



**Munira H. Mutran (org.), *A Infância no Conto Irlandês* [Childhood in the Irish Short Story], São Paulo: Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas/USP, 2025, 290 p.**

Childhood in the Irish Short Story, or *A Infância no Conto Irlandês* in its Portuguese title, is the latest addition to Munira H. Mutran's remarkable work as an editor of anthologies of English-language short fiction translated into Portuguese. Mutran's pivotal role in establishing and developing Irish Studies in Brazil and across South America has earned her the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, awarded by President Michael D. Higgins in 2018. Mutran has also put her expertise in the short story form at the service of Brazilian and other Portuguese-speaking readers. Indeed, as noted in the Afterword, *A Infância no Conto Irlandês* is her fifth anthology of short stories of literature in translation made available in Portuguese. Her experience as an editor has made her aware of how anthologies of literature in translation can serve the general public while providing a useful educational resource for the study of the short story form and of literary translation. Her 1996 anthology, *Guirlanda de Histórias – Uma Antologia do Conto Irlandês* [A Garland of Stories: An Anthology of the Irish Story], aimed to make the twentieth-century Irish short story better known to a Brazilian readership, opting for an overview rather than a thematic focus. It was followed by four other short story anthologies: in 1998, *Os Herdeiros de Poe – Uma Antologia do Conto Norte-Americano no Século XX* [Poe's Heirs: An Anthology of the North American Short Story in the Twentieth Century]; in 2004, *Mosaico de Histórias – Uma Antologia do Conto Europeu* [A Mosaic of Stories: An Anthology of the European Short Story], which featured stories from various European literary traditions to mark Ireland's Presidency of the European Union and the access of ten new member states from Central and Eastern Europe on 1 May 2004; in 2006, *O Mundo e suas Criaturas – Uma Antologia do Conto Irlandês* [The World and Its Creatures: An Anthology of the Irish Story], returned to the Irish short story with a focus on the relation between humans and animals.

The 2025 anthology builds on this experience and on the collaborative work involving scholars of Irish Studies and translators – often, scholars-translators, performing the role of linguistic and cultural mediators between the literature they study and the community out of which they come. As noted by child psychologist Paulo Salles de Oliveira in his Preface, much care has been placed in *A Infância no Conto Irlandês*. This is noticeable in the breadth of the twenty-one stories by eighteen authors featured in the volume, in the quality of the translations, and in the framing of the stories. Indeed, the framing of the stories caters both for the general public, who may come to the anthology out of an interest in childhood and/or in things Irish, and for the student or scholar encountering the anthology in the context of their studies in Irish literature, the short story, literary translation and/or childhood studies. The critical apparatus addresses both lay and expert readerships: while the Preface, by psychologist Paulo Salles de Oliveira, himself the author of works on the role of play, testifies to what an attentive and committed reader may find to cherish in the stories, the Afterword, by editor Munira Mutran, identifies the ‘Pillars of the modern Irish short story’, introduces the ‘Contemporary Short Story Writers’ featured in the anthology, and explains the rationale underpinning the selection of the stories. The Irish stories on childhood are further framed by five drawings, under the umbrella title of ‘Childhood Under the Artist’s Eyes’, by Ângelo Roberto Mascarenhas de Andrade (1938-2018). Known for graphic lines that admittedly drew on his childhood, Ângelo de Andrade’s illustrations of children and animals add an inter-arts layer to the intercultural framework within which the translated Irish stories are presented to the Brazilian reader. Their visual representation of childhood opens up further reading possibilities and resonances.

Rewarding as it may be, editing and translating an anthology involves making choices. Just as no two translators will make exactly the same word choices, so will two editors hardly make exactly the same textual choices. If Mutran’s 1996 anthology aimed to offer an overview of the Irish short story in the twentieth-century, her present anthology combines the aim to include representations of childhood with her attention to stylistic continuities and changes in the Irish short story in the twentieth and twenty-first century. This twin preoccupation, outlined by Mutran in her Afterword, explains why key names in Irish realist short fiction such as Liam O’Flaherty, Sean O’Faolain and Frank O’Connor feature with two stories, while such relevant contemporary authors as Colm Tóibín, Anne Enright and Sebastian Barry have not been included: “it was not possible to find a story that would fit the aims of the volume”.

This does not mean, I would add, that childhood is absent from these authors' short fiction, as instanced by the poignant episode of childhood grief in Tóibín's "One Minus One", in *The Empty Family* (2010). It means instead that, as happens in that story, the prevailing narrative perspective is not that of a child, but of an adult.

Targeting an adult readership but seeking to foreground childhood experience predominantly from children's perspective, *A Infância no Conto Irlandês* features eighteen authors, including "pillars of the Irish short story" such as James Joyce, James Stephens, Liam O'Flaherty, Elizabeth Bowen, Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor, alongside contemporary practitioners of the form, namely John Banville, Dermot Bolger, Emma Donoghue, Roddy Doyle, Celia de Fréine, Brian Friel, Claire Keegan, Bryan MacMahon, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Edna O'Brien, Mary O'Donnell and William Trevor. Opening with Joyce's "Araby", the selection includes some well-known short stories such as O'Flaherty's "Three Lambs", O'Connor's "My Oedipus Complex" and O'Faolain's "The Trout". Inspired by the choice of opening the anthology with the first story from *Dubliners*, this reader might wish for it to close with a story from Lucy Caldwell's young Belfast inhabitants in *Multitudes* (2016) – though Celia de Fréine's "The Story of Elizabeth" provides a no less apt ending.

Indeed, any reader will be able to appreciate the rich tapestry of childhood experience assembled in this anthology. At a time when childhood studies are expanding and literary representations of childhood in Irish literature for adults as well as for children and young adults are attracting scholarly attention (Carroll 2024; Coghlan and O'Sullivan 2011; Kennon 2020; Luddy 2009; Luddy and Smith 2014; Mikowski 2015; Whyte 2011), this anthology foregrounds a body of work of interest to scholars from various disciplines while making it available to the Brazilian reader.

The reader of *Childhood in the Irish Short Story, A Infância no Conto Irlandês*, encounters accounts of childhood lived in the city and in the countryside, in different decades and social environments, told in a variety of voices and registers, all vividly rendered in Portuguese by a team of translators sensitive to their role as intercultural mediators, and mindful that such a staple feature of the Irish countryside as heather may require a footnote when transported to the southern hemisphere. These stories invite us to appreciate how complex and intense the experience of childhood is; how it differs from rosy-tinted idealized notions and ranges from care, tenderness and joy to sadness, loneliness and cruelty; how it can be rendered in poignant, ironic or humorous tones. Faced with the sheer breadth of the

anthology, the adult reader may notice what differs and what resonates across generations in Ireland, as well as across cultures. Perhaps in the process of reading about others' childhoods they will take stock of moments from their own childhood; perhaps by reading others' words they will find their own to articulate what remained numb or silenced; perhaps by imagining distant landscapes they will notice their own all the more vividly. As Salles de Oliveira so felicitously puts it in his Preface, these stories invite us to “embark on many journeys, many of them imaginary”. The meticulous care put into the selection, translation and presentation of these stories will undoubtedly enhance their resonance with their twenty-first century Brazilian readers.

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