

**AN APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS
CENIZAS DE KALABÓ Y TERMES AND *AUTORRETRATO CON UN INFIEL*,
BY JOSÉ FERNANDO SIALE DJANGANY**

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The study of contemporary Equatorial Guinean fiction has been gaining momentum in recent years and is approaching a transitional period within academic circles. There have been several introductory works published that have drawn attention to the field and it can now be safely stated that more intensive projects have been undertaken.¹ This shift in approach, away from exploratory and introductory treatments and towards detailed analysis, is marked by increasingly more complex and integrated interpretations that question more acutely the nature of this narrative and help to establish its place alongside more traditional areas of study. Approaching this topic from the field of Hispanic studies, Equatorial Guinean narrative has particular significance as these Spanish language texts cannot be ignored.

José Ramón Trujillo has termed the literary time period since 1990 as “los años de la esperanza” (528). This term is suitable if one considers the increase in the number of texts published by Equatorial Guinean authors since 1990. On the verge of a narrative “boom,” as the publication increases so too will the academic projects that study them. The two texts that will be discussed in this paper fall into this category. José Siale Djangany's *Cenizas de kalabó y termes* (2000) and *Autorretrato con un infiel* (2007) both actively participate in this new generation of narrative and illustrate many of the challenges surrounding the nature of identity.² The aim of this paper is to offer an approach to the concept of identity as explored

by Djangany in these novels with the hope of contributing to the understanding of the representation of identity formation in contemporary Equatorial Guinean narrative.

The subject of identity can easily lend itself to multiple interpretations and can be adopted as an “umbrella” term to encompass a number of aspects. The purpose of employing the term here is not to further complicate the issues, but to use it as the interpretative thread to read these texts. It would first be prudent to situate this issue within the field of identity studies and to narrow the scope of analysis. One cannot simply approach these texts from a postcolonial literary theorist’s perspective, as some of the basic assumptions regarding colonialism may not be appropriate. The role of Spain as a colonial power in Africa differs from its more established counterparts Britain and France.³ The term “identity” is inherently ambiguous and resistant to definition. From its inception in the social sciences, as a derivation of Freud’s term “identification,” it has been popularised and appropriated by a range of scholars in several areas of study to perform various analytical tasks (Brubaker and Cooper 2).⁴ From the very beginning, the term has been associated with psychological processes. Contemplation of the self and one’s place in the world has remained a common theme in the area of identity studies. But approaches to the concept have varied greatly and have assumed several roles such as cultural identity, national identity, and personal identity. It is perhaps the flexibility of this term that makes it so appealing, but this can also be seen as its limitation. The core of this paradox becomes fertile ground for debate and it is necessary to specify how this far-reaching concept can be approached in order to fulfil the aim of this analysis.

1. Framing Identity

The ambiguity that surrounds the subject of identity can be attributed in part to the variety of definitions and uses the term receives in everyday language. The uses of the word reflect the indistinctness of the concept, a problem that is amplified when it is employed to perform analytical work. Brubaker and Cooper portray identity as “richly ambiguous” and go on to describe ways in which the term is commonly used. In this description they note that

identity can be understood as a “core aspect of (individual and collective) ‘selfhood’” (6). The term is shared by both the individual and the collective and occurs in both theoretical work and everyday practice. This has led Brubaker and Cooper to state that identity “bears a multivalent, even contradictory theoretical burden” (8). The main problem surrounding this area of research is the tendency to view identity as either a series of essentialist static elements, or conversely, a series of constructed fluid elements. Brubaker and Cooper describe these divergent views as “hard” and “soft” (1).⁵ Relating to “hard” conceptions of identity, Smith writes: “[i]n an intuitive and everyday sense we think of our identities, whether ethnic or national or of any other form, as pre-given and stable facts of our lives” (248). Conversely, Woodward argues that “[a]n excess of fluidity and movement, which classifies identity as hybrid may leave us with no meaningful ways of placing ourselves” (157). These divergent observations serve as examples of the types of approaches that are present in the field of identity studies.

In line with the essentialist view of identity, Brubaker and Cooper signal potentially problematic assumptions that need to be considered when entering into the study of identity. These assumptions need to be addressed in order to avoid possible pitfalls whilst establishing parameters of study. “Identity is something all people have, or ought to have, or are searching for Identity is something all groups (at least groups of a certain kind- e.g., ethnic, racial, or national) have or ought to have” (10). These assumptions are accepted on the basis that they will underpin the specific model that will be detailed below.

The process of establishing sameness and difference must occur in relation to an “other.” This can take the form of an individual or a group, just as long as it is a point of reference that is outside the self. According to Hall, identification or the negotiation of identity is continuously “in process” (2). Instead of marking sameness, it is more prevalent to construct identity through marking difference.⁶ Masolo describes this as “a process to create the identity of the same through the discrimination of the Other” [capital in original] (182). The process of identification relates to the ability of the subjects to identify with some aspects and exclude themselves (or others) from what they feel is the “majority identity” (Amselle 24). Therefore, there is an active role for the subject in the construction and negotiation of identity.

It can also be argued that there are several identities available to an individual and the ascription to any given identity is determined through a set of situational circumstances. Hall goes further, describing identities as “points of temporary attachment,” which in turn can be interpreted as a type of situational identity (5).

It is important to reconcile the central contradictions that exist within identity studies between “hard” and “soft” conceptions of the term. Parameters must be established in order to satisfy the “hard” conception of the term, yet there needs to become flexible so as not to succumb to either a completely static or fluid understanding of the issue. There needs to be a balance “between a hard identity that doesn’t quite fit and a soft rhetoric of hybridity” (Brubaker and Cooper 30). To summarise this initial framing of the problems concerning identity, it has been established that identity is negotiated by the agency-empowered subject. The individual is connected to the collective and must define themselves in relation to the “other.” Furthermore, individuals possess the ability to engage with “situational” identities that permit them to emphasise facets of their identity that will be beneficial to them in certain situations.

2. Description of telescopic approach

Ronald Cohen’s approach to this problem in relation to ethnic identity is valid and his development of “nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness” (387) is an attempt to reconcile the static/fluid problem. The only difficulty with this model is that it promotes a hierarchy within the designations of identity. The occupation of a certain identity is the privileged status and, although the process of negotiation is accounted for in his model, it is more the process as opposed to the outcome that will be stressed here.

In order to reconcile the difficulty of this issue between “hard” and “soft” approaches I propose to use a *telescopic* approach to this problem. This means that, like the apparatus of a telescope, rings (or facets of identity) can be extended and contracted, adjusting to particular situations while remaining in contact and overlapping. It is not the view through the telescope, but the profile of the object itself that inspires this type of analysis. When the telescope is

completely contracted, that is to say, when the fewest number of rings are visible; this represents a broad definition of self. As a telescope extends, the definition narrows to become more specific without sacrificing the connection to other elements. Depending on the situation, subjects can choose to highlight a very broad or a very narrow definition of themselves without omitting or dismissing elements of their identity. Unlike Cohen's model, the individual components of identity that will be examined with the *telescopic* model are not positioned in a hierarchy. Each “rung” or facet of identity is seen as equal and what is privileged is the subject's agency.

The *telescopic* approach is useful because it allows for movement, but is not seen as fluid. This also allows elements of identity to be both static and malleable at the same time (or “hard” and “soft”) which in turn provides a more comprehensive understanding of the treatment of identity as a whole. Therefore, what can be seen as *telescopic* identity is important as it allows for adjustment by the subject during processes of self-definition and self-differentiation. This is done in accordance with the subject's needs, mostly to benefit him or her in a particular situation. While this model is proposed as an analytical tool to address issues of identity within these texts, it is by no means an exhaustive or fixed model. It could easily be adapted to fit other criteria depending on the desired outcome of the analysis. The most important function of the *telescopic* model is the maintenance of the relationship or contact between set criteria and the fact that the movement is controlled by an actor. The agency of the subject to assert his or her identity will vary according to situations and is generally shaped by interaction.

3. Textual examples

It is now necessary to put the effectiveness of the telescopic model to the test with some textual examples.

3.1. *Autorretrato con un infiel*

Autorretrato con un infiel is Djangany's most recent work and represents a major achievement in his career thus far. The sophistication and complexity of his narrative represent a clear contribution to the corpus of material produced by this new generation of authors. The issue of identity in this novel appears on two levels. One is metanarrative as it concerns the status of the writing itself in terms of narrative voice and point of view; the other is the matter of identity as a theme in the novel, and relates to the experience of the characters.

The identity of the text itself oscillates telescopically between "hard" reality and "soft" fiction providing many levels of interpretation. The discussion surrounding identity is directly related to a decoding process, the identification of people and places makes the novel itself an artefact that mediates the relationship between fact and fiction. From this perspective, the text can be interpreted as the author's own situational interaction with the reader. The metafictional layers that obscure the authorship of this text contribute to the decoding process that is vital to the understanding of the novel. The author very carefully constructs a multi-layered narrative initiated by the very origin of the text itself. Following the cervantine tradition, the narrator obscures the source of the narrative by relating to the reader that the novel is based on notes taken by Juvenal de Golas, who wrote in illegible handwriting: "Esas anotaciones originales han servido –con dificultad debido a la caótica caligrafía del autor– para la redacción de gran parte de esta historia" (ACI 20).⁷

Therefore, the foundation for the narration is built on illegible notes that were taken from an oral encounter with two religious women. The sisters related their account of the story, although the narrator emphasizes that their imagination also plays an important role. "El resto ha sido completado gracias a la infalible memoria y desbordante imaginación de las hermanas de la congregación Oblatas de la Virgen del convento que se encuentra al norte de Civilianjail, que fueron entrevistadas para este menester" (ACI 20). The reader then ponders the unclear basis of the story while being lead through a maze of metafictional details.

3.1.1. Decoding

The informed reader must therefore constantly be engaged in a process of decoding in order to make sense of the text, while at the same time making the effort to relate the fictional narrative to actual places and events. This simultaneous process allows for a much deeper understanding of the text and a greater appreciation for the skill of the author. One such example can be found in deciphering the location of the action. The reader is told that the novel takes place in “Póor Donanfer.” This name does not seem to coincide with an actual geographical location, so it would be presumed that it has been created for the purpose of fiction. However, this is the author’s first demonstration of the complexity of his narrative. He employs anagrams of actual places to show the attentive reader that he is referring to a contemporary situation. “Póor Donanfer” can be rearranged to spell Fernando Poo, previously the name of the main island of Equatorial Guinea currently known as Bioko.⁸ In addition to the anagram, the reader is informed that Póor Donanfer is an island, further corroborating the claim that it is in fact Equatorial Guinea (*ACI* 82).

There is a similar process of decoding that occurs with historical actors. Although it does not take the form of anagrams, there are clues that help the reader to relate the ostensibly fictitious characters to actual historical actors. The narrator relates that the fictional character Nicomedes Espíritu Sesinando “[n]ació en Peña de los Bueyes allá por el año mil novecientos veinticuatro” (*ACI* 149). He is chosen by the colonial administration to be the president of Póor Donanfer following independence. It is not a coincidence that this is the same year in which Francisco Macías Nguema, the first president of Equatorial Guinea, was born. The reader is also informed that he was elected “en comicios posteriores al año 1960” (*ACI* 23). Without giving the exact date of his election, the author is able to sustain fiction, although to the attentive reader, this corroborates the hypothesis that Nicomedes is a direct reference to Macías. The historical actors can therefore be viewed as having telescopic extensions of their identity manifested through the fictional characters. The levels of separation between fact and fiction are reconciled by the reader as different facets of identity are emphasized, thus allowing the author to refer to a certain actor without providing actual names. This technique

is fruitful as it increases the distance between actual events and the fictional narrative, providing the author with a critical space in which to explore issues without restraint.

3.1.2. Situational interaction

Hadèsfaya is a character that is closely related to Nicomedes Espiritu Sesinando. He is considered to be his right hand man and is empowered to work on his behalf. Hadèsfaya asserts his identity by pointing to the power entrusted to him by Nicomedes. This becomes apparent in a dialogue with an inhabitant of Póor Donanfer:

- ¿Ves esto? —[Hadèsfaya] le mostró al criador una insignia con banderitas que llevaba enganchada en la solapa del chaquetón—. ¿Sabes qué es?
—Una decoración oficial, señor.
—¡Condecoración! —corrigió el recién llegado—. Y me la puso el mismísimo Nicomedes Espiritu Sesinando, mi amigo de toda la vida (AC/ 156).

The assertion of his identity in this situational interaction with a commoner emphasises the power that has been bestowed upon him by the leader. His identification with Nicomedes is deeper than simply the assertion of power; his personal relationship with him is also a factor. In this instance, Hadèsfaya is highlighting the facets of his identity that give him an advantage over the Other. His declaration of power and his relationship with the dictator are both factors that shape this interaction and serve to illustrate the telescopic nature of his identity.

3.1.3. Reflection of identity

A further extension of this model to the text can be illustrated with the discussion of the painting that carries the same name as the novel. *Autorretrato con un infiel* is the painting created by Bosquejo Delatorre, a member of the religious mission. He paints himself in the foreground and Baltasar, an inhabitant of Póor Donanfer, in the background. Three months

later, he paints *Soy negro, pero hermoso hijo de Dios* which portrays Baltasar on his own. The title of the second painting exemplifies the attitude of the missionaries towards the colonial subjects. The paintings themselves, as well as the paternalistic treatment of Baltasar, are justifications for the colonial project. In the first painting, Delatorre illustrates himself with Baltasar emphasizing the Christianisation objective of the mission. In the second, he is representing Baltasar on his own in an attempt to demonstrate the success of the mission.

In spite of his ethnic identity, he is still beautiful in the eyes of God. His ethnic identity is seen as a negative attribute but one that can be overcome with the help of Christianity. It can be argued that Delatorre paints himself in an attempt to explore his own European identity through comparison with the Other. In a dialogue between the two men, Baltasar asks Delatorre: “¿Por qué siempre me buscas en tus ojos?” (ACI 44). This suggests that Delatorre is differentiating himself from Baltasar and seeks to affirm/explore his own identity through a gaze that is filtered through the Other. This situational interaction between the two men is embodied in the painting, which in turn becomes a representation of Delatorre’s identity as well as a version of Baltasar’s identity that has been interpreted and conveyed by Delatorre.

One final example from this novel will be discussed. Without entering into a discussion of the magical objects that are present in the text, it is worth exploring briefly the importance of the oval mirror. It is said that the oval mirror “refleja el fondo abominable de cualquier crapuloso – a la imagen de ‘un demonio transformándose en hombre’” (ACI 118). The act of the reflection of an image is relevant to the discussion of identity. Similar to the painting of the portrait discussed above, the act of seeking a reflected image of oneself is representative of a search for identity. The fact that this mirror also distorts and produces an evil reproduction of the self is further evidence of the destructive forces associated with the thirst for power presented by Nicomedes. By the simultaneous reflection of his image with that of his collaborator Hadèsfaya, they are transformed into a destructive beast. The beast is significant as it embodies all of the negative facets of the men’s identities. The convergence of the reflected images produces a monster that is a telescopic extension of their human selves.

3.2. Cenizas de kalabó y termes

Unlike the previous novel discussed, *Cenizas de kalabó y termes* has an identifiable protagonist and makes clear references to actual places and events. The identity of this protagonist, Ilde Wilson Peleté, is in a constant state of development throughout the novel. As Ilde grows, so do the facets of his telescopic identity, being shaped and defined through interactions with others.

3.2.1. Time

The temporal structure of the narrative is significant when related to issues of identity, as the narrator's treatment of time can serve to highlight above all the situational nature of his identity. It can also illustrate his judgement of events "by measuring the way a narrator temporally paces a particular content and the value of that content to the culture text or to the decorum of the particular story" (Lanser 201). For example the narrator states:

¿Pasaba realmente el tiempo? Una profunda sensación de abordar siempre la misma fase temporal me albergaba ... Por eso el tiempo se paraba como esperando el desenlace para arrancar bajo nuevos auspicios. (CKT 202)

The uncertainty related to time can be linked to uncertainty about the narrator's own identity. In this sense, time, as expressed in the novel, is engaged with by the narrator as demonstrated by his use of concrete facts, or it can be more illusive and appear to take on a personality of its own. Paul Ricoeur argues that "[c]ontemporary experiments in the area of narrative techniques are thus aimed at shattering the very experience of time" (81). The juxtaposition of the two representations of time appears to transfigure the reader's experience, while at the same time serving to illustrate facets of the narrator's identity. The narrator's experience of time can illustrate the extent to which he is engaged and can therefore be seen as his situational interaction with time. For example: "El tiempo pasó sin que me diera cuenta" (CKT 50). The reliability of the narrator's capacity to convey an

“accurate” account of time is compromised.

The expression of time in this context can be easily mapped onto the telescopic model in two ways. The first way would have the broad or collapsed definition classified as atemporal or vague which is supported with expressions such as “y pico.” The specific or extended definition could be classified as the concrete expressions of time such as “el catorce de enero de mil novecientos cuarenta y siete” (*CKT 99*). The second way this model can be employed is in a historical sense. The past is viewed as very specific, whereas the narrator’s experience of the present is expressed as broad or vague. This last point is also interesting because as the narrator progresses through time, the focus of the present also shifts, allowing the telescopic model to absorb the change as it occurs.

3.2.2. Situational interaction

It has been stated that Ilde’s development is marked by his situational interaction with others as he progresses through the action. One example of this occurs when he learns that he has a half brother. The initial dialogue between the two of them is a significant revelation for Ilde:

—¿Cómo te llamas?

—Cielín.

—No, ese nombre no. Tu nombre de bautismo, ¿cuál es?

—Juan Julio Wilson Elembo. ¿Tú cómo te llamas?

—Ildefonso Wilson

—Entonces tú eres mi hermano mayor de Santa Isabel.

—Así es Cielín, así es, soy hermano tuyo.

—¿Vives en Santa Isabel?

—Sí, vivo en Santa Isabel.

—Me han dicho que es muy bonita, mucho más bonita que Bata, ¿es cierto?

—Así fue, pero la estamos destruyendo, sólo quedan vestigios.

—¿Qué son vestigios?

—Restos transitorios del pasado.

- Restos transitorios... hummm –repetió para sí.
—Y yo que me creía el último de los Wilson (CKT 29-30).

The distinction must be noted between given names and baptismal names. It is significant that it is not until the boy reveals his “other” name that the family connection is established. The final statement that Ilde makes in closing the conversation relates to his belief that he was the last of the Wilsons. The discovery of his half brother changes his self-ascribed identity as an “only child” to one of shared inheritance. The existence of a half brother also attests to his father having a double life, and consequently a type of split identity and one that Ilde may have inherited. In this way, Ilde himself can be seen as a facet of a telescopic continuum of his family or the Wilsons. The broad, all encompassing definition of his ancestors is contrasted with the specific present of Ilde and the even more extended future of his brother or the next generation.

3.2.3. Identity of narrator

Throughout the novel, Ilde has been named as the first person narrator. There is however a secondary narrative voice that speaks directly to the reader that appears during the narration of Ilde’s time in France:

E incluso estaría dando al lector serios argumentos para desprestigiar mi experiencia personal en lo que a la riqueza material se refiere, desbaratando por vía de consecuencia mi solidez espiritual en cuanto al asunto del que venimos platicando hace ya docenas de páginas, habida cuenta de que la razón por la que he realizado este largo viaje se centra muy lejos de la abundancia material, se contraponen a ella, puedo decir. Por respeto a su curiosidad, a la curiosidad del lector me refiero, y con eso de que las confidencias aportan un plus a las relaciones personales les soplaré algunos detalles sobre las artes culinarias de Fabrice Fabre, el cocinero ... Una palabra más y me callo⁹ (CKT 204).

This interjection by a metafictional voice is distinct from the type of anecdotal narration that has been offered in the previous pages. The interruption of the established narrative causes the reader to take notice. Waugh describes the reason for this narrative technique:

In novelistic practice, this results in writing which consistently displays its conventionality, which explicitly [sic] and overtly lays bare its condition of artifice, and which thereby explores the problematic relationship between life and fiction ... Metafiction may concern itself, then, with particular conventions of the novel, to display the process of their construction (4).

The pause in the narration to address the reader reveals the constructed nature of the narrative and adds another facet of narrative identity to the discourse. If Ilde is accepted as the narrator, then this could constitute a situational interaction with the reader. This digression can also be interpreted as the voice of the author. Waugh argues that metafiction is a tendency within the genre of the novel and does not constitute a separate sub-group (12). The interruption of the narrator's voice contributes to the metafictional quality of this text. This, Waugh argues, is what "gives the novel its identity" (5). Similar to *Autorretrato con un infiel*, the telescopic identity of the text itself can be seen to extend in order to engage with the reader on different levels.

3.2.4. Ethnic identity

There are two examples where Ilde's ethnic identity is called into question. The first incidence occurs on the mainland when he is identified as being from the island and is incarcerated on suspicion of being subversive. "Mi mala vena fue ser de Fernando Poo. Resultó sospechoso que me encontrase por aquí en estos momentos de 'agresión exterior.' Me encerraron en un calabozo mientras se investigaba mi caso" (CKT 185). In this instance, Ilde is forced to downplay his ethnic identity, therefore broadening his definition of self in order to escape prosecution. Years later, upon his return from France, Ilde notices a drastic change in the behaviour of his countrymen, particularly in the airport. He witnesses beatings and

abusive behaviour towards passengers attempting to enter the country. He reports specifically “Paco Álvarez” and “Luis Ormíguez” among those who have been deported. The significance of the Spanish names is indicative of the strong hispanophobia that was present, especially during the Macías dictatorship. When it is his turn to pass through customs: “[el policía] no se molestó en escrutar mi pasaporte” (CKT 213). The sharp contrast in the treatment that Ilde receives from his countrymen can be attributed to the political pressures experienced within the country. The abuse that Ilde received as a result of his narrow definition as fernandino is then rewarded as a broad national definition as Equatorial Guinean. Ilde utilises the ethnic definition that is best suited to the circumstance thus illustrating the situational nature of his identity.

4. Conclusion

After briefly examining some of the theoretical problems surrounding the discussion of identity, this paper sought to offer a reading of two works by José Siale Djangany with an eye to resolving some of the key oppositions within that discussion. Although both texts have distinctively different characteristics, it has been argued that identity within these novels can be said to operate telescopically thus mediating the differences between both “hard” and “soft” conceptions of the term. Although the telescopic approach is by no means absolute, it does offer a framework within which to approach issues related to identity that can in turn be incorporated into a larger discussion thus offering a more comprehensive approach to the ways in which identity is explored in contemporary Equatorial Guinean narratives.

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¹ There are too many references to cite here including books and numerous articles. See for example: Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo and Mbaré Ngom *Literatura de Guinea Ecuatorial (Antología)*, 2000, Marvin Lewis *An Introduction to the Literature of Equatorial Guinea: Between Colonialism & Dictatorship*, 2007, and Mbaré Ngom (ed.) *La recuperación de la memoria: creación cultural e identidad nacional en la literatura hispano-negroafricana*, 2004. There is a large amount of scholarly work being dedicated to this subject including books, articles, doctoral theses, conferences and symposia.

² References to primary texts will appear hereafter as *CKT* and *ACI*.

³ Spain as a colonial power in Africa did not behave in the same way as her imperialist counterparts. In fact, Spain was considered to be Europe's "other" at the time of intense hispanisation of the territory which therefore results in an even more concentrated process of cultural formation. Spain's unique position at the time of active colonisation will have a fundamental impact on the colonial process and subsequently the identity of the postcolonial subject. For further discussion see Tofiño-Quesada 2003.

⁴ The term "identity" became popular in the 1980s with the increase in the use of the term in literary criticism and cultural studies.

⁵ The divergent views between "hard" and "soft" conceptions of identity are also discussed in Grossberg (89). Additionally, Grossberg voices concerns over the study of identity: "My argument is not with the fact that identity has been –and may still be– the site around which people are struggling, nor even with the significant advances that such struggles enabled over the past decades. Rather, it is a question of whether this is a fruitful path to continue following" (87).

⁶ Grossberg is much more firm on this point and argues that "identity is always constituted out of difference" (93). His definition excludes the possibility of the identification of sameness.

⁷ In an attempt to assure the veracity of the transcribed accounts, the reader is assured that others have confidence in the notes taken by Vilareal de Golas. "[É]l no se inventa nada; mira lo que hacen los hombres y lo deja escrito para que los demás lo sepan" (121).

⁸ The rearranging of letters reveals an extra "r" that does not match exactly the spelling of Fernando Poo. The author could be making reference to the English word *poor*, thus emphasizing the socio-economic situation of Equatorial Guinea.

⁹ It is symbolic that this example of metafiction appears during Ilde's time in France as it is during this time that the protagonist has reached maturity. He has fulfilled his journey of self-discovery and the process of identity formation is close to complete.