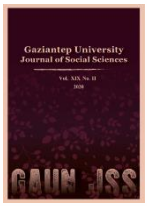

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Erotics of War and Sovereignty in Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green*

Iris Murdoch'un The Red and The Green Başlıklı Romanında Savaş ve Hükümranlığın Erotiği

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Ö Z

İrlandalı yazar Iris Murdoch, *The Red and the Green* başlıklı romanında yirminci yüzyıl İrlanda tarihinin en kaotik dönemeçlerinden biri olarak kabul edilen 1916 Paskalya Ayaklanmasını merkeze alan bir anlatı evreni kurar ve bu tarihsel süreçte Dublin'de küçük bir Anglo-İrlandalı camianın yaşadığı ahlaki çatışma ve ikilemleri ortaya koyan bir olay örgüsü sunar. Bu makalenin temel tartışma izleği, Iris Murdoch'un söz konusu romanını 1916 Paskalya Ayaklanmasının mito-poetik söylemi bağlamında okumak ve Murdoch'un İrlanda yakın tarihini kendi kökleri üzerinden nasıl yeniden düşündüğünü ortaya koymaktır. Yürütülecek tartışmanın temel önermesi, Paskalya Ayaklanmasının milliyetçilik söylemine dayalı savaş retoriğinde, Keltlerin mitik tahayyüllerinde ve anlatılarında başat rol oynayan feminen unsurların cinsellikten arındırılıp romantize ve idealize edilmiş olduğu ve bu söyleme yanıt olarak romanda anlatının merkezinde yer alan Millie karakterinin feminen arketipini ve Erotik ilkeyi temsilen bir karşı söylem olarak karakterize edildiğidir. Bu bağlamda yürütülecek tartışmada ortaya konacağı gibi romanın olay örgüsünün merkezinde yer alan Millie dişil arketip imgesi ve sembolik bir Eros temsili olarak Paskalya Ayaklanmasının eril şiddet ve savaş retoriğini sarsarak bir karşıt söylem üretir. Bu argüman çerçevesinde, Murdoch'un, İrlanda Diriliş hareketi ve zihniyetinin cinselliğinden arındırdığı, romantize ve idealize ettiği Hükümranlık Tanrıçası (Sovereignty Goddess) temsillerine cevap olarak Millie temsilinde bu feminen unsuru yeniden inşa ederek romanı eleştirel bir etos üzerine inşa ettiği söylenebilir.

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A B S T R A C T

In *The Red and the Green* the Irish writer Iris Murdoch creates a narrative universe that focuses on the Easter Rising of 1916, one of the most tumultuous turns in twentieth century Irish history, and introduces a rich web of moral conflicts and dilemmas experienced by members of an Anglo-Irish community in Dublin. The main concern of this article is to introduce a reading of Murdoch's The Red and the Green in the context of the mythopoetic discourse of the Easter Rising of 1916, which predominantly reflected the nationalist rhetoric of the Irish Revivalist Movement, and to show how Murdoch revisualizes recent Irish history through her own cultural origins. The argument is grounded on the premise that Millie features in the novel as the embodiment of the feminine archetype and symbolic representation of the Erotic in stark contrast to the war rhetoric of the Easter Rising that relies heavily on the desexualized, romanticized and idealized versions of the feminine in Celtic mythic imagination. Millie's feminine archetypal image and her symbolic representation of Eros distorts and shakes the masculine rhetoric of the Rising. As a response to the desexualized, sterile, and therefore displaced representations of the Sovereignty Goddess in the literature of the Irish Revival, Murdoch introduces a critical ethos in the novel by restoring the essence of this feminine element in the portrayal of Millie, the central character around whom the plot largely revolves.

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Introduction

As a Dublin born Anglo-Irish novelist, Iris Murdoch never failed to mention her Irish roots, and her personal connection to Ireland found its way into her oeuvre. Among her twenty-six novels, only in *The Unicorn* (1963) and *The Red and the Green* (1965) Murdoch uses Ireland as setting or Irish history as her subject matter. While references to Ireland or to Murdoch's biographical/cultural bond to Ireland are quite subtle, silent or veiled in *The Unicorn* which descends from the Irish Protestant Gothic tradition; *The Red and the Green*, Murdoch's only historical novel, is set in the colonial capital of Dublin and zooms in to the intricate relationships between members of an extended Anglo-Irish family during the week precipitating the Easter Rising of 1916. In *The Red and the Green*, Murdoch recaptures and fictionalizes this pivotal hallmark of Irish history through the lens of an Anglo-Irish community, and thus portrays a lesser manifested picture of the Rising. The novel's rich gallery of portraits provides a polyglot space that accommodates diverse perspectives and attitudes towards the Rising. Murdoch, in this respect, disrupts performative clichés of national allegory that rests on the dichotomy of Irishness and Englishness. Given the multiplicity of discourses in the novel, it will not be erroneous to consider *The Red and the Green* as one of the early examples of the revisionist school of historical novel writing in modern Irish literature. Rather than reimagining an alternative historical setting and thematic background for the Easter Rising, Murdoch turns her narrative gaze towards formerly neglected and even benighted corners and spots of the Irish community in the Dublin of 1916. In one of her interviews Murdoch explains that she tried to get the historical details right "for that particular week" and did meticulous research on the historical background, including "what day a particular article was published on, what day and how they changed the plan for the insurrection, and what the English were doing, what everybody was doing during that week" (as cited in Dooley and White, 2019, p. 999). Set against this elaborately and faithfully revitalized historical background, the plot reveals a social and political panorama much richer than the ideologically engaged historical novels of the period. The major contribution of the novel to the canon of the Irish historical novel, however, is its nonconventional counter-representations of the mythopoetic nationalist discourse of the Irish Revival that energized the spirit of the Rising. On the basis of this premise, I would argue that Murdoch in *The Red and the Green* decentres the representations of the feminine element in the Rising's mythic discourse that relies heavily on the romanticized and distorted image of Mother Ireland and the figure of the Celtic sovereignty goddess. This article, thus, aims to explore the novel's treatment of the displaced image of the Irish sovereignty goddess and to address Murdoch's response to the politics of death and sexuality in the mythopoetic discourse of the Irish Revival and Easter Rising.

Murdoch's motive as a novelist to revisit and fictionalize a traumatic period in Irish history may easily be located in her intellectual desire to re/claim a forgotten or obscured origin. Given that it was published on the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, the novel may be read as Murdoch's contribution to the selective gallery of portraits in the mnemonic archive of nationalist agenda, which seldom included representations and accounts of middle-class Anglo-Irish community and its involvement in the Rising. Although Murdoch's works abound in allusions and symbolic references to Irish culture and letters, the influence of her Irish roots and her Irish cultural heritage on her fiction is rarely addressed in critical works except in individual studies on *The Red and the Green* – which are relatively limited in number in the vast archive of critical writings on Murdoch's novels. Born in 1919 in Dublin to a Protestant Anglo-Irish family, Murdoch occasionally underlined her Anglo-Irishness, which she defined as "a very special way of being Irish" (Spear, 1995, p. 2). In her interviews as well as in the biographies written after her death, it is clear that although Murdoch's family moved to London when she was a small child, she was always conscious of her Irish roots. Her words in an interview in

1983, "I've only recently realised that I'm a kind of exile, a displaced person. I identify with exiles," may account for her interest in displaced characters and themes of displacement of sorts in her fiction (Conradi, 1986, p. 10). As a post-war novelist, who personally witnessed the loss and devastation caused by military violence, her intellectual ethos was also shaped by a critical response to such troubled forms of existence.

In *The Red and the Green* Murdoch turns her gaze to a politically chaotic timeframe in Irish history when definitions of Irishness were being reformulated and registered through storytelling – a powerful discursive weapon that shapes national consciousness.[1] While precolonial mythic heritage was tried to be revived in literature to fuel spiritual, intellectual and physical rebellion against colonial oppression; mythic figures—especially the goddess archetype—were displaced from their original context, trimmed to suit the Revivalist discourse, and robbed off of their sexual content to render them serviceable to the nationalistic cause. *The Red and the Green*, like in Murdoch's many other novels, is populated by displaced characters, and yet the most remarkable form of displacement is introduced on a subtler, abstract and symbolic level. As a response to the desexualized, sterile, and therefore displaced representations of the Sovereignty Goddess in the Irish Revivalist literature, Murdoch restores the essence of this feminine element in the portrayal of Millie, the central character around whom the plot largely revolves.

Irish Sovereignty Goddess and the Mythopoetics of Easter Rising

Identification of land with the feminine in Irish literary and political imagination has roots deeper than the history of anti-colonial Irish nationalism. In pre-Christian traditions, the land was conceived as a female deity. The image of Ireland as a woman, which is deeply embedded in the Irish imagination, has mythological foundations and relies heavily on the cult of the mother-goddess. Especially the figure of the Sovereignty that holds a prominent place in Ireland's mythic heritage "has deep historical and mythological roots, the way in which it permeates Celtic tradition and informs the Irish worldview" (Tymoczko, 1994, p. 98). Her status and significance are unique among Celtic goddesses not only because she is the symbol of the land but also because her "union with the rightful king ensures his sovereignty. Without union with her, he cannot become a king acceptable to his people. Without her rightful ruler she is lost, old and occasionally deranged" (Bhrolcháin, 1980, p. 12). In the Irish tradition, "actual historical kings were believed to be wedded to the local territorial goddess and hence to the land she embodied" (Tymoczko, 1994, p. 100). Sovereignty goddess's sacred marriage with the mortal king is sealed with sexual intercourse, and her sexual prowess is overtly manifested in the mythic narratives concerning the goddesses. Mac Cana (1973) notes that "the Celts had no goddess of love, no Venus or Aphrodite, though on the other hand the majority of their goddesses display a vigorous sexuality," and that literature of the Celts deal mostly with "the circumstances of the erotic encounter rather than with the personal relationship involved" (p. 85). Medb from the Ulster Cycle claims that the sovereignty goddess figure "never had one man without another waiting in the shadow" (*The Táin*, p. 53). As personified by Medb, a great warrior queen/goddess is also concerned with the security of the land against enemies, and one of the common attributes of the Celtic goddesses, including the Sovereignty, is their warlike courage, rage and glow.

[1] Dooley and White in "'A Terrible Beauty': Iris Murdoch's Irish Novel, *The Red and The Green*" provide a detailed account of the reception of the novel and trace the autobiographical Irish references in the text (*English Studies*, 100:8 (2019), 997-1009).

Sovereignty goddess is therefore dually portrayed as a hostile goddess of death and warfare as well as a goddess of fertility,[2] and much of her power is believed to stem from her vibrant sexuality. Her symbolic representations in Irish literary narratives throughout centuries, however, have been altered in accordance with historical and political paradigms. When England steps into the picture as the male usurper in colonial context, the personification of Ireland as woman extends to "a woman torn between two men", or an unfaithful and shameless woman "who lifted her skirts for the invader's pleasure" (Kearney, 1997, p. 96). At the turn of the twentieth century, when nationalist consciousness ripened especially after the Great Famine of 1846, the figure of the Irish sovereignty goddess became a potent mythopoetic image frequently used in the literary productions of the Revivalist writers and poets who advocated national and cultural sovereignty for Ireland and revitalized its precolonial heritage.

The nationalist rhetoric grounded its mythic discourse on the idea that "[t]the mythological motherland served as a goddess of sovereignty who, at least at the imaginary level, might restore a lost national identity by summoning her sons to the sacred rite of renewal through sacrifice" (Kearney, 1997, p. 91). Representing this mythopoetic political discourse, the opening address of the famous proclamation of the Easter Rising in 1916 opens with the following words with a particular emphasis on the resurrection: "In the name of God and the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for freedom" (Lyons, 1973, p. 369). In Kearney's words (1997), the leaders of the Rising articulate "the mythological idea of Mother Ireland calling on her sons to shed their blood so that the nation be restored after centuries of historical persecution" (p. 95). The Fenian cult of martyrdom is directly linked to this mythopoetic register which was popularized in the plays, stories and poems of the Revival.[3]

Recycling of this precolonial mythic material was done through significant transformations in the representations of the sovereignty goddess, and the source material was tailored to fit onto the body of the ideological discourse. While the figures of sovereignty goddesses in Irish myths and sagas are marked by their lust, sexual desire and appetite, her reproductions, especially in the Revivalist narratives, are based predominantly on a romanticised, desexualized and idealised mother figure glorified in the nationalist rhetoric. In these revisions, as Valente (2010) observes, the sexual union of the goddess with the prospective king ("the sexual congress") in the source material is replaced by "the heroic self-immolation of blood sacrifice as a means of attaining Sovereignty" (p. 96), and "male blood substitutes for the sexual substance" (p. 97). The sons of the nation, the volunteer martyrs, are likewise desexualized in their re-enactment of the future sovereigns of the land. While the feminine sexual element is silenced or removed from the stage altogether, the performance of achieving sovereignty is singled out as an articulation of heroic manhood. Eros is thus displaced and rechannelled into the discourse of the good old patriarchy. This ideological blindness on the part of the Irish struggle for sovereignty is masterfully addressed in James Joyce's "The Dead" (1914) in which he builds an analogy between the working principles of imperial politics and patriarchy. Joyce was quick to see that without defying all forms of oppression, any form of emancipation and sovereignty would be maimed from the start. It goes without saying that

[2] Duality of Celtic goddesses including the Sovereignty is elaborated in detail in a wider context by Maria Tymoczko in "Unity and Duality: A Theoretical Perspective on the Ambivalence of Celtic Goddesses" (*Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 5 (1985), pp. 22-37).

[3] Among the plays staged at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the most notable ones that use the Sovereignty mythos include W. B. Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), Maud Gonne's famine play *Dawn* (1904), Lennox Robinson's *Patriots* (1912), Patrick Pearse's *The Singer* (1916).

casting female representations in the mould of piety and virtue in order to honour Mother Ireland is one of those unjaundiced forms of oppression which is sometimes overlooked or dismissed in discussions on the rhetoric of Irish Revivalism.[4]

On another level, desexualized trope of Mother Ireland in the fiction of the Revival, articulating a reclamation of the lost honour and dignity of the land, is also a counter attack to reverse and negate the sexual metaphor of colonization. Analogic discourse of colonialism in the Irish context rested upon the haunting personification of Ireland as a defenceless woman thrusted upon by England, the invader, as the rapist hegemonic power. Again, on a discursive level, desexualising practice of Revivalism may also be interpreted as the negation of the views of English scholars like Matthew Arnold (1962), who noted the femininity of the Celtic race whom he identified with a "romantic and attractive" and yet "undisciplinable, anarchical and turbulent" woman (p. 347). In order to reverse such misrepresentations, the sexual element in the archetypal representations of the Sovereignty Goddess was removed, and sexual performance in the ancient rituals was translated into military blood sacrifice. Sons of the nation shedding their blood for Mother Ireland personified in the image of the Sovereignty Goddess acted upon a desire to reunite with the Mother by overthrowing the colonial Father.

It is hardly possible to overlook the Freudian tone in this ideal that kindled the subaltern imagination of Irishmen at the time of the Rising. In *The Red and the Green* the same Freudian trope can be symbolically traced in the incestuous relationships centred around Millie. The "family machine" in the symbolic landscape of the novel operates by and through relationships among members who are "practically incestuous" (Murdoch, 1967, pp. 20, 15). Murdoch's treatment of a historical moment of crisis in Ireland by weaving it around an erotic crisis may be seen as a plotting device she has inherited from the Big House novels of Anglo-Irish school of writing. In Neil Corcoran's words (1997), "placing the personal life in the context of public, political event, the Big House novel is always a love story too, of however thwarted, perverse, or incestuous a kind" (p. 37).[5] Assigning Millie a central role in the incestuous family romance, Murdoch not only reflects the literary genetics of her Anglo-Irish background, but also extends her symbolization to an overarching discursive problematic discussed above. Namely, she restores the sexual element not only in the archetypal image of the Celtic Sovereignty Goddess but also in the feminine representations of women in fictional revisualizations of the Rising.

Murdoch's reforming authorship in *The Red and the Green* is performed against a historical backdrop marked by heroic failure in the Irish calendar. The heroic spirit of this defeat was soon translated into "a republican martyrology," in Corcoran's (1997) phrasing, when the poet Padraig Pearse was executed along with fourteen other leaders of the Rising (p. 101). It is plain enough that martyrdom wrapped in poetry and romanticised discourse veils a sense of disillusionment. What was disillusioned on the day of "terrible beauty" in Yeats' aphorismatic

[4] Maria-Elena Doyle in her meticulously researched analysis in "A Spindle for the Battle: Feminism, Myth, and the Woman-Nation in Irish Revival Drama" explains how some women playwrights like Lady Gregory "created a difference in perspective" by "reject[ing] the accepted readings of mythic women as counterparts to and predecessors of the passive woman-nation" (1999, p. 35), and shows that translators and compilers of Celtic mythology preferred, for one reason or another, some versions over others and limited their selection of mythic narratives to those that represented their idealized versions of femininity.

[5] The Big House is more than a subtle referent in *The Red and the Green*. On the very first page of the novel, for example, Andrew is introduced to the reader in the garden of a "dignified villa" called "Finglas", and the description of this distinguished house with its seclusion "behind substantial walls" and its big garden evokes the splendour of Big Houses (p. 7). With the collapse of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, the Big House with its heavy baggage of political symbolization in Anglo-Irish tradition had long been reduced in Murdoch's time to an image of displacement and a reminder of a lost glorious past.

description was the romanticism and poetic illusion injected into the politics of Irish independence by Revivalist poets and writers. It is telling that the Irish poet Patrick Pearse was a landmark figure of the Rising whose "rhetoric was poetic" (Foster, 1989, p. 479). In Foster's (1989) words, Pearse's poetry and aesthetic vision celebrated nationalist blood sacrifice and "the beauty of boys dying bravely in their prime, rather than growing into the compromises of adulthood" (p. 477). Years after the Rising, W. B. Yeats, one of the pioneers of Revivalism, asked in "The Man and the Echo" whether his play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* "sen[t] out/Certain men the English shot" (p. 345). Although the leaders of the Rising were of the Catholic Irish stock, "the Anglo-Irish [Protestants] were not without their representative in 1916" (Boyce, 1996, p. 311). Yet, the major contribution of the Anglo-Irish to the Easter Rising was done with their pens and words, which shaped and triggered the utopic mindset of military rebellion for sovereignty in the decades leading up to 1916. As Boyce (1996) puts it, "the ideology of the Easter Rising was in large part of Anglo-Irish creation" which was inspired by Anglo-Irish writers, poets and intellectuals including Yeats, Douglas Hyde, Lady Gregory, Emmet and Tone (p. 311). Retrospective reading of this rich archive of Irish Revivalist literature today reveals the powerful impact of mythopoetic imagination in activating the spirit of rebellion, as well as the silent potential of poetry and storytelling to alter the course of events especially in the threshold moments of history.

Eros and Thanatos in *The Red and the Green*[6]

The intermingling images of martyrs and lovers are no strangers to chaotic times of transgression, especially in pathologically symbol-driven countries like Ireland in the colonial context. In one of his finest articles on Irish literature, "The Doubleness of Oscar Wilde," Terry Eagleton (2001) refers to a particular "cult of Irish martyrdom, […] mingling Eros and death" that "[re]emerged with the Easter Rising" (p. 6). Eagleton notably underlines this erotically inspired poetic spirit of the Rising once again in "Politics and Sexuality in W. B. Yeats", a lecture delivered to the Yeats summer school in Sligo in 1985. Such observations may be extended beyond iconic representatives like Wilde and Yeats, for the literary genetics of the Rising bears vivid traces of this symptomatic "doubleness" that welcome and embrace death as an inevitable or even necessary condition of life. This espousal, however, is merely a faint echo of the pagan perception of death (dissolution of the old) that exists in natural synergy with sexuality (libidinal force of life that enables the birth of the new) in the Celtic imagination. On the symbolic level, the sexual energy of the aspirations of Irish rebirth was removed from the nationalist discourse and rechannelled through repression into the dark labyrinths of the social psyche. The image of Irish rebels with zealous oedipal dreams of reuniting with Mother Ireland and liberating her from the hegemonic grasp of the colonial father is telling enough to show how the desexualized feminine element operates counter-actively in the psyche of the Rising. *The Red and the Green*, in this particular context, emerges as a rare bird among historical novels about the Rising as it brings Eros back into the picture, refusing to brush off the sexual element from the scene and manifesting the haunting presence of the subdued spirit of Sovereignty.

Eros and Thanatos, as inseparable dual forces that can be traced way back to ancient Greek thought, have been conceptualized by Freud to signify "life drive" and "death drive", respectively. Although Freud did not specifically use the term Thanatos in *Beyond the Pleasure*

[6] Meanings of the colours red and green in the title of the novel are attached to their symbolization, red representing the English forces and green representing the Irish forces, as articulated in the song Cathal sings in chapter eight: "Sure 'twas for this Lord Edward died and Wolfe Tone sunk serene, / Because they could not bear to leave the red above the green" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 109).

Principle or elsewhere, it has become the terminological marker for the Freudian "death drive" in psychoanalytic scholarship. In Freud's conceptualization, although Eros is directly linked to sexuality, it stands for the celebration and affirmation of life in general. Eros is "the preserver of life" (Freud, 1961, p. 48), "holds all living things together" (Freud, 1961, p. 44), and it "appears as a 'life instinct' in opposition to the 'death instinct' (Freud, 1961, 55). In its "will to live", it exists in a dialectic relationship to the "death drive" that seeks self-destruction. The conflicting dual drives of Eros and Thanatos, according to Freud, struggle with each other for supremacy from the very start. When Eros is taken out of the picture, the balance between these dual impulses is lost, and the self-destructive Thanatos takes charge and pervades in Eros's absence. This is exactly what happens in the rhetorical revival of the Sovereignty goddess as the representative of mother Ireland in need of emancipation from the oppressor. The erotic force embodied by the Sovereignty goddess in Celtic tradition is sterilized, and the goddess archetype is desexualized to conform with the ideology of Irish nationalism.

Murdoch uses the dualistic force of Eros and Thanatos as the organizing image of *The Red and the Green*, and places Millie at the heart of the stage as the feminine centripedal element towards which this force is drawn. Millie, "a much-courted woman" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 97), is described from Christopher's focalization as "a gorgeous desirable object", "an overflowing vessel, a plump, gay, generous woman" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 68). Her transgressive character matches her boundless body. The members of her Anglo-Irish community perceives her as a "person who habitually 'went too far'" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 21). She is

> known to hold rather progressive views on 'the woman question', had taken a nurse's training, contrary to the family's wishes, during the South African war, and had managed to get herself briefly to the scene of action. She had, it was said, not mourned too long after her husband's death. She was rumoured to wear trousers and smoke cigars. She possessed and could fire a revolver. She had a great many gentlemen friends. (Murdoch, 1967, p. 21)

As illustrated in the quotation, her feminine body performs through masculine behavioural codes and a set of symbols that include cigars, a revolver and trousers. The coexistence of feminine and masculine performances and images in her description highlight the dual quality of her character and her simultaneous embodiment of Eros and Thanatos. While being the only female character in the novel who is associated with sexual desire and appetite, her portrayal differs utterly from other female characters also in terms of her attitude towards military rebellion and war. She occasionally carries a loaded revolver (Murdoch, 1967, p. 126), and lets the rebels use her cellar as a "hiding place" for "a large collection of miscellaneous weapons" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 84). Although Millie "had observed an impeccable discretion about the contents of her cellar and had also been conveniently discreet about her patriotism, so that hardly anyone knew her for a sympathizer" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 84), her loyalty is questioned especially by Pat who distrusts Millie's "almost sexual excitement about the possibility of bloodshed" and sees her "as depraved and frivolous, a mixture of prostitute and adolescent boy" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 88). The dual quality of Millie's character, regarding her co-embodiment of sexuality and "bloodshed", finds expression also in several other contexts. From Christopher's point of view, for example, she is an "unrealistic, comfort-loving, imperial" woman "who simply want[s] the preservation of her advantages", yet he does not fail to recognize that she is "also capable of enjoying disaster" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 118).

Millie's ambivalence is crystallized even further when juxtaposed with other female characters in the novel. In *The Red and the Green* Millie is not the only female character who is incongruous with idealized poetic representations of women in the mythopoetic narratives that emblazed the nationalist imagination in Ireland. Although Kathleen's desexualized motherhood and Frances's romantic maidenhood are presented in stark contrast to Millie's erotic femininity, they also fall outside the celebrated performances of womanhood in the Irish

patriotic discourse, and they are equally brushed aside by devoted Irish patriots like Pat. Kathleen and Frances do not conform to the idea of feminine pathos that sublimates and even promotes martyrdom in the service of Irish independence, and thus, they fall outside the cherished and blessed feminine models of the Revivalist discourse, especially in terms of their unpatriotic anti-war attitudes.

Kathleen is a disappointed woman with unfulfilled potential. Almost as a reverse version of Millie, she looks "noticeably shabby, untidy, old", and seems "invariably […] tired" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 98). She is practically the embodied image of Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan with her "old unfashionable serge dress bobbing on the pavement, her bulging-bag knocking on the railings" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 99), walking in the streets of Dublin like a displaced miserable shade from the other world. Her description from Andrew's focalization earlier in the first chapter contrasts her pale and listless body to Millie's lusty flamboyance: "Millie's form might be regrettable, but Kathleen was formless" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 22). Barney disapproves of her self-neglect and ragged appearance, saying that she "go[es] round looking like an old hag" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 137). The epithet of "old hag" Barney uses to scorn Kathleen seals her with the popular image of the medieval Sovereignty archetype as an old hag waiting to be transfigured into a beautiful young woman by the kiss or embrace of a worthy warrior and prospective ruler. Her sons, Pat and Cathal, the militant Irish patriots who are ready to sacrifice their lives to liberate their mother land, seem to be fitting representations to fulfil this agency of transformation. Yet, Kathleen rejects violence and bloodshed as a means of emancipation. She is not content with living in "a man's world, a world of hate" which is "mad with violence" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 136). She tries to talk Pat out of his patriotic engagement in military rebellion, and thus refuses to perform a symbolic motherhood of the Celtic twilight. By denying to perform the role of a subdued yet proud mother calling her sons to shed their blood for her, she disclaims the prestige and ascendancy she is promised by the Revivalist discourse.

Like Kathleen, Frances does not conform to the cliché expectations of the Rising's patriotic imagination, either. Her affections are torn between a British officer "commissioned in the distinguished regiment of King Edward's Horse" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 7) and a militant Irish rebel devoted to "a vision of fighting for Ireland" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 76). She shares with Kathleen a dislike for military violence and thinks that "[i]t can't be right to shed blood for anything" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 107). She is not sure where her allegiance lies. Although she is not indifferent to anti-colonial struggle and thinks that she "ought to be in uniform," she "[doesn't] know which one to wear" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 107). Her eventual rejection of Andrew's hand in marriage is a symbolic reflection of her refusal to abide by the romanticized role of submissive maidenhood.

When Millie's portrayal is compared to that of Kathleen or Frances, it is fairly obvious that Murdoch has conceived Millie as the co-embodiment of masculine violence and feminine sexuality – a magnetic centre towards which all ends of dichotomies are inevitably drawn. Her tendency for adultery and betrayal, evocative of Molly in *Ulysses*, symbolically attaches her to the Sovereignty archetype. The tales featuring sovereignty figures in pre-Christian and medieval Irish lore commonly picture a kind of transformation of an old and ugly hag into a beautiful woman as a result of a kiss or embrace she receives from a candidate for kingship. As mentioned earlier, sexual contact in one form or another is a requirement or test to be completed before aspiring to inherit kingship and claiming rightful ownership of the land. Millie's link to major male characters in the novel – Christopher, Andrew, Pat, and Barney represents the diversity of approaches to the Irish question and armed rising. Erotically driven towards Milly, each of these potential warriors embodies a different attitude and mindset regarding Irish emancipation and the ideological agenda of Irish Revivalism.

Christopher, a widower who offers Millie financial salvation through marriage, is English by ancestry but has adopted Irishness after his marriage to an Anglo-Irish woman. He became an Irish "enthusiast" and devoted himself to scholarly work on Gaelic culture. Although he is "an expert on the antiquities of Ireland" and is familiar with the Gaelic language, he has "never joined the Gaelic League," is "hostile to the wholesale cultivation of the Irish language", and "[keeps] aloof from all politics and controversy" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 26-7). He thinks that the study of Gaelic in Ireland "should be left to [them scholars]" and that the Anglo-Irish who "think themselves superior both to English and to the Irish" have produced the best works in the English language (Murdoch, 1967, p. 35-6). He sees the nationalist poets and writers like Patrick Pearse as "idiots" in their invention of "a romantic Irish tradition which just ignores the English ascendancy" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 36). He reacts to the nationalist agenda of reviving the precolonial medieval culture, asserting that "Ireland should turn back to the eighteenth century [the time of Goldsmith and Sterne], not to the Middle Ages" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 37). He is also against the sentimental cliché of the gender-driven rhetoric of the Rising, judging the habitual personification of Ireland as a "tragic female" which caused "any patriotic stimulus" to produce "an overflow of sentiment at once" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 42). Although he is well-meant, he takes advantage of Millie's financial downfall. "Millie's difficulty [becomes] Christopher's opportunity" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 69) and he delights in the idea that "he would save her by marrying her" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 71). While he "enjoy[s] his state of undeclared sovereignty", he feels somehow sad about Millie's vulnerable condition that stems from her "loss of power" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 72) and promises her to restore "the splendour of her previous existence" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 118).

While Millie accepts Christopher's marriage proposal, albeit half-heartedly, and resigns herself to a mature and wealthy suitor in order to sustain her glory; she does not refrain from seducing young Andrew and offering him a sexual rite of passage. Andrew's uneasiness towards his "Aunt Millicent" somehow mirrors his ambivalent attachment to Ireland, which finds expression in the uncanny feeling the Irish Sea creates in him in its "intensely familiar and yet disturbingly alien" quality (Murdoch, 1967, p. 8). Among Millie's suitors or admirers, Andrew is the least Irish in heart and soul. He "had grown up in England and more especially in London, and felt himself unreflectively to be English" and "Ireland remained for him a mystery, an unsolved problem: and a problem which was in some obscure way disagreeable" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 8). Recently commissioned in the "distinguished regiment of King Edward's Horse", Andrew cuts a fine figure in his uniform, yet his "persona as a solider" is described as "disparate, composed partly of childish romanticism" that "depended on early impressions of the more patriotic passages of Shakespeare and a boyish devotion to Sir Lanchelot" (Murdoch, 1967, pp. 11-12). Unlike Irish patriots of the nationalist brand who derive their inspiration from the mythic heroes of pre-colonial Irish cultural archive, Andrew's sources of inspiration are English to the core. His lack of experience in military action is accompanied by his lack of sexual experience. When he admits to Millie that he "[hasn't] seen much action yet" in war (Murdoch, 1967, p. 61), his military inexperience rings with Freudian overtones, for we are already informed on earlier pages that he is "still a virgin" whose mind is troubled by "the idea of his first introduction to sexual intercourse and idea of his [possible] death [in the battlefront]" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 24).

Andrew's uneasy and even timid attitude towards military action is weighed against Pat's undaunted, fearless and idealist devotion to the nationalist "vision of fighting for Ireland" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 76). Pat's patriotism stems neither from the mythopoetic rhetoric of Revivalism epitomized in Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* nor from the Catholic nationalist discourse of Holy Ireland. The Ireland he is eager to fight and even die for is "nameless, a pure Ireland of the mind, to be relentlessly served by a naked sense of justice and a naked self-

assertion. There were in his drama only these two characters, Ireland and himself" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 77). He is the counter-image of a stereotyped Irish rebel. He is annoyed by Patrick Pearse and everything he stands for. He thinks that Pearse "was given to all kinds of infantile nonsense" and that he "romanticized Ireland's heroic past, which he peopled not only with Red Branch Knights but also with ghosts and fairies and leprechauns" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 80).

Ironically enough, as Millie confesses to Christopher that she is "desperately in love with Pat" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 221), Pat recognizes a dangerous and threatening power, an antagonistic force in Millie. His preference for "the absence from his life of women and all that they represented" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 80) does not stem from a calm and peaceful set of mind but from his ideologically driven belief that a politically engaged mind and sexual body are mutually exclusive. He reveals the suppressed Erotic force in his psyche as he associates women with "the part of himself which disgusted him" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 81). Almost in denial of female sexuality outside romantic codes, he defines prostitutes as "grotesque animals", and he remembers his experiences with prostitutes with a feeling of "nausea" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 81). Cherishing the sexual animal body and embracing sexual pleasures and desire mean "supreme degradation" to him (Murdoch, 1967, p. 81). As a young and passionate man full of vigour, he chooses Thanatos over Eros and replaces his Erotic agency with the agency of death drive in the prospect of martyrdom. He firmly believes in armed rebellion and supports the idea that "Ireland's freedom must be bought with blood" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 83).

Pat is not the only one who is devotedly attached to an ideal related to Ireland. If Pat is a man of action, his Catholic stepfather Barney is a man of words, engaged in the authorship of sorts, including a memoir as well as scholarly research on the history of the early Irish Church and Saint Brigid. Barney is the most pathetic among Millie's courting admirers. His dog-like devotion and fidelity to Millie is neither appreciated nor rewarded by the object of his desire. He is only "tolerated" by Millie (Murdoch, 1967, p. 89), who derives a somehow sadistic satisfaction from his misery and humiliation. Before his ordainment as a priest, he falls in love with Millie, and shortly after his fall from his spiritual heaven, he quits priesthood. Barney, "by vocation a failed priest" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 99), is also a discredited father who is "abused […] in front of his stepson" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 101). Eros, unheeded and submerged by Pat, is made manifest in Barney's unguarded appeal for Millie, so much so that

> [h]is body which had seemed a pure vessel, a spiritual temple, scoured, empty and awaiting the final installation of a ghostly visitor, not hotly and needfully enclosed him, a tugging animal of unquiet flesh. It was as if his veins had been emptied and given new blood. He became horribly incarnate; and when the desperately beautiful, desperately desirable Millie looked meltingly into his eyes and inclined her warm lips slowly upon his he felt that God was become man indeed (Murdoch, 1967, p. 93).

This passage is the most overt articulation of the Erotic register operating at the heart of the novel. Barney's desire for Millie is a whole lot different than Pat's. Echoing the masculine violence of military action, Pat expresses his desire for Millie by comparing her to "an enemy, a victim, a quarry" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 212). Pat perfectly embodies the coexistence of life and death drives (Eros and Thanatos) in a single body. If the pleasure principle is fulfilled by death, as theorized by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Eros interrupts the process of self-destruction and creates tension.

The erotic tension Murdoch builds in the last few days leading to the Rising reaches its climax when Christopher, Barney, Andrew and Pat, unaware of one another, visit Millie's country house in Rathblane late at night with expectations of psychological, romantic, or sexual fulfilment. While Andrew is the only man who enters Millie's house by invitation, the other three sneak into it in one way or another. The domestic space surrounded by solid darkness becomes a space of gothic sensation when, in successive scenes, Pat gazes into Millie's bedroom and notices the presence of a male companion [Andrew] sharing her bed; Andrew

confronts Pat outside the bedroom, staring at him "with a look of dazed bleak misery" (Murdoch, 1967, p. 215); Christopher sees on Millie's finger the engagement ring Andrew has planned to give to Frances and finds out her sexual betrayal, and hears Millie's confession that she is hopelessly in love with Pat. Their individual stories, which have been layered upon each other, are now entangled by disclosures and revelations. Barney remains the only visitor who manages to leave the house undetected. His shock, disillusionment, jealousy, and sense of betrayal are akin to how the other three men feel once they have noticed their unexclusive place among Millie's miscellany of admirers.

The novel reaches its finale with a series of disillusionments that chime with the overtones of the "terrible beauty" of the Easter Rising. As revealed by Frances in the Epilogue, Christopher is "killed by a sniper's bullet" as he passes through a street on his way to the Post Office (Murdoch, 1967, p. 276), Pat gets hit by a shell inside the Post Office during the Rising, Andrew is killed at Passchendaele in nineteen seventeen, and Barney dies a symbolic death in a tragi-comic fashion and is obliged to stay out of the game when he "accidentally [shoots] himself in the foot" on his way to join the rebels (Murdoch, 1967, p. 278). We learn that Millie, unlike her admirers, has survived the Rising but has lost all her charm and power as an enchanter. She is reduced to a sick old woman who delights in speaking out the memories of her "heroic" involvement in the Easter Rising, and has become a source of embarrassment to Kathleen (Murdoch, 1967, p. 272). It is remarkably ironic that Millie, as the symbolic Sovereignty figure, is not transfigured into an idealized, happy and peaceful female as a result of the sacrificial deaths of the rebels but degraded to the level of a dispossessed old hag with nothing left to hang on to but memories of a glorious past to boast about.

It is obvious that Murdoch's ending is the reverse version of the romanticized ending of Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* in which the old hag is transformed into a beautiful maiden by the blood sacrifice of a young patriot. Millie's transformation from a sexually attractive enchanter into an old hag is ironically significant in terms of Murdoch's critical moral response to the political mindset of romanticizing a desexualized feminine archetype and embracing the symbolic embodiment of a self-destructive death drive in the form of masculine violence. Forms of disappointment, futility, and loss that mark the ending of the novel may be interpreted as a reflection of Murdoch's anti-war attitude and her critical response to mythopoetically constructed pseudo-nationalist ideals that celebrate death rather than life. Millie's tragic fall and failure become a performative sign of paralysis which can be seen as a symbolic death. At first glance, Murdoch's depiction of Dublin and Dubliners in *The Red and the Green* seems to be quite different from the canonical label of Joyce's Dublin as a paralyzed social and cultural landscape populated with paralyzed Dubliners. It may however be misleading to overlook Joyce's influence on Murdoch and disregard other versions of paralyses in Murdoch's novel characterized by failed potentials and missed opportunities. Although the novel depicts a group of Dubliners seemingly in stark contrast to Joyce's Dubliners in the city of paralysis, a closer analysis reveals a common spirit that Murdoch's disillusioned and disappointed characters share with Joyce's Dubliners who are characterized with unfinished sentences, half-silences and unfulfilled dreams. Murdoch introduces the suppression of Erotic force as a possible source of paralysis among others.

Conclusion

One of the hallmarks of Murdoch's authorial signature in her novels is her masterful performance of blending realism with symbolism. She imprints her acknowledged style also on the historical dimension of *The Red and the Green*. Significantly, the affluent symbolism she uses as the centripetal constant throughout the novel challenges the canonically cherished symbolic register in the Irish literary imagination. Filtering the Easter Rising of 1916 through the lens of a small incestuous Anglo-Irish community, Murdoch portrays a lesser manifested

picture of this pivotal moment of Irish history and turns her gaze towards formerly neglected and even benighted corners and spots of the Irish community in the Dublin of 1916. The above analysis reveals that one of the factors that energized the spirit of the Easter Rising was the nonconventional counter-representations of the mythopoetic nationalist discourse of the Irish Revival. It is shown that the dual attribute of the sovereignty goddess of pre-colonial narratives is trimmed and altered by the patriotic nationalist rhetoric and reformulated in the image of Ireland as Mother summoning her sons to shed their blood in order to emancipate her from bondage and degradation. *The Red and the Green*, as revealed in the detailed comparative reading of its characters and their symbolizations, works counteractively through this desexualized trope of Mother Ireland imprinted in the colonial mythic discourse of the Revivalist mindset. Suppressed Freudian overtones of the death-driven patriotic call for *reuniting with the mother* are masterfully disclosed by Murdoch in the overlapping manifestations of Eros and Thanatos in the dual portrayal of Millie, who may be conceived as a speculative reincarnated version of the sovereignty goddess archetype. It is thus inferred that Murdoch puts Eros and its dual force back into the picture, and amidst a network of entangled moral dilemmas and pressing questions, disenchants the typecast manifestations of Irishness that have shaped both the creation and reception of fiction on the popularized symbolizations of Easter Rising of 1916. Murdoch's subtle references to the symbolic use of the Celtic Sovereignty archetype as well as her critical ethos towards the discourse of sublimated violence in the rhetoric of the Easter Rising are suggestive enough to consider *The Red and the Green* as a noteworthy example of Irish historical fiction. Most importantly, Murdoch's novel perfectly displays how the manipulative rendering of the sovereignty myth leads to a paralysing transition from Eros to Thanatos, and how the repudiation of Eros signifies a catastrophic self-destruction in the death-affirming nationalist rhetoric of the Rising.

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