Introduction

This book cannot begin without a proper explanation of why a Polish scholar, whose field of expertise is mainly contemporary British literature, has decided to write about South Africa and Northern Ireland, two distant countries which sit as a backdrop to the ways the realm of fiction is tightly interconnected with a divisive socio-political dimension. There are two main reasons that are worthy of some clarification, and both shed light on the prerequisites for embarking on the whole project. First, there is my interest in literary texts which, when concatenated with political, sociological or historical narratives, have the potential to touch upon the complexity of the concrete conditionings of a given public life. For this kind of literary discourse the outside world remains a constant source of 'inspiration'. In such cases, the fictionality of a given work of art, compensated by its referentiality to the actual, constitutes interesting material for a further study of the relevant societal ills. Second, there is the notion of the [traumatic] past as leaving an imprint on a society in transition to a more democratic environment. Although a correlation between Poland and the two countries in question is not immediately apparent, a general perception and understanding of recent Polish history with its ideological divisions, as reflected and evolving in local debates in the first two decades after the demise of 'communism', leads me to see these two distant settings as marked by similar mistakes and sentiments resonating in people's individual and collective consciousness.

As is to be shown, South Africa and Northern Ireland, before and after the political settlements of the 1990s, revealed a high degree of optimism over the prospect of ending internal conflict. Like in Poland, an 'understandable' shift towards the future, which dominated discussions – paradoxically – over the present, could be observed. The past did matter, yet its pressures were often set aside since many wanted to believe that the actual change looming on the horizon would have to the power to reverse former antagonisms. This particular belief was visible, especially on the level of

political rhetoric where more profound references to 'the bygone' were unwelcome, for they could derail reconciliatory processes. In order to understand the dilemmas the general public in South Africa and Northern Ireland had to face, it is worthwhile citing some conclusive remarks from Piotr Sztompka's essay "The trauma of social change: A case of post-communist societies".[1] Central to his view on how societies function in the interim, just after the demise of the old socio-political order/regime, is his belief in disturbing aftereffects. With regard to the Polish background of the early 1990s, Sztompka spoke of "post-communist hangovers". In essence, people were confronted with the vexing question of a general attitude towards the past; namely, whether they were ready to indulge themselves in shaky promises of some political closure, without much delving into the obscurities of former years; or whether the time was ripe for profound "reevaluations" of individual and collective consciousness as molded by the antagonisms of the communist era. Concurrently, Sztompka draws to our attention one of the first and most important decisions made by the first non-communist Polish government, namely, to separate the present from the past by "declar[ing] a policy of a 'broad line'". Such a proposal underlined the idea of the new social order as including not only those who played a part in making the political change possible but also the authors of indelible past transgressions. The latter's offences were not to be forgotten, yet the "evaluation" of individual cases was to be based "on the merit of their contribution to the new […] democratic order" (Sztompka 2004: 181). However, as could be expected, another tendency was revealed, namely, to suppress more nuanced discussions on recent history in order to focus 'people's energy' on the present. Too much attention on the past could have, as some claimed, detrimental effects on the general public. Hence, there was an observable intentional or unintentional turning away from 'former' animosities and resentments, so as not to inflame the seminal moment of democratic change.

Similar rhetoric was employed, for example, in transforming South Africa, where eminent representatives of the local political stage voiced 'concerns' over the potential impact of such debates on 'healing the old wounds' [a more detailed presentation of the arguments given, with refer-

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[1] In an article from 2014 (Bartnik, 2014), I made a reference to Sztompka's conclusions. Due to their digressive character, I felt compelled to relegate them to the footnotes. This time, in order to elucidate the scholarly stance I have taken, his opinions need to be moved to the foreground.

ence to Nelson Mandela and President Frederick Willem de Klerk, is presented in chapter two]. Once the present and the future were acknowledged on the horizon of socio-political expectations, the past started to be perceived as casting a menacing shadow over the collective mindset. Apparently, that kind of misunderstanding or even manipulation of the initial position required a counter-reaction. Among those who were willing to address the challenge, one finds not only representatives of the social sciences but various intellectuals as well. As the latter group were to be involved in socio-political intervention, a certain response could also be expected from both distinguished and less celebrated artists from within the South African and Northern Irish literary fields.[2]

In light of the above, a central question has arisen, constitutive of the current project's hypothesis; namely, to what extent was literature ready to adopt a stance on the notion of the relevance of the past in molding post-apartheid and post-Troubles consciousness? And to what extent did a given literary discourse mimic or follow the conclusions formulated by, but also hitherto reserved to, other areas of investigation – political, historical or sociological? As I will try to prove, both in South Africa and Northern Ireland, there appeared a considerable number of writers who embarked on an effort to assist through literary narratives[3] in leading people through the twists and turns of the transformational time. And in most of the works analyzed in this monograph, the reported diagnosis ran parallel to other scholarly conclusions provided by the social sciences. Concurrently, the issue of the relatedness of two autonomous, and by many standards distant, areas had to be touched upon.

To address the latter question, it was of vital importance to reach out to those analyses which demonstrated an interesting convergence of the South African and Northern Irish backgrounds. Interestingly, especially before but also after the political watershed, the social fabric in both countries was presented as being fraught with agony, brought about by decades of anta-

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[2] The concept of 'literary fields' is taken form Pierre Bourdieu's studies on "the rules of art" (1996) [a more detailed reference to a composition of the literary field is given in chapter two].

[3] Since the main idea is to show how South African and Northern Irish writers intervened in contemporary discussions over the socio-political realm, there is no focus on typological differences concerning specific literary genres. Instead of attention given to such formalities, my objective is to analyze texts of fiction which through their referential character did *narrate* a certain commentary on the corrective meanderings of post-conflict life.

gonistic intransigence. Some scholars speak openly of 'divided societies', others relate to the notion of communal shredding. Among the representatives of the first group we find, for instance, Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin (2007: 3-5) who, focusing on the issue of reconciliation in the societies emerging out the crisis of violence, set South Africa and Northern Ireland as nations whose rifts are analogous to those observable in other countries like Nicaragua, Chile, Israel and Palestine, or even post-communist countries. Another important scholarly source relevant to the comparative analysis of [post-]apartheid and [post-]Troubles socio-political realms comes from Maria Ericson (2001). In her thorough study of the contemporary states in question, the eponymous issue of reconciliationis central. In addition, she presents both societies as corresponding in terms of exclusion of *the other*, but also in terms of the past and its imprint upon the present. Finally, she sees South Africa and Northern Ireland as comparable in terms of the divide built upon legal, social and ideological differences.

John McGarry (2004), for instance, sees Northern Ireland as part of a bigger picture of the 'divided world'[4] in need of mending the ways that have led to splitting up the social fabric. Providing a comparison with different national backgrounds, he does not forget to include a reference to South Africa, making it a prime example of a country that embarked upon a deconstruction of the foundations of the divide. Padraig O'Malley (2004) also diagnoses both societies as significantly equivalent. With the political change unfolding in the South Africa and Northern Ireland of the 1990s, he underlines parallel processes which led the populations of the local divided worlds to sit at a historical "crossroads".[5] In the area of political sciences, there is an analysis conducted collectively by Helen Brocklehurst, Noel Stott, Brandon Hamber and Gillian Robinson (2001) which confirms the strong correlation between the two societies. Most apparently, the conflict

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[4] The fact that the essays highlight the problem of 'violent divisions', as noticeable for example in the social fabric of Northern Ireland, needs to be addressed and should not be regarded as unitary. As Kristen Schulze's article "Taking the gun out of politics: Conflict transformation in Northern Ireland and Lebanon" (2004) indicates, societies divided specifically by belligerent mentalities constitute a more widespread worldly phenomenon. Driven by similar mechanisms of exclusion, such seemingly dissimilar geographical contexts do establish common ground for a comparative analysis. As regards South Africa and the notion of violence and militant mindsets in divided societies, it is worth mentioning Don Foster's, Paul Haupt's and Marésa de Beer's political study (2005).

[5] This is a reference to the very title of O'Malley's text, namely "Northern Ireland and South Africa: 'Hope and History at a crossroads'" (2004: 276).

led given populations to be driven by antagonisms towards an "alien"[6] group within the national framework. The other side was to be 'marginalized' and prevented from meaningful participation in shaping the collective identity. The resentment towards '*the other*' was ingrained in people's mindsets, and as it was so "deep-rooted" it required concrete measures to be taken on the part of 'intellectuals' to influence the public.

With the general objective of a successful transformation, that is to bring and "sustain a lasting peace", Colin Knox and Pádrick Quirk referred to three separate cultural contexts – South Africa, Northern Ireland and Israel. As their study proves, it is legitimate beyond any doubt to speak of 'divided societies' with regard to the above locations. Moreover, to discuss the mechanisms of such political changes, we look upon these societies to "reflect on the value of the model as a useful theoretical framework for peace building" (Knox and Quirk 2000: 28). Attempting to define the key element within that model, which facilitates commencing a reconciliation process, it becomes pivotal to cross the threshold of limitations brought along with the existing walls of partition and elaborate on "access to and engagement with the [aforementioned] other" (Breen Smyth 2007: 8). With direct reference to South African and Northern Irish socio-political transformations, Marie Breen Smyth must be classified as yet another author who diagnoses the respectively considered local mindsets as driven by the divide,[7] but concurrently mediating upon possible resolutions.

Based on a variety of sources and their firm conclusions, many of which have been signaled above, it became evident that both societies suffered from bipolar socio-political disorders. Seeing post-conflict South Africa and Northern Ireland through the prism of deep-seated divisions could not be regarded as coincidental, as has been proven in different fields of scholarly investigation. Therefore, another hypothesis has been

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[6] The term "alien", which clearly points to the rift of hatred between communities, Brocklehurst et al. borrowed from A. Johnston, "Self-determination in Comparative Perspective: Northern Ireland and South Africa" [1990].

[7] References to divided societies, though considered from a strictly local perspective, can be found in Sean Farren and Robert F. Mulvihill's historical analysis *Paths to a settlement in Northern Ireland* (2000); in Geraldine Smyth's "Remembering to begin with peace", where she speaks of "divided people emerging from prolonged violence" (2007: 124); in Graham Dawson's *Making peace with the past* (2007) which concentrates, inter alia, on the memories of divided communities; in Valéry Morrison's essay on "schizoid identities" and "polarizations" in post-conflict Northern Irish society (2012: 241).

formulated, namely to relate to the local areas of literary production in order to find out not only whether the problem of the divide appears in post-apartheid and post-Troubles texts of fiction, but also to what extent the conclusions drawn by writers coincide with more academic viewpoints. Even though a discussion on the correlations between the two countries/nations/societies in transition, especially in the social sciences, has adopted an organized form, an equivalent debate in literary studies still awaits extended studies. In that sense, this comparative analysis of referential literary narratives can be reckoned as pioneering research on the parallelism between contemporary South African and Northern Irish literary thematization of the troublesome past and its impact on the democratization of individual and collective consciousness.

Apparently, it would not be possible to proceed with a wide-ranging revision of combined South African and Northern Irish narratives without reference to earlier scholarly works focusing separately on the dynamic of a given literary field. In both cases, the caesura from the logic of conflict led to a general reconsideration of artistic goals. Literature by and large was prompted to find alternatives to the politicization of fiction, so common before democratization processes were in full swing. In South African criticism, for instance, we find André Brink as one of the most resonant voices. He was of the opinion that in the wake of the political reconditioning, South African writers will participate in discovering 'the new'. With this objective in mind, 'storytelling' was to outweigh any socio-political intervention. Concurrently, Brink understood that the local literary field could not simply get rid of the "political load" (1998a: 185). What had changed was related to the undoing of politicized/ideological traits in fiction and turning towards actual post-conflict predicaments. These, as is to be shown, concerned the problem of dismantling the mentalities of the recent past.

Elleke Boehmer responded in the same spirit. The post-apartheid era drew a line between literary production of a strictly political nature and the new fiction aiming at "less social observation" (1998: 53). Nonetheless, once the turn away from former literary practices was admitted, no radical declaration was made about aesthetic escapism. Boehmer indicated that the rhetoric of intervention, though working upon slightly different polemical tones, was to remain visible in post-conflict novelistic formats. Speaking of contemporary literature, she noted to what extent the correlation between the South Africa of today and the South Africa of yesterday had an impact upon local writing. The past in general, and the

recent past of apartheid conditions in particular, gained the status of an indelible landmark, which no historical and political analyses could pass over while undertaking an attempt to discuss the present time. Of more resonant critical voices within the literary field was the one presented by Derek Attridge. From his perspective, it was legitimate to think of contemporary South Africa in terms of a post-conflict "mental landscape" (Attridge 2004: 142), which could not be properly diagnosed without direct reference to the logic of apartheid. As David Attwell and Barbara Harlow (2000) wrote in their introduction to *South African fiction after apartheid*, the old regime's collapse propelled to the spotlight debates concerning whether the political changeover had given an impetus to a new literariness. As other authors of this compilation of critical texts indicated, irrespective of 'aesthetic goals', the socio-political approach, with an imprint of the past in sight, has not only endured but continued to play its part in relating literary narratives to outlining the 'wounded' individual and collective mindsets of South Africa.

Similar, if not the same, dilemmas one finds explored by scholars for whom Northern Ireland is the field of literary expertise. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (2003), considering the reshaping of circumstances in the post-Troubles reality, with one very telling title – *[de]constructing the North* – demarcated the line between former and present expectations towards local literature. As the South African context proves, Northern Irish fiction also aimed at reconfiguring its own literary paradigm, acknowledging the closing stages of 'combative' writing in favor of widely understood literary experimentation. On the other hand, as his references to contemporary works of fiction revealed, an overtly 'escapist' attitude towards authorial socio-political engagement has been to no avail. For the sake of touching upon the post-conflict mental landscape, the recent past of the Troubles, especially, could not be neglected. To [re]shape the present, different authors had to [re]consider – paraphrasing Glenn Paterson – that which went before. In simple terms, Northern Ireland needed all the different narratives to aim at profound 'national' self-examination. Reading Michael Parker's book (2007) on *Northern Irish literature, 1975 – 2006*, one could conclude that a more adequate word to use in the above context would be 'national redefinition'. Yet Parker also noticed that along with the disregarding of "older sensibilities" Northern Irish fiction has remained under the influence of pending socio-political processes (2007: 184). With referential writing in mind, Joe Cleary (2003) focuses on local, post-Troubles mentalities as

marked by deep-seated divisions. Interestingly enough, touching upon the intricacy of such mindsets, he drew a parallel between such distant literary contexts as Israel, Palestine and Northern Ireland [South Africa was not included]. As his argumentation goes, literature in these three countries shares common ground, which boils down to finding a new language to enable the present to dispense with the past predicament.

In order to view some selected writings from such two different backgrounds in relation to each other, it seems crucial to sketch out a three/four-decade historical perspective to gain insight into what kind of conflicts and mentalities we are dealing with, and how [to what extent] these conflicts have been resolved. Of utmost importance, however, at least at this point, would be to indicate the presence of specific 'mental landscapes' as forged by the time of apartheid/the Troubles, and to be 'deconstructed' by literature. Prior to the time of transformation, South African or Northern Irish standpoints were rather insular and marked by militancy, thus the kind of identification by which only a sense of the self-righteousness of a given community could be highlighted. This lack of dialogue, which Jonathan Sacks elaborated upon in his article "Turning enemies into friends" (2005),[8] if continued, fortifies initial identifications contributing to further divides between contending communities. Hence, as many an author has underlined, the need to notice the presence of the antagonized frames of mind, in order to facilitate their further decomposition.

Although a more detailed examination of socio-political divisions in the two countries will be made later, one thing – on the most general level – is conclusive. The communities in both countries, albeit split on different grounds – ethnic or religious, did share insular identities. Bearing in mind what Sacks said about the clash between warring parties, it is beyond any doubt that the South African and Northern Irish populations, for decades involved in the process of creating binary divisions, could not abstain from taking up efforts to counteract the logic of hostile coexistence. Literature in that sense had to deconstruct those mindsets so often inclined to solidify identity "within their borders", to prevent individuals from further contributing to tensions and conflicts "across borders" (2005: 114). Such 'beleaguered mindsets',[9] which for a long time excluded any cross-community

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[8] An extended presentation of his arguments can be found in chapter one.

[9] In my use, the above term connotes holding one entrapped within a framework of intransigent, politicized reasoning, and as such has been formulated with regard to Brink's (1983) conclusions pertaining to the individual living in 'a state of siege', Dawson's (2007)

communication and brought about detrimental campaigns of militancy in the past, required constructive dismantling. In democratizing South Africa and Northern Ireland, the accent had to be placed somewhere else, hence different discursive/literary endeavors to lay down the grounds for reconciliation. Relevant recommendations, given by scholars and novelists, can be found in the following parts of the book.

The whole monograph has been divided into four sections. In all of them a strictly literary perspective has been interwoven with either a historical, political, sociological or psychological one. In the first chapter especially, the discussion on literary narratives has not so much been superseded as assisted, by other discourses, in introducing the reader to a short history of the local conflict. Such an overview of forty years of apartheid and thirty years of the Troubles provides an insight into, paraphrasing the title of Ericson's work, South African and Northern Irish shared mental landscapes. The idea is to indicate how the amplifying of divisive, politicized antagonisms, as developed over a number of decades, constituted almost unsurmountable obstacles, the resonance of which was carried across both societies [the collective mindset] and actual people [the individual mindset]. The outline of certain political barriers and negotiations, to be given in chapter one, is to indicate the corresponding character of South African and Northern Irish backgrounds in overcoming difficulties with reaching the moment in history when the need to dispense with the hitherto entrenched logic of 'divided societies' has become not only pressing but an apparent *raison d'État*.

Chapter two is devoted to an identification of the options given to post-apartheid and post-Troubles literature. Therefore, it is crucial to present the enthusiasm with which the changing socio-political circumstances were welcomed within both literary fields. On the other hand, very often that zest to practice a new mode of artistic expression was counterbalanced by numerous voices of men of culture urging contemporary authors of fiction not to be released from their commitment to public commentary. On top of that discussion, the notion of the politicized past as an ever-present, persistent point of reference for post-conflict South African and Northern Irish narratives is juxtaposed with the more postmodern creed to rewrite the past in terms of for-

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claim on dismantling of 'mental militancy' [further references to their views can be found in chapter three], and Bauman's (1999) perspective on modes of 'tribal' identifications [a more detailed presentation of his stance on tribal insularities is included in chapter two].

mer conventions of realist writing. The ultimate objective of this chapter is to indicate that even when postmodern fictionality and literariness were valued more than literary documentation of 'the real', still in many cases, taking into account the overwhelming nature of the local socio-political transformations, a definite turning away from referential writing turned out to be – euphemistically speaking – incomplete. To support the argument, selected works of eminent South African and Northern Irish novelists are summoned. The difference between these texts, and all the other included in the monograph, comes down to the former's indirect self-reflexive character, thank to which the then tensions between a fictional socio-political intervention and textual literariness were highlighted. The analyses of the remaining literary narratives, framed within the subsequent chapters, underlines the presence of referentiality in fiction as bereft of the pressure to unburden a literary work of one's commitment to public matters. Finally, and most importantly, some of the texts enable us to understand that the beginnings of such debates dated back to a few years before the actual political watersheds.

As mentioned above, in the next two chapters it should become more apparent that post-apartheid and post-Troubles novelistic writing, at least over one decade, was preoccupied with the interdependence of both transforming societies and the conflict-ridden South Africa and Northern Ireland of the recent past. Many a novelist, as shall be proven, emphasized the weight of historical experience, and within the confines of this framework, the study of individual and collective memory turned out to be the driving force in contemporary referential writing. Hence, chapter three concentrates on displaying how the public discourse and literary fields in both cultural contexts responded to the possibility of the reoccurrence of 'history'; how sensitive the topic of maintaining a sort of equilibrium between remembering and forgetting was; and how many authors noted in their stories that it is the individual' perspective which safeguards the gains of transformation against collective amnesia. Inasmuch as this chapter demonstrates the overall inscribing of literary narratives into the past in order to use it for present purposes, then chapter four, remaining within the logic of 'historical bearing', points its lens away from the general into the specific. The notion of the past is to be refracted through thematizations of violence, trauma and [in]justice, regarded as the predominant sources of anxiety in post-conflict realities. The main objective here is to present a variety of referential novels which define the post-apartheid and post-Troubles realms as resonant of behavioral mechanisms

characteristic for South Africa and Northern Ireland's cultures of violence. Its most blatant illustration was a sense of the traumatization of individual and collective life. Therefore, a great deal of attention is given to scholarly and literary understandings of that phenomenon. Finally, since one of the basic questions concerns the possibility of reconciliation, the remainder of chapter four refers to the notion of justice; to what extent [quasi-]legal institutions can be considered beneficial in restoring trust in wounded societies; and whether establishing the whole truth and only the truth, to use the terminology of penal investigation, should be regarded as a condition *sine qua non* for everyone involved in attempting to bridge the gap between former 'enemies'.

In part, the book includes the whole analyses [sometimes their significant parts] of selected literary texts which I have published over the last few years in the form of scholarly papers. However, by no means is this just a compilation of already existing articles. The monograph should be considered a final consummation of the work devoted to the phenomenon of 'divided societies' as coping with burdens of the past, and its presentation in the literary discourse of post-conflict South Africa and Northern Ireland. In that sense, its character is more comprehensive, yet certain authors and their novels seem to be of ultimate significance with regard to the problematized subject-matter, and their exclusion would contribute to making the line of argumentation incoherent/incomplete. Hence, with the consent of given editors [due appreciation is expressed in the acknowledgments], the most telling analyses have been reprinted with slight modifications, in other cases only the most relevant sections have been referred to, and sometimes only substantial paraphrases of the article's most important conclusions have been submitted. Finally, the order of the presentation of various novelists and their texts in this monograph should not be considered random or haphazardly done. The general idea was to create alternating layers of signification [with the exception of chapter two] to indicate that various literary narratives of South African and Northern Irish decent eventually constitute, irrespective of a given cultural and socio-political background, a coherent storyline about imprints of the past on post-conflict societies.