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SEANCHAS - AN INPORTANT IRISH TRADITION RELATED TO MEMORY, HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Abstract: In most works approaching Premodern historiographical phenomena there is a remarkable silence about *Seanchas*, an Irish tradition related to old tales, memory, history, historiography genealogy and traditional law. The main purpose of this article is to analyze this issue, pointing out *Seanchas* is a *conditio sine qua non* to the comprehension of both Irish History and Historiography from Early Christian to Modern Ireland. Therefore, any attempt to understand Premodern and Early Modern European historiography should also consider this Irish contribution.

Keywords: Seanchas; History and Historiography; Ireland.

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SEANCHAS - UMA IMPORTANTE TRADIÇÃO IRLANDESA RELACIONADA COM MEMÓRIA, HISTÓRIA E HISTORIOGRAFIA

Resumo: Na maior parte das obras que abordam fenômenos historiográficos Pré-modernos há um notável silêncio sobre *Seanchas*, uma tradição irlandesa relacionada com contos antigos, memória, história, historiografia, genealogia e lei tradicional. O principal objetivo deste artigo é tratar desta problemática, sugerindo que a *Seanchas* é uma conditio *sine qua non* para a compreensão tanto da História quanto da Historiografia desde os primeiros tempos da Irlanda Cristã até a Irlanda Moderna. Desta forma, qualquer tentativa de entender a historiografia europeia Pré-moderna e do início da modernidade deve considerar esta contribuição irlandesa.

Palavras-chave: Seanchas; História e Historiografia; Irlanda.

SEANCHAS - UNA IMPORTANTE TRADICIÓN IRLANDESA RELACIONADA CON MEMORIA, HISTORIA Y HISTORIOGRAFIA

Resumen: En la mayor parte de las obras que abordan fenómenos historiográficas Pre-modernos hay un silencio notable sobre la *Seanchas*, una tradición irlandesa relacionada con los cuentos antiguos, memoria, historia, historiografia, genealogía y la ley tradicional. El propósito principal de este artículo es hacer frente a este problema, señalando que *Seanchas* es una *conditio sine qua non* para comprender tanto la Historia como la historiografía desde los primeros tempos de la Irlanda Cristiana hasta la Irlanda Moderna. Por lo tanto, cualquier intento de comprender la historiografia Europea pre-moderna y de los princípios de la modernidade debería considerar esta contribución irlandesa.

Palabras clave: Seanchas; Historia e Historiografía; Irlanda.

I – Seanchas and the problem of pre-modern historiographies

Before been displayed in historical narratives, the *corpora* of evidence historians arrange to represent what could have been the case are always disordered, confused and chaotic, as they did not exist in the same way, or even have any coherence, in the past. Only after being gathered, ordered and systematized into a plausible narrative 'the diverse, accidental and irregular come into an order' (COSTA LIMA, 1989, p. 17).

The transformation of what happened in the Past into History is not a mechanical and automatic process, hence it is very important to understand how from the facts History comes to be. Past and Present have a fluidly relationship in the writing of History which, in its turn, is inseparable of the historian. As Lucien Febvre has once pointed out: '*L'histoire est fille de son temps*'. Benedetto Croce has also said about it that '*Ogni storia vera, è storia contemporanea*'. The role developed by historians and the concepts of History attached to their narratives, then, must always be considered when one is trying to answer the question what do the historians do when they do History.

Because of this fragmental characteristic of any knowledge about the Past, historical narratives have been frequently reconsidered. That is the reason why Historiography, a branch of the Science of History occupied itself with the comprehension of how History has been written in different ways and contexts, is so important.

Being aware of this, many authors have cooperated to increase and develop the study of Historiography. But, unfortunately, as it has been recently pointed out (SANTOS, 2015, p. 7-18), in many works approaching Theory of History and Historiography there are few or even none references to Premodern historiographical phenomena. Actually, sometimes those are even taken, negatively, as examples of non-historiographical texts.

Also, even when Premodern historiography is considered in general books about Theory of History and Historiography, sometimes one can find just mentions to a couple of names sporadically. Commonly: Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius, to summarize what has happened in Greek historiography; Tacitus and Dion Cassius appears as a roman counterpart; Augustine of Hippo, Eusebius of Caesarea and perhaps Gregory of Tours would be the medieval representatives; After this, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), i.e. already a post-medieval author, is quoted; The next is Voltaire and, then, Prussians/Germans; There are still the options that present synthesis such as: '*Historia Magistra Uitae*' specially for Roman historiography; the idea that 'for the Greeks time consisted of endlessly repeated cycles'; and that 'in Middle Ages all History was ecclesiastical' (SANTOS, 2015, p. 7-18).

Because of such considerations, the idea that there was no History before the work of Leopold von Ranke (1790-1744) and the *Historik* of Georg Gottfied Gervinus (1805-1871) or Johan Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) is often presented. In other words, when reading general books about the writing of History one can have a feeling that few things, in a historiographical way, have taken place before that beginnings of what modern historians have termed as *Geschichtswissenschaft*, or `The Science of History` (SANTOS, 2015, p. 7-18).

According to John Marincola, this effect is the result of modern authors considering past historiographies through the lenses, in terms of methodology and approaches, of the 19th Century historians (MARINCOLA, 2007). Taking this for grant, Pre-modern historiography would be a mere appendix for its contemporary counterpart, a kind of Pre-History of Historiography.

Italian historian Arnaldo Momigliano charged Collingwood, Niebuhr and Hegel for the view of Greek mind as a 'non-historical' one, which only works if the focus is on part of the works of Pythagoras, Zeno or Plato, but it is definitely not the case for Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius (MOMIGLIANO, 2004).

Between Herodotus and Ammianus Marcellinus's *Res Gestae* there is an interval of 800 years of Historiography. From the death of the later until Vico published his *Scienza Nuova*, in 1725, c. 1300 years has passed (SANTOS, 2015, p. 7-18). Pre-modern Europe produced several works that could be understood as Historiography, why should any historian of the historiographical thought reduce this huge amount of time to be represented by such a limited number of authors?

Reacting to this, some effort to give the credit Pre-modern historiographies deserve has been made by some scholars. Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Müller's *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, digitalized under Monica Berti's supervision, in Leipzig[1], Felix Jacoby`s *Die Fragment der griechischen Historiker*[2], Hermann Wilhelm Gottlob Peter's *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquae* (Vol I, 1914/1967; Vol I, 1906), Martine Chassignet's *L'Annalistique Romaine* (1996-2004), Andrea Mehl`s *Romische Geschichtsschreibung* (2011), T.J. Cornell's The Fragments of the Roman Historians (2013), A.T.E. Olmsted, H, Güterbock, A.K. Grayson and E.A. Speiser, all mentioned in John Van Seters`s work (2008), Roberto B. Gozzolli`s History and Stories in Ancient Egypt (2009), Herbert Grundmanns's *Geschichtsschreibun im Mittelater: Gattungen, Epochen, Eigenart*, Bernard Guenée's *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiévale*, and Franz Josef Schmale's *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung: eine Einfuhrung*, some medieval works that have been addressed by Debora Deliyannis's Historiography in the Middle Ages (2003, p. 1-16), are among the best examples (SANTOS, 2015, p. 7-18).

But, even in texts like this kind, there is a remarkable silence about *Seanchas*, the Irish tradition related to old tales, history, historiography, genealogy and traditional law. Taking this into consideration, the main purpose of this article is to analyze this issue, pointing out *Seanchas* is a *conditio sine qua non* to the comprehension of both Irish History and Historiography from Early Christian to Modern Ireland. Therefore, any attempt to understand Premodern and Early Modern European historiography should also consider this Irish contribution.

II - Seanchas: one word, muliple meanings

The Electronic Dictionary of Irish Language of the Royal Irish Academy presents the word *Seanchas/Senchus* (Old Irish *Senchas/Senchus*) as attached to at least three categories of meanings: A) Old tales, Ancient History, Tradition; B) Genealogy; C) Traditional Law (dil.ie/37124).

The word itself derives from the term '*sean*', which is an Irish equivalent to the Latin *Senior/Senex*, that could be translated into English as 'old, long-standing'. If *Seanchas* is the tradition, the *Saí seanchasa* or *Seanchaidhe* is the person responsible for that.

In modern Irish, *Seanchas* is related do Folklore and Tradition. Writing about such topics, for example, and its relationship to Memory and Oral History, Guy Beiner says the word *Seanchas* 'has been used with a variety of meanings: history, lore, ancient law, a record or register, a minute description, a pedigree, an ancient tale, an act of storytelling, gossiping, inquiring (about one's condition, health etc.)' (BEINER, 2007, p. 81).

Fergus Kelly remind us even though *Senchae* is a term frequented translated as 'historian', it would be more accurately as 'custodian of tradition'. The *Seanchaidh* would be the one who provides 'evidence about the past which is of relevance in a law-case, e.g. genealogical facts, details of former ownership of property, traditional rights, etc.' (KELLY, 1986, p. 93). Responding to this, Kim McCone points out the term was created in Pre-Christian Ireland and is related to someone of a long memory. It would indicate 'an aged individual in a position to recall authoritatively events that had taken place, rights that had been established, etc., earlier in his life in addition to still older ones supposed to have been transmitted to him by a predecessor' (McCONE, 1995, p. 9). In this sense, it would be an 'old witness' or an 'ancient witness', the author insists (McCONE, 1995, p. 9).

The Irish concept of History, *Seanchas*, then, Ó Cróinín says: 'embodied, besides the data that might normally be included under such a heading, tribal lore and origin tales, topographical legends, and gobbets of law, in addition to genealogies and annals' (Ó CRÓINÍN, (2005, p. 185).

Senchas was the traditional lore of Irish culture divided at least into three branches: *dindschenchas*, or topography; legal; and genealogical, explains Francis Byrne (1974). According to him, it is important to pay attention to the fact we use to think about myth, legend, pseudo-history and fiction as separated subjects, or at least it is in this way they are analyzed by our contemporary disciplines of History, Literature, Philosophy, Sociology etc., but that was not the case in Medieval Irish texts. He has pointed out 'however separate in our own minds, they tend to be inextricably raveled in the texts as we have them' (BYRNE, 1974, p. 138).

Elva Johnston says *Seanchas* put together History, Myth and Tradition. The word '*Senchas*, and its Hiberno-Latin equivalent *Peritia*, is an altogether wider term and embraces several subjects' (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 56). Following Byrne's idea, she agrees the *Seanchaid* 'may be a historian, genealogist, master of placename lore, or all of those above' (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 57). That's why the author believes 'the interpretation of the terms *senchas* and *senchae* are heavily dependent on the context in which they occur' (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 57).

The concept is a complex one and it appears frequently in Irish manuscripts. Katharine Simms recognizes some of the meanings of the word *Seanchas*, or the *Seanchaidh* in charge to produce the *Seanchas*. It could be: 'the custodian and interpreter of the law'; 'an expert witness on the contents and meaning of old customs', 'on facts of a person's ancestry', on the 'historical boundaries of some estate or territory', or 'on the amount of tax or tribute'; 'an antiquary of long memory'; 'a public notary'; 'an arbitrator'; 'compared to a medieval herald'; 'a silver-tongued orator'; 'a sage'; 'a *ollam* who takes position directly in front of the king, interviews

a subject in the presence of his king, and prepares his speech'; 'a master of eloquence'; 'a equivalent to *fabula*'; 'having the force of a charter' (SIMMS, 1987, p. 2 and p. 276).

After presenting this explanation about the multiplicity of the meanings related to the word *Seanchas*, the author also systematizes how the tradition itself changed through the time until it's end. According to her, earliest Irish texts presented *Seanchas* more related to law, tradition and poetry than 'History', which can be found in the Irish Latin texts represented by the terms *Peritia* and *Historia*. After the twelfth century, however, a transformation has occurred and both Latin terms were replaced by *Senchus*, when it can be applied also for 'History'. This meaning of *Seanchas*, and *Seanchaidh*, continued to be used until the practice was attacked by English and Anglo-Irish authors, which alleged the *Seanchaidhean* were not 'historians', but 'antiquaries', 'chroniclers', 'genealogists' or 'pedigreers'. Mainly as a result of 'many of the New English Protestant Ascendancy saw the cultivation of Irish language and letters as a threat' (SIMMS, 1987, p. 276) and also considering `others were specifically hostile to the traditional *Seanchas* version of Irish history, ostensibly because it was unscientific nonsense, but more subtly because it was resented as encouraging national separatism` (SIMMS, 1987, p. 276). According to Simms, the tradition came to an end 'after the ending of Brehon law jurisdictions in the reign of James I, which vanished Seanchaid's function as an expert witness in the law-courts' (SIMMS, 1987, p. 278); 'the Battle of Aughrim in 1691, because the legitimation of both Gaelic chieftains and Anglo-Norman barons became irrelevant' (SIMMS, 1987, p. 278); and because 'all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the development of scientific 'foot-noted' history was to supersede the essentially medieval learning of the *Seanchaidhe*' (SIMMS, 1987, p. 278).

Edel Bhreathnach, probably one of the greatest authorities in the study of *Seanchas* tradition currently, points out the term is related to the origins of Irish people, their genealogies, saints and the landscapes. According to her, 'briefly defined, *Seanchas* was the memory and narrative of Irish history as preserved and written from the early medieval period to the writing of histories of Ireland in the seventeenth century' (BHREATHNACH, 2007, p. 19). She also says one shall not forget 'it was a trigger for a society's memory of the past' (BHREATHNACH, 2007, p. 20). In this sense, '*Seanchas* is the key to history in medieval Ireland', as they author has pointed out in a lecture she gave to Royal Irish Academy recently (BHREATHNACH, 2013). While in Modern Irish the term relates to storytelling, tradition and folklore, she says, 'in its earlier articulation *senchas* encompassed the collective consciousness of the Irish as expressed by their historians' (BHREATHNACH, 2014, p. 2).

As differing from early scholarship, i.e., nativist interpretations that viewed it as attached only to orality and pagan tales, nowadays, *Seanchas* has been understood as related to the writing tradition that starts in Early Christian Ireland. Considering this, it would be important to review briefly the background of this Irish tradition of learning in which *Seanchas* is located.

III - Early Irish culture and society between orality and bilingual literacy

Besides Inscribed *Ogham* Stones, which contains the first evidence of written Irish language, texts have been produce in vernacular in Ireland since a poem called *Amra Choluimb Chille* (The Eulogy of Colm Cille/the Poem for Colum Cille/or the wonders of Colum Cille, depending on the translation), the oldest datable text of Gaelic Literature, which survived in later manuscripts, but it is often thought to be composed by a sixth-century poet called Dallán Forgail soon after the death of Colm Cille in 597 (BREATNACH, 2005, p. 400; O'LOUGHLIN, 2006, p. 468; CLANCY, 2006, p. 557).

This article's section has no intention, of course, to present any synthesis of the History of Irish Literature, even more since its beginnings, a behavior French historian March Bloch had been labeled as 'obsession with origins', or 'the idol of Origins' (BLOCH, 1954). However, it is not only because of its antiqueness *Amra Choluimb Chille* is interesting, but for its introduction of Colm Cille as a patron of the poets and because the poem 'exhibits a rapprochement between vernacular and Latin scriptural learning' in Ireland (CHARLES-EDWARDS, 2004), a topic of great interest for this debate about the *Seanchas* Tradition.

From some point in the 5th century [Saint] Patrick was writing his texts in Latin. Today, he is considered to be an author with great rhetorical skills who wrote his *Confessio* and *Epistola ad Milites Corotici* by using a complex system denominated *per cola et commata.* His hagiographer, Muirchú Moccu Machténi, who wrote about him two centuries later, understood this better than the romantic authors of modern times and related Patrick to the same tradition in which texts like *Audite Omnes*, the *Commonitorum*, the *Etymologiae* from Isidore of Seville, the apocryphal text *Actus Petri cum Simone*, the *Passio apostolorum Petri et Pauli, and the Historia apostolica* were produced (HOWLETT, 1994; SANTOS, 2013).

There are a plenty of narratives from Medieval Ireland written in Middle Irish about themes from the Classical World. There is a Destruction of Troy; a *Scéla* of Alexander, the Great; one adaptation of Virgil's Aeneid, telling, in Irish, the adventures of Aeneas; a work based on Lucano's *Bellum Civille*; another one published alongside with Orosio's *Historia adversum paganos*; a tale about the boyhood deeds of Achiles; a text about Minos, Deadalus, Icarus and the Minotaurus; a narrative based on Ovid's Metamorphoses; a tale about Odisseus and many other texts (O'CONNOR, 2014, p. 1-24; MILES, 2011; SANTOS, 2016, p. 93-110).

From these times, Irish scribes also produced many new compositions in Irish, like the *Lebor Gabála*, *Táin Bó Cúailnge* etc., being the later just one *Táin* among many *Tana*, a gender of Irish Literature from that time. According to Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, bilinguism, the *duo* of Latin and Irish was an important tool of Irish literature and 'readers were completely aware and prepared for this kind of text' (NÍ MHAONAIGH, 2008, p. 32-73). Helen Fulton has pointed out 'there was an active program of translation and adaptation, and not only the access to classical texts' (FULTON, 2014, p. 41). According to Brent Miles, classical reception and the production of a vernacular developed together in Medieval Ireland. Interacting with some ideas previously developed by Walter Berschin and David Howlet, he summarizes: 'there was an Irish fascination with the *tres linguae sacrae*' [Hebrew, Greek and Latin] (MILES, 2011, p. 34).

It means from its very beginning Irish literacy and textual tradition developed in vernacular and in Latin altogether.

In parallel, both memory and orality also played a fundamental role in the development of Irish tradition of learning. All these branches were a key into Irish Medieval Identity, in which oral vernacular was mixed with bilingual written practices of learning, that considered other language traditions and had been in constant exchange and interaction with Post-Roman Europe and other parts of the insular world (JOHNSTON, 2013).

In her recent book, Elva Johnston has provided a detailed panorama about this. According to her, at the same time, Ireland was a home of computists, exegetes, canonists and geographers, working in Latin, but also dominated by tradition (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 27). It was 'an island of tradition and of innovation; its culture was a creative synthesis of the old and new (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 28). The author has pointed out, despite the centrality of monasteries, Irish literate culture was far from being restricted to these spaces, 'it flourished within a learned hinterland defined by its secondary-oral culture (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 131). As stated by her, one should keep in mind 'Irish literacy functioned within a secondary-oral environment, an environment in which the oral and written were in continual interaction' (JOHNSTON, 2013, p. 157).

This society of orality and bilingual literacy was the context that allowed the appearance of *Seanchas* tradition and its *Seanchaidh*, which developed, then, under this constant interaction between native ideas of History and historiographical influences from Post-Roman Britain and the Continent from the beginning of Early Christian Ireland to Early Modern Times.

IV - Seanchas, an Irish tradition of learning, and the seanchaidh, an artifex of the past

The role of *Seanchas* and its *Seanchaidh* inside this tradition of learning based on both orality and bilingual literacy, as already mentioned, is a key to understand the early Irish way of representing the past and an important manifestation of Historiography in Pre-modern Europe. However, its historicity is often denied. Hence, it is important to ask: What does really bother modern and contemporary audiences about *Seanchas*? Why such resistance to accept this tradition as Historiography? Why Early Irish Historiography, in general, and *Seanchas* Tradition, in particular, can hardly be found even when such historiographical topics are addressed? Our hypotheses are the following: the substantial part fiction features, such the role of emotions and the use of poetry, and the closer relationship between History and Memory occupy in *Seanchas* Tradition is not well comprehended and accepted by the community of professional historians of our days because such topics are viewed as a threat to the pretensions of scientificity in History.

Some authors have recognized this issue in the last decades. According to Byrne's interpretation, it may be the case Early Irish Narratives are seldom mentioned because 'the truth is that Gaelic Ireland never produced a Bede or a Gregory of Tours. The muse of history here never escaped from the swaddling bands of *senchas*'. (BYRNE, 1974, p. 138). Bernadette Cunningham believes this non-appreciation of early Irish historical writings could be related

to the way, in general, historians think about this kind of texts. Taking one specific genre as an example, the annals, the author explains: 'there is an understandable tendency, even among professional historians, to regard history written in the form of annals as simply a 'straightforward recitation of dates and what happened' (CUNNINGHAM, 2010, p. 25). In this sense, those texts are seen as less relevant than others.

In Donnchadh Ó Corráin's perception the problem is also clearly related to the way the community of historians thinks about the genres of Irish historical texts. Genealogy, for instance, 'has had an indifferent reception', it was viewed as 'a minor genre', they (the Genealogies) are seen as 'short, miserly about detail, stereotyped – in sum, incapable, at first sight, of contributing much to history' (Ó CORRÁIN, 1998, p. 177). As Ó Corráin has pointed out: 'there has been a tendency amongst scholars to treat the makers [of this kind of text] as more or less unthinking antiquarians, backward-looking and resistant to change' (Ó CORRÁIN, 1998, p. 185).

If the detractors of Early Irish Texts are to be believed the producers of this material, then, shall never be denominated as 'historiographers', of course, and the result of their efforts, consequently, would never be 'historiography', but better related to the concept of Antiquarianism, perhaps as Arnaldo Momigliano has presented it in his Sather Classical Lectures at Berkeley (MOMIGLIANO, 2004).

Sometimes texts produced by this *Seanchas* tradition are also understood just as tools to help resolve present and practical issues. In such contexts, the *Seanchaidh*, the 'antiquary of long memory', was called to recall genealogies that could be used to interpret a problem of the elite daily life (BHREATHNACH, 2007).

Modern historians are constantly disputing about the separation between Poetry and History, and Irish historical tradition has a 'literary bias' (BYRNE, 1974, p. 157). Erich Poppe also indicates the dichotomy of 'fact' versus 'fiction' as a relevant issue of this discussion. According to him, the main problem is while modern audience considers the texts as literature, 'medieval Irish writers considered then to be history' (POPPE, 2014, p. 139).

The same authors who recognized those aforementioned problems also have presented some alternatives views. As said before, according to Byrne, despite modern audience interprets the multiple function of *Seanchas* as separated one from another, medieval writers saw then as 'inextricably raveled' (BYRNE, 1974, p. 138). It was not a problem to the Irish *Seanchas* Tradition the combination of national `origin legends with stories of kings, saints and secular heroes` (CUNNINGHAM, 2010, p. 302). Ó Corráin's points out 'origins, then, are not simply origins. In the world of early medieval Irish historiography, an origin is the demand the present makes upon the past, not knowledge of the past for its own sake – a much more recent historical pretence' (Ó CORRÁIN, 1998, p. 185). It is a mistake to think about the genealogies only as 'unconscious cultural baggage' or 'meaningless detritus of half-forgotten myth', the author explains (Ó CORRÁIN, 1998, p. 186). Instead, 'the makers of the texts were professionals (...) [they] constantly and necessarily re-interpreted the past in the interest of the contemporary socio-political structures and power-holders (Ó CORRÁIN, 1998, p. 186). Taking this into consideration, Ó Corráin explains historical creations of the medieval Irish were produced by scholars whose skills were developed in vernacular and Latin and have

biblical history and Isidore of Seville as inspiration. He says, 'the ideas that informed their work were those that created and informed the European historical consciousness for well over a millennium that began with Isidore in the seventh century and had not quite ended by the Enlightenment' (Ó CORRÁIN, 1998, p. 207).

To the problem Edel Bhreathnach had mentioned about the restriction of *Seanchas* to law and the genesis of some elite families, she also claims it's a completely wrong and limited interpretation made by modern scholarship. She said '*Seanchas* was not confined to practical uses such as legal disputes and proving the legitimate claim of kings and lords to their rights by reference to genealogies' (BHREATHNACH, 2007, 20). We should accept *Seanchas* as an important tradition of Historiography in Ancient Ireland. The author explains '*Stair*, a word borrowed from Latin *historia* and used in Modern Irish as the term for 'the science of history', was rarely employed in medieval Ireland' (BHREATHNACH, 2014, p.2). Thus, when early Irish society though about their Past, independent of the chosen genre, it was made, through the lenses of *Seanchas* tradition, by its *Seanchaidh*. It was never a problem to early Irish audience, but only for modern historians.

According to Poppe, the modern audience needs to understand 'Medieval *Historia* is different from modern historiography in scope and claim, and allows the embellishment and augmentation of the past, for example through speeches or the description of emotions' (POPPE, 2014, p. 139). Following some of Hans-Werner Goetz' ideas, he reminds us entertainment was part of Medieval Historiography and it does not make it a fiction. Also, Medieval Historiography 'is not an arbitrary construction, but based on an image of the past (*Geschichtsbild*), (...) it is bound to a historical object, the *res gestae*, and to time, or chronology; indeed, there is a very strong connection between history and time' (POPPE, 2014, p. 139). He explains medieval Irish authors have a restriction to their creativity, they were obligated to follow some rules, contemplating a collective knowledge about the Past and, at the same time, to show they were aware about patterns of rhetoric, aesthetical pleasing, and political and didactic application to the present (POPPE, 2014). The texts, then, were accepted by their authors and audience as 'a probable account of Ireland`s past and in this sense, they participated in a massive project of learned collective *memoria* intended to preserve the country's past as narrative history' (POPPE, 2014, p. 140/141).

In early Irish texts, even the material modern historians consider to be 'only fictional' can be related to History somehow. James Carney points out it happens because the traditional genealogies through its main characters have a didactical purpose and they are written in such way to work as a kind of 'dramatized' or 'fictionalized' History which could be understood through the concept of *scél-senchus*. Explaining how this kind of narrative works, the author says: 'its primary purpose was usually not entertainment but instruction, and even the most obviously fictional elements may carry a didactic message' (CARNEY, 2005, p. 479). It's exactly the case of the great Irish epic tale Taín Bó Cúailnge which can be interpreted as an amalgam of fiction and history (CARNEY, 1983/2005; SANTOS e FARRELL, 2014.).

The problem is Historians do not seem to appreciate or at least they do not seem to have a good relationship with the concept of fiction, as if it were a risk to their field. A short

research into Hayden White`s works reception can indicate this (MARQUEZ, 2011, p. 54-82). In several texts that presents doubts about the scientificity of History this author is quoted negatively, especially when White is addressing the Historical Text as Literary Artifact, i.e. pointing out both the narrative strategies of the historical discourse and historical imagination (DOMANSKA, Ewa; KELLNER, Hans; WHITE, Hayden, 1994, p. 91-100). Ranke`s *dictum* '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*`, and the historicist tradition it represents, on another hand, perhaps is the greatest *exemplum* of the opposite, and more positive, view.

Commenting the correspondence between Renato Serra and Benedetto Croce, Carlo Ginzburg explained the complex connection historical narrative has with reality which, necessarily, means a relationship with fiction. As he has said: 'narrazioni, indipendentemente dal loro carattere più o meno diretto, hanno sempre un rapporto altamente problematico con la realtà. Ma la realtà (la cosa in sé) esiste' (GINZBURG, 1992, P. 543). Also, a Brazilian historian called Norberto Luís Guarinello has pointed out that it is very important historians do recognize, analyze and comprehend the narrative shapes they use in their discourses to present the Past to their audiences, because none of them are unbiased (GUARINELLO, 2003, p. 57). There is no need to make a definitive and excluding choice between Ranke's *dictum* and Hayden White's (and others that have pointed out narratological issues) premises, each of them has its place in historiographical narrative. It is the community of professional historians who needs 'to establish a truthful and reliable relationship between the narrative and its empirical basis' (MARTINS, 2009, p. 5-34). in order to produce a Science of History that relays on relational truths or certainties (MARTINS, 2009, p. 5-34).

Joan N. Rander addressed this issue on his presentation delivered at the Harvard Seminar in Celtic Literature, published 12 years later in *Celtica* - the Journal of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. Discussing 'Early Irish Historiography and the Significance of Form' he takes three common forms of historical writing in Early Ireland (Annals, Legends, and Chronicles), from which he analyzes rhetorical and symbolical implications in those narratives. He accepted Kim MacCone`s definition of 'blurred boundaries' to explain the relationship between poetry and History and he also benefits himself of the concept of *Seanchas* to define Irish way of doing History in pre-Norman Irish Tradition (RANDER, 1999, p. 318). In constant dialogues with Hayden White`s narratological debate concerning to the writing of History, Rander says the three forms of Irish texts were different in production and preservation, but 'used conjointly by the same historians (...) a single author could, on occasion, see two or all three divergent modes of interpreting the past as contributing to the same rhetorical purpose' (RANDER, 1999, p. 321). He also has pointed out that 'what we today might see as contradictory modes of thought and belief`, illustrated by these three diverse genres of historical writing, did not necessarily seem contradictory to the scholars of Medieval Ireland' (RANDER, 1999, p. 325).

Even if one insists on looking at poets and historians as separated in Medieval Ireland, it would be mandatory to remember they share a tradition in common which is related to all Irish Men of Learning (O LOCHLAINN, 1947). Commenting this shared common ground in their linguistic and literary training, Brian Ó Cuív says 'the poets were expected to be familiar with genealogical and historical lore as well as with 'poetics', and historians showed themselves to be competent poets' (Ó CUÍV, 1963, p. 234). The same word *Seanchas* was applied for both kind

of knowledges, the one developed by specialized historians and the poet's legends and ancient tales (Ó CUÍV, 1963, p. 237).

The *Seanchas* Tradition continued to be a fundamental part of Irish writing of History until the 17th Century. Before Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh, Cú Choigcríche Ó Duibhgeannáin and Fearfeasa Ó Maoil Chonaire decided work together to compose one of the master pieces of Irish historical works they were 'under the influence of a centuries-old tradition of *Seanchas* [and] had as their exemplars the Annals of Ulster and a range of other annals, together with other historical texts in prose and verse' (CUNNINGHAM, 2009, p. 181). In 1645, John Colgan called them '*Peritissimi Magistri*', and also denominated their work as '*Annales Quatuor Magistrorum*', its name until today (MAcCARTHY, 2010, p. 14-15). According to Cunningham, the Four Masters were completely 'consciousness of the nature of their role as preservers of the memory of the past (CUNNINGHAM, 2010, p. 25). They were Franciscans who composed their work '*do chum glóire Dé 7 onora na hÉireann*/for the glory of God and the honor of Ireland' (CUNNINGHAM, 2010, p. 26), as she has pointed out. They were following standard views and patterns of how History should be written in their time and no only them, but also 'the professional Irish Scholars who were asked to approve formally the work were themselves immersed in the same traditions of *Seanchas*' (CUNNINGHAM, 2010, p. 301).

BHREATHNACH explains 'Micheál Ó Cléirigh and his fellow scholars belonged to families from the north and the west of Ireland who had practiced the arts of history and poetry throughout the late medieval period' (BHREATHNACH, 2007, p. 19). These families were the link between *Seanchas* Tradition and the Franciscans historians of the 17th Century in Ireland. Hence, according to the author, the Annals of the Four Masters can be interpreted as 'the apex of the tradition of compiling Irish chronicles' (BHREATHNACH, 2014, p. 2).

Daniel P. MacCarthy recognizes 'the accumulated written chronicles of any culture represent a window onto the collective memory of the past preserved by one of its most privileged groups, its literate class' (MAcCARTHY, 2010, p. 1). He has explained Ireland Medieval and Early Modern Chronicles, such as Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh (CG), Lebor Gabála (LG), Foras Feasa ar Eirinn (FF), Chronicum Scotorum (CS), and the annals of Tigernach (AT), Ulster (AU), Inisfallen (AI), Loch Cé (LC), Connacht (CT), the Four Masters (FM), the Fragmentary Annals (FA) and Conell Mageoghagan (MB), as he quote them in his work (MAcCARTHY, 2010), were produced under a deep influence of Rufinus of Aquileia, who was himself working on the Chronological Canons of Eusebius of Caesarea, and its translation and extension by Jerome (MAcCARTHY, 2010). The author says it is possible to follow 'the sequence of compilation stages starting from Rufinus and continuing to Michéal Ó Cléirigh" (MAcCARTHY, 2010, p. 117). All those Irish texts influenced by Rufinus`s Chronicle were produced under the *Seanchas* Tradition.

According to Debora Deliyannis, History was not an independent category in Middle Ages, historical texts could be found under 'grammar' or 'rhetoric'. They could be Annals, diaries, calendars, chronicles, deeds, biographies, hagiographies, poetry, exegesis and commentaries of parts of the Bible, panegyrics, computational texts, legal documents, liturgical offices etc. (DELIYANNIS, 2003). According to her, 'in the earlier Middle Ages, people who wrote historical

texts were scholars, monks, bishops, clerks, and government officials' (DELIYANNIS, 2003, p. 7). They were, then, the responsible for the production of historical writing related to all aspects of their society.

Understandably, those narratives used fictional and rhetorical patterns, a way to please their audience at that time. History and Memory were constantly a *duo*. How could it be different in texts produced in form of Annals, Chronicles, Genealogies in such a context? However, by no means, even though the epidemic so-called `post-modernity` has also reached our field (MARTINS, 2009), fiction should be considered as a threat to the scientificity of History. As J. B. Bury has pointed out in his inaugural lecture delivered at the Divinity School on January 26 1903 in Cambridge: `It has not yet become superfluous to insist that history is a science. No less and no more` (BURY, 1904, p. 01; TEMPERLEY, 1930, p. 4). It never meant to exclude narrative, Bury's intention was only to emphasize History is not a branch of Literature, which is very important since he was addressing this earlier than the 'Linguistic Turn' (BURY, 1904; TEMPERLEY, 1930). N*arratio* is an element present in any work of History that has ever been written and fiction is a central part of any historiographical discourse. It only could be interpreted differently by those who still believe in the existence of 'pure facts' and a Past waiting to be 'discovered'. As the German historian Jörn Rüsen has always insisted, *Historik*, *Forschung*, and *Geschichtsdidaktik* are all part of the Science of History, each of them an *Unterdisziplin/Teildisziplin der Geschichtswissenchaft*, which need to be understood *systematically* (RÜSEN, 2010). Taking this into consideration, Historians should be looking more carefully into S*eanchas*, this Irish tradition of Learning, and its *Seanchaidh*, an *Artifex* of the Past in Premodern Ireland. Any attempt to comprehend Premodern and Early Modern European Historiography should also consider this Irish contribution.

Notas

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