	L
39	When **fact** is **fic**tion and T**V** real**ity**	**I**
40	And to**day** the **mil**lions **cry** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	M
41	We **eat** and **drink** while to**morrow** they **die** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	M
42	The real **ba**ttle just be**gun** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	I
43	To **cla**im the **vic**tory **Je**sus **won** (Sunday, Bloody Sunday)	I
44	On Sunday, Bloody Sunday, yeah	A
45	Sunday, Bloody Sunday.	A

5.2. Annex 2: Easter, 1916

1	I have **met** them at **close** of **day**	A
2	**Com**ing with **vi**vid **fa**ces	B
3	From **coun**ter or **desk** among **grey**	**A**
4	**Eight**eenth-**cen**tury **hou**ses.	B
5	I have **passed** with a **nod** of the **head**	**C**
6	Or po**lite mea**ningless **words**,	D
7	Or have **lin**gered a**while** and **said**	**C**
8	Po**lite mea**ningless **words**,	D
9	And thought be**fore** I had **done**	**E**
10	Of a **mo**cking **tale** or a **gibe**	**F**
11	To **please** a com**pa**nion	e[8]
12	Around the **fire** at the **club**,	f
13	Being **cer**tain that **they** and **I**	**G**
14	But **lived** where **mot**ley is **worn**:	H
15	All **changed**, **changed ut**terly:	g
16	A **te**rrible **beau**ty is **born**.	H
17	That **wo**man's **days** were **spent**	**A**
18	In **ig**norant good-**will**,	B
19	Her **nights** in **ar**gument	A
20	Until her **voice** grew **shrill**.	B
21	What **voice** more **sweet** than **hers**	**C**
22	When, **young** and **beau**tiful,	D
23	She **rode** to **ha**rriers?	c
24	This **man** had **kept** a **schoo**l	d
25	And **rode** our **wingèd** horse;	E
26	This **o**ther his **hel**per and **friend**	**F**
27	Was **co**ming into his **force**;	E
28	He **might** have won **fame** in the **end**,	F

[8] Lower case indicates slant rhyme

29	So **sen**sitive his nature **seemed**,	G
30	So **da**ring and **sweet** his **though**t.	H
31	This **o**ther **man** I had **dreamed**	G
32	A **drun**ken, vain**glo**rious **lout**.	H
33	He had **done** most bitter **wrong**	**I**
34	To **some** who are **near** my **heart**,	J
35	Yet I **num**ber **him** in the **song**;	I
36	He, **too**, has re**signed** his **part**	**J**
37	In the **ca**sual **co**medy;	K
38	He, **too**, has been **changed** in his t**urn**,	L
39	Trans**formed u**tterly:	K
40	A **te**rrible **beau**ty is **born**.	L
41	**Hearts** with one **pur**pose a**lone**	**A**
42	Through **su**mmer and **win**ter **seem**	**B**
43	En**chan**ted to a **stone**	**A**
44	To **trou**ble the **li**ving **stream**.	B
45	The **horse** that **comes** from the **road**,	C
46	The **ri**der, the **birds** that **range**	**D**
47	From **cloud** to **tumb**ling **cloud**,	c
48	**Mi**nute by **mi**nute they **change**;	D
49	A **sha**dow of **cloud** on the **stream**	**B**
50	**Chan**ges **mi**nute by **mi**nute;	E
51	A **horse**-hoof **slides** on the **brim**,	B
52	And a **horse** plashes with**in it**;	e
53	The **long**-legged **moor**-hens **dive**,	F
54	And **hens** to moor-**cocks call**;	G
55	**Mi**nute by **mi**nute they **live:**	**f**
56	The **stone's** in the **midst** of **all.**	**G**
57	Too **long** a **sa**crifice	A
58	Can **make** a **stone** of the **heart**.	B
59	O **when** may **it** suf**fice**?	A
60	That is **Hea**ven's **part**, our **part**	**B**

61	To **mur**mur **name** upon **name**,	C
62	As a **mo**ther **names** her **child**	**D**
63	When **sleep** at **last** has **come**	**C**
64	On **limbs** that **had** run **wild.**	**D**
65	What is **it** but **night**fall?	E
66	No, no, not **nigh**t but **death**;	F
67	Was it **needl**ess **death** after **all**?	E
68	For **En**gland may **keep faith**	**F**
69	For all that is **done** and **said**.	G
70	We **know** their **dream**; e**nough**	**H**
71	To **know** they **dreamed** and are **dead**;	G
72	And **what** if ex**cess** of **love**	**H**
73	Be**wil**dered **them** till they **died?**	**I**
74	I **write** it **out** in a **verse**—	J
75	Mac**Donagh** and Mac**Bride**	**I**
76	And **Co**nnolly and **Pearse**	**J**
77	**Now** and in **time** to **be**,	K
78	Wherever **green** is **worn**,	L
79	Are **changed**, **changed u**tterly:	k
80	A **te**rrible **beau**ty is **born**.	L