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The Modern Irish Bildungsroman:  
A Narrative of Resistance and Deformation

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## Abstract:

My thesis examines the ways in which the critical structure of modern Irish Bildungsroman deconstructs and re-examines 'residues of past trauma' in the form of socio-cultural, psychological, personal and notably political artefacts present in the nation's unfortunate engagement with the State's politics of formation. The result is a resistant and radical form which challenges the classical and modern specificity of the genre by introducing a non-conformist, post-Joycean protagonist, whose antithetical perception of history and socio-cultural norms contradicts the conservative efforts of the post-independence Irish State. To examine such a resistant critical structure, this thesis focuses on Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (1999), Dermot Bolger's *The Woman's Daughter* (1987), William Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault* (2002), Seamus Deane's *Reading In The Dark* (1996), Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996), Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960) and *A Pagan Place* (1970), Nuala O'Faolain's *Are You Somebody?* (1996), Francis Stuart's *Black List, Section H* (1971), Flann O'Brien's *The Hard Life* (1961), and John McGahern's *The Dark* (1965). The selected novels provide an invaluable insight into the nation's perception of sensitive concepts such as modernism and modern Irish identity, and how the confluence of these two produced a critical dialectical discourse which chronicles the formation of a non-conformist, ahistorical modern protagonist. To achieve a historical relevance, this thesis starts by examining Doyle's fictionalization of 1916 Easter Rising and the chaotic 1920s; Bolger's exploration of a repressive, inward-looking post-independence Irish society in the 1930s and the 1940s; Trevor's engagement with a socio-political divide that further split the nation; Deane's autogenous reading of an internal neocolonial 'Othering' during the 'emergency'; McCabe's illustration of the State's architecture of oppression, and societal introversion from the early 1940s to the 1960s; Edna O'Brien's and Nuala O'Faolain's exemplary illustration of women's blighted sexual Bildung in the 1940s, 50s and 60s; and finally examining a radical, 'chronocentric' depiction of a socio-political divide fictionalized by Stuart and McGahern, which emerged during the early days of the State and continued to dominate the nation well into the 1960s and the early 1970s. By examining psycho-social, sexual and political traumata reflected in the modern Irish Bildungsroman, this thesis provides a dialectical reading of the gap that appeared between the revolutionary ethos of

independent Irish identity formation, rooted in the principles of 1916 Rising and the 1920s, and that which appeared in the form of a tolerant republicanism in the 1980s. To study this socio-historical gap, I examine the nation's criticism of the State's politics and structure of formation, manifested in narratives of individual and national formation. The modern Irish Bildungsroman, I argue, appropriates the traditional features of the genre, for instance, chronicling the individual's psychosocial formation and the potential to re-engage with their society, and produces a critical matrix for a dialectical discourse which enables the nation to voice their concerns vis-à-vis a politically dichotomous post-independence Irish society, a repressed history, and at the same time to externalize their perception of modern Irish formation, being founded on an anti-colonial, non-conservative and politically aware consciousness. The result, which I call the 'Meta-National Narrative of Formation,' is a historically resistant and socio-politically conscious narrative which finds independence in rejection, imposition, and deformation, namely, by defying the State's architecture of formation as well as their nativist, retrograde visions of Irish identity.

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The conception of the symbolic novel is polymorphous: now a single character moves through spheres deformed by his own hallucinations, by his temperament, and the only *reality* lies in these deformations. ... Thus, scorning the puerile methods of naturalism ... the Symbolic-Impressionist novel will build its work of *subject deformation*, strong in this axiom: that art can only seek in the *objective* a simple and extremely succinct starting point.

Jean Moréas, "A Literary Manifesto" 206

But our particular friends were the rats, that dwelt by the stream. They were long and black. We brought them such tidbits from our ordinary as rinds of cheese, and morsels of gristle, and we brought them also birds' eggs, and frogs, and fledgelings. Sensible of these attentions, they would come flocking round us at our approach, with every sign of confidence and affection, and glide up our trouserlegs, and hang upon our breasts. And then we would sit down in the midst of them, and give them to eat, out of our hands, of a nice fat frog, or a baby thrush. Or seizing suddenly a plump young rat, resting in our bosom after its repast, we would feed it to its mother, or its father, or its brother, or its sister, or to some less fortunate relative. It was on these occasions, we agreed, after an exchange of views, that we came nearest to God.

Samuel Beckett, *Watt* 153

## Introduction

### Bildungsroman as the narrative of growth and integration

The Bildungsroman or under its various headings, namely, the novel of formation, of youth, of initiation, of apprenticeship, of education and recently even the life-novel, has been regarded by scholars such as Franco Moretti at one and the same time as a debatable yet “pivotal point of our history”, narrating the link between national and individual formation (*The Way* 16). A socio-historically conscious narrative, the Bildungsroman emerged in the late eighteenth-century Germany as an objective portrayal of the harmonious interplay between individual and national formation. It was this perception of the Bildungsroman that provided a metonymic insight into the European ethos of Bildung,<sup>1</sup> resulting in a narrative that as Georg Lukács notes identified individual formation as a historically conditioned, “uninterrupted process of changes” (*The Historical Novel* 23), chronicling the development of the “man along with the world” (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres* 23);<sup>2</sup> and as Moretti claims, it becomes a means that reflects the individual’s struggles to keep not just the history but also society “at a safe distance” while striving towards psychosocial perfection (*The Way* vii).<sup>3</sup>

Such various “headings,” according to Jerome Buckley, are *debatable* for they are sporadically yet spuriously used when critics and readers refer to novels that are neither about self-cultivation nor self-determination, resulting in a *failed conceptualization* of the term (*Season of Youth* vii). Jerome Buckley in *Season of Youth* (1974) argues that the most fitting headings for the Bildungsroman are the novel of youth and of education; for youth inherently implies a transitional state of “movement and adjustment from childhood to maturity,” and “‘education’ can be

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<sup>1</sup> On the European ethos of formation during ‘the Age of Enlightenment’ see Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland, *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, London: Routledge, 1983; also see Giovanna Summerfield, Lisa Downward, *New Perspectives on the European Bildungsroman*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010, especially pages 11-28.

<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> On the European Bildungsroman as the main and most cited form of the novel of formation see Franco Moretti, “The Novel: History and Theory”, in *New Left Review*, No. 52, July-Aug 2008, 111-124; also see, Franco Moretti, *The Novel: Vol. 2 Forms and Themes*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.



understood as a growing up and gradual self-discovery in the school-without-walls” (viii).

The narrative of the Bildungsroman illustrates how characters’ “internal impulses” are influenced (and developed) by the “external compulsions” – for instance, society and its authoritative pattern of formation (Moretti 15). In Todd Kontje’s terms, the main theme at the heart of the classical Bildungsroman initially is to illustrate firstly the character’s self-integration, and then his re-integration within society. However, what Moretti, Buckley, and Kontje do not consider in their definitional categorization of the novel of formation, and what this thesis will, is that such a narrow definition of the intimate interaction between the bildungsheld, namely, the hero as the subject and society has rid the former of developing a proper and personalized perception of Bildung, leading him to be consumed by the authoritative norms of the latter, and resulted in a self-critical, negative impetus that re-emerged in the twentieth century as self-referential individualism, or a modern Bildung.<sup>4</sup>

It is this socio-literary aspect of the Bildungsroman that introduces it as a hero-centric, socio-politically conscious narrative, allowing for the examination of the “conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialization” (Moretti 15). In other words, it is because of this dichotomous role of society, mediating between the individual’s perception of identity development and the State’s oppressive politics of formation, that the Bildungsroman was reintroduced in the early twentieth century as a narrative that not only defied its classical definition but challenged its historical roots, emerging as a resistant dialectical discourse questioning the socio-politically narrow definitions of Bildung, namely, self formation under the oppressiveness of a postist State.<sup>5</sup>

As Buckley argues, the Bildungsroman as an anthropocentric discussion of man’s development did not emerge as a significant critical form until the nineteenth century, when psychological understandings of childhood and the concomitant literature transformed into a “seriously ... appropriate literary concern” (*Season of*

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<sup>4</sup> On modern identity formation and modern subject see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, 1991. Also see Mary P. Corcoran, Perry Share, *Belongings: Shaping Identity in Modern Ireland*, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> On the re-emergence of the Bildungsroman in postcolonial nations especially Ireland see Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, London: Pluto Press, 1997; and *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, James Hardin, ed., University of South Carolina Press, 1991; and Emer Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations: Irish Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce*, Syracuse University Press, 2007.

*Youth* 19). Prior to this, the German perception of the Bildungsroman had already expanded the genre to encompass a broader sense of individuals' development. For instance, as Buckley notes, "the *Entwicklungsroman*" became the narrative of "a young man's general growth rather than his specific quest for self-culture; the *Erziehungsroman*, with an emphasis on the youth's training and formal education, and the *Kunstlerroman*" which dealt with the narrative of formation and development of an artist (*Season of Youth* 13). What Buckley and Moretti didn't include in their comprehensive historical readings, however, is how the concept of Bildung was perceived and embodied by nations whose national literature had been underrepresented by their politically narrow State in the Europe. Ireland, as this thesis argues, emerges as a notably influential nation whose literary resistant attempts at subverting the Empire and their dominant discourse of subordination and subjugation was repressed by its immediate neighbour, resulting in narratives centred on protagonists whose antiauthoritarian radicalism and resistance had been read as gruesome depictions of an "unmanageable" life in Ireland, "torn" by difficult "wild-looking men", with "wild thoughts" in mind and "wild deeds" in heart (Steuart Trench 89, 397).<sup>6</sup>

At the heart of these variants, which Jonathan Bolton misidentifies as a form which heralds the end of the Bildungsroman, and this thesis will introduce as a dialectical discourse that resists the political hegemony of postist regimes,<sup>7</sup> lies a singular truth: the modern Irish novel of formation is a candid account of a socio-politically conscious young individual who seeks his 'selfhood' in the face of harsh realism of the external life imposed by not just the binary of colonial and postcolonial norms but also the State as a power-oriented political monolith, and aims to end his narrative by appropriating a self-centric understanding of Bildung in which the State and society are barely important.

In such narratives of self-criticism and self-abnegation, closure or in Theodor Adorno's terms the "true impulse" that ends in "decipher[ing] the riddles of external life",<sup>8</sup> emerges as a force that further separates the modern Irish novel of formation from classical and modern variations, producing an independent, structurally radical

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<sup>6</sup> W. Steuart Trench, *Realities of Irish Life: By W. Steuart Trench Land Agent in Ireland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1869.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Bolton, *Blighted Beginnings: Coming of Age in Independent Ireland*, New Jersey: Bucknell University Press, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Theodor Adorno, "The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel", in *Notes to Literature, Vol. 1*. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson, New York: Columbia UP, 1991.

narrative that as Moretti claims can be regarded as a modern sub-genre of the ‘transformation principle’ (*Notes to Literature* 30).<sup>9</sup> This is the resistant form, I argue, that challenges Buckley’s and Moretti’s categorical perception of the Bildungsroman not only by leaving the ending open, resisting the quasi-Hegelian normative principles at the heart of the nineteenth-century British novel of formation, which assessed the individual’s Bildung on the basis of their finality and outcome, ending in a normalized formation and marriage; but also by deconstructing such categorical definitions of the novel of formation by portraying an untouched account of Irish life and Bildung which oscillates between the formation of the Irish as artists and rebels, patriots, freedom fighters, and eventually non-conformists. By interpolating radical accounts of formation oppressed by the State and society in the main body of the narrative the modern Irish Bildungsroman not only distances itself from the British categorical definition of the novel of formation<sup>10</sup> but provides a novel portrayal of Irish life and life in Ireland.<sup>11</sup> The result, as I shall examine in this thesis, is a narrative established on a dialectical discourse that critiques the conventional pattern of identity formation in Ireland, especially in the wake of the Easter Rising, the wars of independence, and continuing to the 1960s, and simultaneously questions the definitional limitations of a conventional understanding of the Bildungsroman by focusing on the formation of revolutionaries and nationalists whose art reinforced their struggle for independence and unity.

What Moretti and Gregory Castle don’t include in their reading of the novel of formation, and this thesis will, is to consider introspection as a socio-historically conscious dialogical discourse that, instead of focusing on the significance of the State as a national phenomenon that tends to unify the Irish, deciphered the ‘riddles of the (Irish) life’ by looking back at the history of identity formation in Ireland, revolution and revolutionary identity formation, and displacement as socio-cultural artefacts of the State.<sup>12</sup> The modern Irish Bildungsroman, I argue, rises as an independent dialectical critique of an identarian perception of Irish Bildung supported

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<sup>9</sup> On categorical differences between Transformation and Classification principles see Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*, 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> The Victorian British novel of formation according to Moretti and Buckley has been established on the trio of formation, social development and marriage. See Jerome Buckley, *Season of Youth*, 28-30; and Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*, iv-ix.

<sup>11</sup> On Irish life and life in Ireland see Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, Harvard University Press, 1997, 15-17.

<sup>12</sup> See Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, Tallahassee, University Press of Florida, 2006.

by the State, and focuses on an estranged, self-critical protagonist who is trapped in a still provincial post-independence Irish society, which regards Bildung, sexual, psychological and social, as either a redundant bourgeois luxury or an aberrant failure.

### Dialectics of Bildung: Pedagogy and Apprenticeship

According to J. P. C. Roach, in the European tradition of the Bildungsroman when young characters leave their home and join a broader society of for instance industrial schools, they share a unique intention, namely, to learn, and to develop by way of becoming an apprentice, or a curious, diligent learner who adapts only to survive the terminal dynamics of the narrative,<sup>13</sup> and their life.<sup>14</sup> Learning and apprenticeship, in this regard, became the very cornerstones of this genre, amplified by the introduction of the state-run schools, in which learning was regarded as an inseparable part of the process of formation across the class divide.

By contrast, the modern Irish bildungsheld seeks a more personal sense of development by engaging in an inner journey, cultivating his “inner culture” (Roach 132). He, therefore, emerges as an individual misplaced in a society whose norms and ideals have dramatically changed as a result of social and political Risings and revolutions; and so has his form of Bildung which now reflects a self-referential sense of development. His narrative of self-formation, as a result, transforms into a narrative which illustrates failed attempts to embody what Roach claims as proper form of Bildung, namely, an aesthetico-spiritual perception of Bildung. More important, however, is the protagonist’s understanding of self-formation altered under the State’s oppressive politics of formation, which according to Castle introduces self-formation as a concept that has been “rationalized and institutionalized to such an extent that Bildung can no longer flourish except among those privileged enough to enjoy traditional university education” (*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* 73). Thus, self-formation for the modern bildungsheld reflects, on the one hand, a repressed

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<sup>13</sup> According to Peter Brooks temporal dynamics is the very impetus that leads the narrative as much as readers towards a sense of composure / closure and understanding of the objectives of the narrative. See Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: Vintage, 1984, 10-13.

<sup>14</sup> See J. P. C. Roach, “Victorian Universities and the National Intelligentsia” in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1959, 131-150.

sense of individualization marked by a lack of proper education, and on the other an inevitable maturation that is bound by social demands. The nature of apprenticeship, in this regard, changes to comply with such radicalized social demands.

To illustrate such socio-cultural dichotomies at the heart of the modern Irish novel of formation, I will examine Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (1999); Dermot Bolger's *The Woman's Daughter* (1987); William Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault* (2002); Seamus Deane's *Reading In The Dark* (1996); Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992); Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996); Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960) and *A Pagan Place* (1970); Nuala O'Faolain's *Are You Somebody?* (1996); Flann O'Brien's *The Hard Life* (1961); John McGahern's *The Dark* (1965); and Francis Stuart's *Black List, Section H* (1971); narratives that expose the unwillingness of the State and its politics of confinement to allow the youths to fully participate in the national formation while expanding their perception of personal Bildung, thus becoming a generation whose perception of Bildung contradicts the clichés, appears incompatible with the nationalist ethos, or just does not contribute to the labyrinthine phases of national development. These are rebels, I argue, whose formation poses a threat to the legitimacy of the State, as they critique the State's politics of forgetfulness, and retrospective present, namely, a historically conditioned perception of the present.

The chronological order of the selected novels is embedded in and reflected by their historical setting,<sup>15</sup> either chronicling a political period critical in the history of Ireland and Irish identity or narrating the ways in which the political period transformed the Irish as both a nation and independent individuals. Such historically and politically conscious narratives resonate with what Georg Lukács regards as historical fiction, namely, narratives "written with a sense of how the individuality of character derives from the historical peculiarity of an age and with an awareness of human existence as always historically conditioned" (*The Historical Novel* 24). James M. Cahalan identifies such historically conscious novels as "a form that deals with periods of political crisis in modern Ireland prior to the author's experience, that concerns itself with a public political focus, and that depicts at least one real historical personage" (*Great Hatred, Little Room* xiii). Although written decades after each

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<sup>15</sup> On the distinction between 'the time of the narrative' and 'the time of the narration' and its contribution to the modern Bildungsroman see Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Trans. Jane E. Lewin, New York: Cornell University Press 1983, 33-65.

particular politico-historical phenomenon, these narratives emerge as literary vehicles for providing the nation with a fictionalized portrayal of their past, and a critical look at a politically oppressed definition of Irishness on the one hand, and examining the effects of such extreme politicization of life on youths and the nation on the other. Therefore, the modern Irish Bildungsroman, I argue, can be read as a critical mouthpiece that analyses the individual's formation through Lev Vygotsky's concept of "internalization", namely, by examining the ways in which political and historical crises have defined, modified, and redefined the Irish subject throughout the history of the nation as an independent country (*Mind in Society* 78).<sup>16</sup> For the modern Irish bildungshelden, history doesn't appear as a temporal artefact trapped in a nationalistic time-space continuum; rather, it stands as a dynamic consciousness with an infinite knowledge of what has transformed the Irish from being a nation repressed by 800 years of colonialism into an independent nation oppressed by the State's internal and psychological politics of colonialism, and finally into a republican, pluralist nation governed by the Irish.

By embracing a failed and depersonalized sense of Bildung, the modern Bildungsroman emerges as a site that narrates the contradictoriness and rebelliousness embedded in the formation of modern bildungsheld: an estranged and socially deformed protagonist, "a predatory, blood-sucking *ascendancy* class" whose non-identarian, non-conformist consciousness threatens to raze, for instance, the identarian social system of the Edwardian Britain, or endangers the nationalist manifesto of the post-independence Ireland (BBC, *The Book of Irish Writers* Ch 28).<sup>17</sup> My engagement with the concept of 'non-identarian' formation is informed by Theodor Adorno's distinction between identarian identity formation, influenced and formed by the bourgeois social subjectivism, and its contradiction, namely, a radical form which defies the State's descriptiveness of identity formation. As Adorno argues in *Negative Dialectics* (1966), the non-identarian "dialectics seek to say what something is, while 'identarian' thinking says what something comes under, what it exemplifies or represents, and what, accordingly, it is not itself" (149). Concepts such as 'unexperienced', 'unknown', and 'non-identarian' (identity), informed by Adorno's negative dialectics, for instance, are utilized to emphasize the State's attempts to

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<sup>16</sup> See Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Harvard University Press, 1978, 52-78.

<sup>17</sup> See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, London: Palgrave, 2007, 145, 147, 149.

present only an abstract dimension of rebellious Irishness. Such an oppressed form of identity, as Samir Gandesha notes in his discussion of “Homeless Philosophy”, finds itself “othered” and thus socially marginalized as a result of a significantly politicized dialectical discourse of the oppressor, namely, the State (252).

My contention is that the binary of formation in its modernist narrative form, depicting a non-identarian individual in a normalized, identarian context, deals with an intrinsically contradictory perception of reality and survival; this is a concept that defies Moretti’s definition of the Bildungsroman. To become efficient at understanding and extracting reality from non-reality the modern bildungshelden must improve their skills in absorbing the complex conception of non-reality, namely a non-bourgeois reality. The modern bildungsheld, thus, needs skills that are not humanistic but mechanical and instrumental. In discussing such a drastic change in the narrative of Bildungsroman, Castle introduces the required skills as: “technical and bureaucratic skills, [rather than] fluency in humanistic disciplines like literature, philosophy, music, theology, political theory and so on” (*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* 73). Therefore, as universities, once a unifying and vital institution in charge of introducing the skills required to find one’s self, transformed into redundant bourgeois luxury, so did the conception of apprenticeship as an inseparable part of the process of Bildung. The modern form of apprenticeship transformed into a merely esoteric or mystical rite of passage, and bore only insignificantly any trace of pragmatic formation.

In such a narrative of negativity and failure, the modern bildungsheld emerges as a being only capable of conceptualizing the non-identarian dimension of both inner and outer culture, namely, self cultivation and social formation, and becomes a radical embodiment of an inherently modern form of Bildung, namely, deformation.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, what he excels at is disavowing the rules that have become the fundamentals of this genre and his narrative, leading his narrative towards more “fluid” and alternative closures, and inventing a self that suits his psycho-social demands, and not that which is set by society – even if this means re-inventing the norms and challenging the ruling state (Castle 74). To fulfil this radical sense of re-invention, the modern bildungsheld directs the focus of inner-formation towards an

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Neo-feminist’ critics have regarded the form as “the most popular form of feminist fiction” (Ann White, *Growing up Female*, Greenwood, 1995, 195). See James Hardin, *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, University of South Carolina Press, 1991, xvi-xviii.

essentially internal, anti-collectivist commanding source, his ego, which prioritizes individualistic perfection over social integration. The norms and rules revisited by the modernist bildungsheld, to account for this sense of Bildung, are only there to substantiate the achievement of one objective: re-invention of the concept of self-identity.

According to Castle, as self-formation and identity incorporate failure and depersonalization as the leading themes, the narrative too transforms into “the site of critical negation of the self” (*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* 74). As I shall illustrate in my reading of Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy*, this is the ‘site’ in which, according to Lukács, the modern man not only externalizes his sense of irrelevance to his current state but scolds his *status quo ante*, which in the case of the Bildungsroman is social integration and formation of a social self.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the sacred codes that lay the foundation of the classical Bildung become impossible trivialities; and social mobility turns into an impossible exchange for the modern man as his path of self-formation shifts towards a ritual of negativity and negative self-formation.<sup>20</sup>

This thesis will argue that it is the negativity and failure embedded in the modern Irish perception of apprenticeship that prevent such a ritualistic and historically aware form of Bildung from indulging in the forgetfulness of existence or what Heidegger calls the “contentedness of everyday life” and (*Being and Time* 302).<sup>21</sup> In Adornian sense, incorporating negativity is the only counter-dialectics of formation necessary for rescuing modern man from being subsumed by the totalitarianism of a static, society-oriented sense of self-cultivation.<sup>22</sup> The result is a ‘counter-Bildung’ – but not an ‘anti-Bildung’, a distinction which I shall discuss at length especially in chapters I, II and IV – that replaces the failures of traditional Bildung with a negative form of modern formation, creating a counter-formation that according to Castle “appropriates history into the production of something new” (*Reading the Modernist*

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<sup>19</sup> See Lukács, “The Ideology of Modernism”, 290-92.

<sup>20</sup> See Jean Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange*, Trans. Chris Turner, London: Verso, 2001, 39-42.

<sup>21</sup> According to Victor Turner’s examination of religious ritual and ritualistic behaviourism prevalent in the formation of (socio-religious) identity, ritual can function at one and the same time “as mechanisms [that] ensure societal unity” and as “rituals (of rebellion)” which “enact social conflicts” (Deflem 5). See Mathieu Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner’s Processual Symbolic Analysis.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1991, 30(1):1-25.

<sup>22</sup> In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer denounce the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century perception of Bildung / self-formation by introducing it as an objectified, society-oriented mentality which devalues the individual. See T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Cultural Memory in the Present*, Stanford University Press, 2007, 11-13.



*Bildungsroman* 75). In discussing the radicalization of the modern man's social habits and trends, my contention is counter-traditional as well, for we will see depersonalization emerge as a ubiquitous modern consciousness that negates the everydayness and psychosocial habituation prevalent in the classical perception of *Bildung*.

As negativity and non-identity became prerequisites for modern *Bildung*, society lost its significance as an interdependent, interpersonal "framework" that would define and gauge the relevance of individuals based on their social interconnectedness and/or class (Williams, *The English Novel* 13).<sup>23</sup> At the turn of the century, the Irish bildungsheld became the embodiment of a self that was constantly contradictory and self-negating as he found both his origin and current condition unsatisfactory. As I shall illustrate in Chapter IV, Flann O'Brien's characterization of Finbarr and Manus in *The Hard Life*, for instance, is a broad depiction of such an on-going opposition between the fundamentals of self-formation and modern negativity animated by the State's politics of social stasis, becoming a radically self-referential conception of formation which in Adorno's terms is known as "the secret telos of identification", namely, welcoming the non-identarian concept of identity (*Negative Dialectics* 149). Following this fragile and yet socio-psychologically contradictory path, *Bildung* associates with negation and self-cancellation rather than formation. As Anthony Giddens notes, modernism replaced society-centrism with self-centrism and self-reflexivity, affirming the Adornian requirement of the shift towards modernism.<sup>24</sup> Society, in this regard, becomes an alternative concept that stands as a "distant, complex, incomprehensible, overwhelming" part of the modern man's life, who himself was in an ideological transition (Schwarz 13).<sup>25</sup>

The classical concept of *Bildung*, which scholars such as Moretti, Buckley and Castle regard as a socially harmonious self-formation turns into what Patricia Alden regards as the "chaos of principles", and I argue as self-contradictoriness of the modernist hero (*Social Mobility* 66). What emerges in the narrative of the modern Irish *Bildungsroman* in the form of self-questioning, rebellion, negativity and a growing sense of social alienation, which Lukács and Baudrillard introduce as the

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<sup>23</sup> Raymond Williams, *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence*, London, Hogarth Press, 1984.

<sup>24</sup> See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, 7-11.

<sup>25</sup> On the role of society as an agent see Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, London, Hogarth Press, 1984.

impossibility of social exchange, and which I argue is a result of radicalization of the principles of Bildung;<sup>26</sup> this is where a depersonalized imitation of the process of socialization dominates the narrative and as Alden identifies helps “legitimate the ideology of [modernist] individualism”, which is inherently negative (*Social Mobility* 5).<sup>27</sup>

In linking the aforementioned concepts of modern Bildung, depersonalization, non-conformism, and the description of modern Irish novel as an allegorical, resistant, form in post-independence Ireland, my study invites a re-evaluation of fundamental concepts such as Irish modernism, and modern Irish formation in the context of modern Ireland. I shall discuss such national transformations, namely, from colonial to post-colonial provincialism and to non-conformist anti-colonial impetus, by tracing and analysing the roots of a belated form of modernism in Ireland; the role of modern novel in narrating, publicizing, and defying the State’s politics of confinement; and the modern Irish Bildungsroman as a radical literary vehicle that reveals a history that the conservative Irish society decided not to acknowledge. As I shall argue shortly, the modern Irish bildungshelden, in this regard, establish their core ideals on such historical forgetfulness and self-negating principles, and openly question the fundamentals of socialization, starting with deconstructing the classical conception of Bildung, forming an ahistorical perception of time, and engaging in exposing the principles of confinement and backwardness imposed by the State. In other words, what the modern Irish Bildungsroman strives to achieve is not just to obviate the need for a proper Bildung, but rather to provide a more lucid depiction of the inner conflicts of modern Bildung, exposing their intentional historical forgetfulness, and defying the autocratic air of cultural limitation that dominated post-independence Ireland.

To escape such insular and filtered political representations of the history of individual formation in Ireland, the modern Irish authors channelled their critique of the State either through the critical discourse of the modern Bildungsroman or a national genre of Irish autobiography known as *Gaeltacht* autobiographies. It is the latter that due to certain stylistic similarities with the Bildungsroman (such as being centred on the formation of a young protagonist and their integration with society)

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<sup>26</sup> See Jean Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange*, trans. Chris Turner, London: Verso Books, 2001, 25-32.

<sup>27</sup> On the depersonalization of Bildung see Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of Present*, London: Verso, 2002, 7-18.

was used interchangeably with the former. The result of such a to-and-fro between genres has produced historically conscious, fictionalized autobiographical narratives of formation which provide a critical understanding of how political intolerance led to the formation of a new form of colonial division, or in Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's terms, "Oedipalization", namely, a hegemonic internalization and marginalization of a group of people by an authoritarian minority legitimized by societal and legal norms (*Anti-Oedipus* xx).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, such narratives of formation, as Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, Nuala O'Faolain's *Are You Somebody?*, and Francis Stuart's *Black List, Section H*, I argue, may be considered more than mere autobiographies bound by the conventions of either genres. Rather, these are unbiased, candid, and fictionalized accounts of life in Ireland during and after national phenomena such as the Rising and the wars of independence, reflecting on the trials and tribulations, and formation of young non-conformist protagonists, and highlighting the effects of politically intolerant regimes on individuals' psycho-social formation.<sup>29</sup> According to Lukács, such narratives portray "the grasp of the historical peculiarity of characters and events", showing how the formation of "its characters belonging to a concrete time" reflects the political foundation of that period in the history of the nation (*The Historical Novel* 20, 19).

As James Smith argues, the modern Irish novel bears a level of reality that the State has emphatically labelled as pure fiction and negligible.<sup>30</sup> I argue that such a stark illustration of Irish society and Irishness in the modern Irish novel that the State finds irrelevant targets one objective: to defy the State's politics of confinement by highlighting the unforgettable.<sup>31</sup> According to Paul Ricoeur, "fiction gives eyes to the horrified narrator. Eyes to see and to weep" (Kearney 180).<sup>32</sup> The Modern Irish novel, in this regard, emerges as a radical form that challenges the historical memory of the

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<sup>28</sup> On Flann O'Brien's *An Béal Bocht* as a critique of Ireland's political and social system see Neil Collins, Mary O'Shea, *Understanding Corruption in Irish Politics*, Cork: Cork University College, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> The form too emerges as an amalgamation of memoir, reflecting on the relevance and significance of 'the lives of others' on the protagonist's life, and Bildungsroman, in which the author inserts himself into the phantasmagoric reality of the fiction. On the differences and similarities between autobiography, memoir, and bildungsroman see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 70-80.

<sup>30</sup> See James Smith "Remembering Ireland's Architecture of Containment: 'Telling' Stories in The Butcher Boy and States of Fear" in *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, Fall-Winter, 2001, 5.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, the tragic fire at St. Joseph Industrial School in Cavan on February 23 1943 with 35 young girls in casualties; a heartbreaking tragedy that was silenced by the State.

<sup>32</sup> See *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action* (Philosophy and Social Criticism Series). Ed., Richard C. Kearney. London: Sage Publication, 1996.

State and those official narratives that were formed to control and normalize the nation, and Irish identity, and at the same time transforms into a form that reveals what the State requires to be silenced. Only by studying the historical artefacts present in the modern Irish novel of formation, for instance, can there be a context for examining and extracting a unique form of Irish identity which for long has been clouded by concepts such as post-colonialism, post-nationalism, and anti-colonial identity. The concept of *Meta-national*, modern Irish identity, which I introduce as the crux of my study, for instance emerges initially as a radical dialogical critical discourse most prevalent in the modern Irish novel (of formation) that targets the nostalgic, retrograde discourse used by the nationalist narratives.<sup>33</sup>

Irish meta-nationalism I argue can be regarded as a radical form of Irish identity that defies the State and the concomitant narrow and intolerant nationalism as its ‘cheap’ product,<sup>34</sup> loathes the empire, admonishes the limitation of the State, and yet seeks affinity with the radical telos of formation of men of 1916. In other words, my reading of Irish nationalism and the nativist State and their ethos of formation reflects a postcolonial perception of the term in which nationalism as a unifying drive is regarded as a fantasy and, as Kiberd notes, “a malignant fairy-tale responsible for most of the ills of the twentieth century” (*Inventing Ireland* 12). It is a concept which leads nations towards either repeating their past or altering what makes the original ethos of revolution through reconciliation. My perception of nationalism is informed by Kiberd’s non-revisionist critical study of nationalism and Irish identity, “Inventing Irelands”, published in 1984.<sup>35</sup> A decade later, however, Kiberd refines his aggressive definition of nationalism in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation* (1995), introducing it as a concept that unifies the nation especially in their perception of growth and development but at once resists the State’s retrogression and a retrospective understanding of the nation’s present and future. According to Kiberd’s understanding of Irish Bildung, therefore, disavowal and identification manifest

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<sup>33</sup> In their discussions of Irish socio-historical memory, Richard Kearney and James Smith separate the novel from the novelistic narratives of national formation supported by the State. See James Smith “Remembering Ireland’s Architecture of Containment: ‘Telling’ Stories in The Butcher Boy and States of Fear” in *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, Fall-Winter, 2001, 7-9.

<sup>34</sup> According to Arthur Schopenhauer, nationalism as in the form of national pride is simply the cheapest sort of pride. See Arthur Schopenhauer *The Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer: The Wisdom of Life*, especially “Chapter IV: Position, or A Man’s Place in Estimation of Others”. (eBooks@Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 2011).

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/schopenhauer/arthur/wisdom/chapter4.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Declan Kiberd, “Inventing Irelands”, *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1984, 11-25.

themselves as the inevitable constituents of the dualistic nature of modern Irish nationalism, where refusing revisionism and nativism contradicts the agrarian vision of an Eire-Ireland advocated by the State; and where nationalism is identified as a socio-historical pattern of national formation founded on the revolutionary values of 1916.

To provide a rich context for my analysis of meta-national, modern Irish identity, therefore, I will examine novels that have internalized tribulations of modern Irish identity formation and modern Irish Bildung during and after the formation of the State.<sup>36</sup> The selected novels of formation are neither artefacts of a society in decline nor nostalgic relics of a lost socio-cultural heritage destined to evoke memories of national grandeur. Rather, they are socio-historically and politically conscious narratives that revisit the past through their introspective narratorial voice with the sole objective of looking into a nationally glorified past and providing an unbiased critique of what Lukács regards as “the unreasonable” history or historical moments behind a nation’s socio-cultural formation (*The Historical Novel* 22). These are novels of formation,<sup>37</sup> I argue, that not only critique the State’s insular politics of formation and the history of colonial dominance but challenge the very conservative boundary of historical fiction in the wake of independence in Ireland that relegated individuals’ psychological and social formation to the State’s political imperatives by repressing and only partially reflecting the history of individual formation in Ireland.<sup>38</sup>

In Chapter I, I shall consider narratives that chronicle the 1920s, critique the rise of an oppressive and equivocal nationalist Irish identity, challenge the nationalist retrograde perception of modernism, and exhibit a growing sense of estrangement with a collective definition of Irishness; and finally highlight the non-linearity of modern Irishness in post-independent Ireland. In Chapter II, I will examine traces of a blanket isolationism manifested in the novels of formation set in the 1930s and the 1950s; these are narratives that incorporate a defiant, non-conformist voice which

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<sup>36</sup> Although the chapters are not properly chronological, their discussion tallies with the stages of formation and development of modern Irish identity.

<sup>37</sup> For instance see Eimar O’Duffy, *The Wasted Island*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1920. Also see Marina Julia Neary, *Martyrs and Traitors: A Tale of 1916*, New York: All Things That Matter Press, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> On the definitional difference between classical and a contemporary perception of historical novel, and the influence of the latter on the individual’s psychological Bildung see Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, Hannah and Stanley Mitche (trans.), Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983, 19-24.

responds to the State's unwillingness to provide socio-cultural and political diversity. In Chapter III, I shall examine narratives that chronicle the rise and maturation of a feminine sexual identity in Ireland between the late 1930s and 1960s. These, I argue, form a body of resistant literature that defies the conservative understanding of femininity, relegating sexual Bildung to a trivial, immoral sense of formation, narratives that introduce sexual formation too as a counter-discourse that critiques the State's dialectics of Bildung. In Chapter IV, I will discuss the rise of modern Irish identity as a non-conformist identity among the youths who seek to break away from the monolithic Irish identity imposed by the State and its normative social codes; however, their perception of formation neither sympathizes with rebels' separatist perception of Irish identity, nor does it endorse what revolutionaries regarded as national formation by submitting to the State's politics of formation. Finally, I shall conclude by examining the ways in which the modern Irish Bildungsroman emerges as a platform for the Irish to come to term with their past by revisiting and reconsidering a politically intolerant perception of Irish identity.

As narrated by the modern Irish Bildungsroman, I shall illustrate how the modern Irish identity emerges as a catalyst that substantiates the move towards a pluralist Ireland, manifested in the 1980s, by introducing the move as a vital departure from a monolithic, intolerant understanding of Irish identity towards a more individual-centred perception of national formation. Before examining the emergence and development of the modern Irish Bildungsroman in post-independence Ireland, I wish to pause and explore the social, cultural and political forces in Ireland, the combination of which resulted in the formation of a potent matrix of 'structurelessness' that at once gave rise to a binary of the provincial State and the modern Irish identity, on the one hand, and the emergence of the Bildungsroman as a dialectical discourse that critiqued the State's political narrowness, on the other.

### De-structured Ireland and the 'Meta-National' Dialectics of Formation

In her discussion of "structurelessness" in modern countries, Joreen Freeman refers to a phenomenological social chaos charged by the tendency to annul oppressive collectivism and social order and engage in an individualistic or group organized

hegemony (“Tyranny of Structurelessness” 2).<sup>39</sup> According to Freeman, collectivist concepts such as tribe or nation are only to be construed as individual-oriented concepts, or as an atavistic desire in the colonized nation for a *pre-lapsarian* social coherence and unity, resulting in reviving the nation’s lost sense of independent identity by subverting the oppressive colonial or postcolonial state. Nationhood, in this regard, translates as a chaotic hegemony, founded on individuals who are controlled by a collective radical consciousness, for instance, nationalism and insular statehood. It is through the oppressive nature of the State, Freeman claims, that “the group [gains] control over people in positions of authority. Individuals may exercise power, but it is the group that has the ultimate say over how the power is exercised” (“Tyranny of Structurelessness” 2).

My contention is that it is the very same momentum of anti-collectivism and ‘structurelessness’ that equips the colonial Irish subject – in the capacity of an author or an individual – with a radical motive to adhere to no colonial order or norm, leading to an inclusive social *wake* by seeking ways to attain a non-bourgeois understanding of Irish identity, namely, a non-identarian, independent Irishness.<sup>40</sup> The youths, who belong to such a hegemonic colonial society and are about to embark on their self-seeking, ritualistic journey will be bifurcated by the British elements embedded in the definition of Bildung such as social mobility, and Victorian identarianism.<sup>41</sup> The result is a contradictory psychosocial discourse that originally belongs to an alien, colonizing culture with goals as heteronomous and incoherent to the traditionalist Irish culture as its ritualistic path. According to Castle, the concept of Bildung, therefore, in its colonial context provides the bildungshelden with two different roles to play – which are fundamentally copies of a singular idea: “sincere imitation” or “subversive mimicry” (*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* 128). My contention is that there is a third layer to the way the concept of Bildung has been perceived by the Irish moderns, a hybrid which I shall call the unconventional ‘Dedalusism’, namely, a socially resistant, antiauthoritarian identity which seeks Irishness and rootedness in an Un-Irish, radicalized perception of the Irish identity, and simultaneously identifies with its non-conformist Irish values during the Rising in

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<sup>39</sup> Joreen Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness”, in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 17, 1972-73, 151-165.

<sup>40</sup> On Irish social awakening, or wake, during the revolution see Roy Benjamin, “Anarchy at the Wake”, in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2013, 203-216.

<sup>41</sup> See Patricia Alden, *Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman: Gissing, Hardy, Bennett, and Lawrence*, UMI Academic Press, 1986.

1916. The result is a particular form that I shall consider as the ‘metanational’ narrative of formation. This, I argue, emerges as a resistant form that questions not only the obsolete Goethean definition but the European genre-oriented features that shaped the modern understanding of Bildung. It emerges as a form which in Gerry Smyth’s categorization of the modern Irish novel emerges as a combination of libertarian resistance and socio-political carnival.<sup>42</sup>

Liam O’Flaherty’s *The Informer* (1925), a quasi-Bildungsroman that focuses on narrating at once the internal and social conflicts of self-formation in post-independence Ireland, for instance, introduces Gypo Nolan as an outcast, and an ex-IRA member who constantly lacks self-determination and any sense of belonging. For not only has he recently been rejected by his fellow freedom fighters, but he also lacks the volition and determination to join the opposite side, namely, the Free State government, or even the unionist rebels. Gypo is to be read as an example of a resistant ‘un-Irish’ minority that emerged as a response to the chaotic and politically oppressive aura of the 1920s, especially after the rise of the Free Staters and the wars in the 1920s. This becomes the very force which I shall discuss in chapters I and IV that represented the Irish who trusted neither the State nor the rebels, and were plagued by an anarchic individualism that introduced the State as unreliable and ideologically ambivalent a source as the British;<sup>43</sup> for the State also lost the faith of its supporters as it “let down the nation by its failure over the border”, resulting in the treaty of 1921 (Boyce 340).<sup>44</sup>

Gypo, I argue, emerges as a broad manifestation of the Irish who find inner Bildung as the only framework of formation that has been untouched by the double standards of not just the State but also revivalists and unionists.<sup>45</sup> Gypo’s psychological Bildung barely reflects historical or socio-cultural concerns; rather, his account of formation deals with an internal rite of passage that ends in reconsideration of Gypo’s social and historical relevance as a modern Irish subject in the formation.

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<sup>42</sup> In his study of modern Irish narrative Gerry Smyth categorizes the modern Irish novel into four distinct forms: the novel as “imagined communities”; as “national allegory”; “as resistance”; and “as carnival”. See Gerry Smyth *The Novel and The Nation: Studies in the New Irish Novel*, London: Pluto Press, 1997, 18-30.

<sup>43</sup> While O’Flaherty’s *The Informer* is not an accurate candidate for the definitional category of Bildungsroman, it without doubt displays an ongoing psycho-political maturation of a Gypo, an adult rebel who is torn between the State’s intriguing offer and his sense of Irish identity. *The Informer*, maybe an *entwicklungsroman*, still presents the trials and tribulations of a maturing, young Irish rebel.

<sup>44</sup> George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, London: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> On placelessness see Paul Smethurst, *The Postmodern Chronotype: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary Fiction*, Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000.



In other words, his socio-historical perception too is influenced by his inner formation, transforming him into what Francis Stuart defines in *Black List, Section H* (1971) as “un-Irish” subjects (87). Such a self-centric sense of Bildung, which I shall discuss in chapters I, II, and especially IV, transforms into a blanket consciousness that defines the modern Irish identity by defying the State, and experiencing the Adornian concept of unexperienced, hence embodying the ‘un-Irish’ Irish identity. O’Flaherty’s Gypo, therefore, can be read at once as the exemplar of the Irish who lost their sense of rootedness and belonging to a nationalist classification of Irish identity, and thus sought rootedness in unexperienced concepts such as counterrevolutionary Irish identity, social rebellion, and antiauthoritarianism. He thus finds himself detached from tribulations of war and independence, and seeks affinity with the Adornian *unknown*, namely, the force which defies the bourgeois social subjectivism of the State, regardless of the result.<sup>46</sup> Gypo’s radical Bildung, therefore, manifests itself in betraying his fellow IRA members and migrating to America in hope of redefining his inner formation by embracing the unexperienced and unknown.

As I will further argue in Chapter II, such a radical social detachment and redefinition of Bildung prevalent in the modern Irish novel of formation, however, manifests itself as the crux of narratives that discuss a national tendency in breaking away from the oppressive politics of confinement and silence practiced by the post-colonial State. The protagonists in such narratives not only distance themselves from a normalized, retrospective conception of present but also cultivate an internal ahistoricism that critiques their national past. Gypo, for instance, after finding himself neglected by his fellow IRA fighters, redefines his telos of formation, and finally informs on his friend in hope of collecting the £20 reward and leaving Ireland with its internal conflicts behind. Although he finally turns himself in and thus gives up any chance of re-formation by not sailing to America, he finds refuge in yet another extreme form of Bildung which I shall examine in Chapter II, namely, internal and external exile, socio-historical detachment and anti-formation.

This isolated, ahistorical anti-provincialist Irishness, I argue is what makes the zeitgeist of the post-independence Irish State and society, shared by the founding figures of Irish revivalism as well as the nationalist fanatics. It manifests itself as a “quality of life”, George Boyce argues, that is overflowed with “cheap patriotism,

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<sup>46</sup> On Adorno’s Unknown see *Negative Dialectics*, Trans. E. B. A., 1973, London: Palgrave, 2007.

demagoguery, internecine quarrels, threats to law and order and above all, the absence of any great, heroic figure” (*Nationalism* 339). Even leaders as notable as Yeats found their feelings of nationalism and a love of free Ireland better to be averted than to be tainted with revulsion and betrayal.<sup>47</sup> The most notable cause, for instance, that heightened the dominant air of mistrust among the Irish, and implicitly advocated the emergence of individual-centrism and thus structurelessness in the 1920s in Ireland, can be found in Éamon de Valéra’s attempts to rise to power and administration. His nationalistic efforts in breaking away from the *Sinn Féin* and forming a centre-right Fianna Fáil led to a vague and ambivalent understanding vis-à-vis the presence of a ‘physical force’, namely the IRA. Suddenly, however, in 1934 de Valéra sought ways to debunk the IRA, and in 1936 declared the IRA illegal and anyone related a convict, leaving the youths in doubt and danger of losing their hopes of proper Bildung.<sup>48</sup> Those who were not yet incarcerated either escaped as emigrants or became the embodiment of ‘failed return’ for a modern bildungsheld, who returns home only with unproductive apprenticeship and unfulfilled Bildung to his agrarian life of farming and “producing cheap beef” (Boyce 347).

I argue, however, that there rests a third form, namely, formation of a resistant body of young Irish who neither returned, albeit symbolically, nor gave up; rather they reinvented Irish formation, that is, by introducing a radical form of Bildung manifested in the narratives of previous radicals such as James Joyce, Sean O’Casey, Patrick Kavanagh and even Jim Phelan.<sup>49</sup> The bildungshelden of either of the first two forms would find themselves in an unfortunate condition of choosing between the rebelliousness of Stephen Dedalus – hence possibly embracing the concept of “an Irishman abroad” – or complying with radical impulses that had been emerging since the 1900s, for instance, the Treaty, the Free State, the Unionists tendencies, the hidden ties with the Empire in the Cosgrave government, and so on (Joyce, “Oscar Wilde: Poet of ‘Salome’” 204).<sup>50</sup> Whereas the third form accommodates a bildungsheld who resists the form of Bildung imposed by either society or the State,

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<sup>47</sup> As Boyce recounts, “national freedom had proved an aesthetic disappointment.” See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 339-369.

<sup>48</sup> De Valéra had previously enticed the youths and invoked their support by touching on the inexhaustible glamour of army. See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 374.

<sup>49</sup> Reference to Jim Phelan and Patrick Kavanagh was intentional, highlighting Phelan’s *Jail Journal* and Kavanagh’s poetry as exemplars of Irish resistance in a non-identarian appreciation of the narrative of deformation.

<sup>50</sup> James Joyce, “Oscar Wilde, Poet of Salome”, in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Ed., Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

and self-referentially conceives a pattern of formation that would lead him to his ideals of self-formation and individualism, regardless of how his formation will be received by society.

The roots of such a radical formation, I argue, can be found in the rise and fall of Irish revivalism. Through the forty years that eventuated in Irish revivalism and the subsequent anti-revivalism, a culture of resisting the Free Staters' "architect of containment" and silence developed to form the ethos of modern Irish literature and thought, inspired by a spirit of non-conformity that was shared among radical minorities, who emerged disagreeing with the State's power-related discourse, for instance, the Parnellian or that of de Valéra's (Smith 2001). It became the discourse behind a form that outclassed revivalists' efforts of resistance and revision, respectively, emerging as a radical dialectics that defied the Empire, and even challenged the ideals of a resistant, albeit marginal, literature which David Lloyd defines as "the minor literature" (*Nationalism and Minor Literature* 21). The roots of such a discourse of resistance, however, can be found in Irish revivalism. As Castle remarks, revivalists were separated by two concepts: rebelliousness and language.<sup>51</sup> In other words, revivalists were initially haunted by the thought as to whether to externalize this condition of Un-Irishness, or to continue with the dominant narrativity of traditionalism and "sincere imitation" (Castle 128). The former decision eventuated in the formation of a radical Irish literature prevalent, for instance, in the Joycean teleological dictum of 'non-serviam,' which I flag as 'Dedalusism' and examine in Chapter II and IV, whereas the latter preserved the transient continuum of traditional, "autogenous" self-cultivations (Grubgeld x). In addition, English language as the discourse, a rather dialectical one, for presenting such rebelliousness and/or servile submission was the other notable concern for the revivalists. For they found their narratives to be susceptible to colonization and their thought to subjugation, when they wrote in English. Samuel Beckett, for instance, reveals an internal ambivalence, if not aversion, towards traditional Irish identity, which damaged his expression:

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<sup>51</sup> Throughout the history of Irish radicalism, Irish Catholics have originally been regarded as politically static majority who were more to find and fix their feet via the gruesome Home Rule movement than finding a way into politics. See Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, 129-132. Also see Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 286-287; and especially on the collision between religion, language and modernity in the pre-independent Ireland see George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 123-151.

“There is something in my English writing that infuriates me and I can’t get rid of it” (*Waiting for Beckett* 1993).<sup>52</sup>

According to Boyce, while the concept of Ireland as a colonial sub-domain had changed centuries before the revolution and independence in the early twentieth century, Ireland has always been regarded as a “sister kingdom” to the Empire (Boyce 388). Therefore, colonial or even post-colonial Irish identity as once a subordinate, colonial subject becomes a concept as alien and foreign to the modern Irish as British ideals of identity formations. For some Irish radicals, in this regard, similar to their ‘revivalist’ peers, writing in English was more of a stigma than a dialectical discourse that promised communication, when they were to narrate the plights of their fathers and forefathers and the entirety of their nation in a language that even in its name intimates estrangement. Avoiding, or at least subsidizing, this infuriating feature, compelled the Irish authors to indulge in a voice that spoke a language that became the medium of modern Irish writing and literature: Hiberno-English, namely, English as it is spoken in Ireland. As I shall illustrate in Chapter II, Patrick McCabe’s characterization of Francis Brady, a rebellious street child, indulges in defying the very syntactic norms of the language, simply to impose his own Irish principles and perception of language, resulting in a symbolic deconstruction of the “Englishness” of English language (*The Butcher Boy* 37).

Once more, this is to be regarded as an instance of Irish radicalism, albeit gentle in appearance, vis-à-vis the domineering language of colonizing England. As Douglas Hyde argues, traditionalists saw the invasion of the English language as a declared attack on the very instance of Irish identity that was rooted in Celtic language and culture, a planned performance that would lead to a thorough dissection of the nation and the masses, namely, the emergence of Un-Irishness. To revivalists and radical scholars, Un-Irishness meant two very separate concepts. While for revivalists retrospection and backwardness meant the only way to save Irish identity from colonial decay, Un-Irishness and subjugation, radicals as early as J. M. Synge, George Moore and Joyce found Un-Irishness as a path towards modern Irish identity, by dwelling upon an Un-Irish, non-traditionalist sense of Irish identity.<sup>53</sup> This difference in perceiving Un-Irish identity together with language, and anti-

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<sup>52</sup> On the effect of English language – translating Irish culture and literature into the more dominant (both in market and audience) English language, see Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, 37-39.

<sup>53</sup> On George Moore’s dialectics of resistance see Elizabeth Grubgeld, *George Moore and the Autogenous Self: The Autobiography and Fiction*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004.

revivalist rebellion widened the gap not only between Ireland and its modern, colonial neighbour but also between the revivalists and anti-revivalist dissidents.

“Between Ireland and England the memory of what was done and endured has lain like a sword”, writes Cecil Woodham-Smith in *The Great Hunger*, in which she explicates the motives, albeit in their embryonic stage, that eventuated in a non-identarian, radical modern Irish identity (119). The fact, however, remained obscure in her discussion: the sword did not simply cut the masses into separate, distinct layers – regardless of the dominantly sectarian class-oriented Irish society;<sup>54</sup> instead, it divided the individuals from their own selves as the psychological effects of such a division developed to form the impulse that reconfigured Irish Bildung to become “an inner split”, rather than the intended inner formation (Castle 129).

The Irish definition of Bildung displayed a certain antagonistic radicalism towards both the British definition, which advocated social mobility, and the German state-sponsored, idealistic perception of freedom. When it comes for the ‘Irish subject’ to form and acknowledge his sense of (self-) development, his narrative changes into a negatively dialectical corpus that critiques the founding principles of Bildung, in particular its British features.<sup>55</sup> The applied antagonism and radicalism with respect to any patterned Bildung is to be assessed and thus interpreted as an emerging yet inherently subversive literary form that is by nature post-colonial and yet Un-Irish, resulting in a supranational hybrid that aims to underpin its Irish identity by eulogizing the decolonization of the ‘motherland’ while at the same time defies any traditionalist approach towards the conception of Bildung. According to José Lanter, to dwell in hybridity is “to find a way of existing between two ways of being, and to question the values and practices of both cultures with an individual and critical eye” (“Nothing is Ever Arrived At” 33). The resulting form, which I have called the meta-nationalist Irish identity, becomes a resounding outcry of independence and detachment from both the colonial and British authoritarianism and

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<sup>54</sup> The Irish during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were divided into five percent minority Protestants, and the rest were the rising, influential Catholics. From within this minority rose radical yet innovative faces in both literature and politics who intensified the radicalness of the Irish Protestant movement that emerged in 1869 and culminated well into the twentieth century; literary radical faces as diverse as George Moore (converted in 1903 when he was 51), Samuel Beckett, Francis Stuart and Daniel Corkery – especially his critique of Gaelic League and their political vista.

<sup>55</sup> A larger part of the Irish corpus that resonates with the minimal criterion of the Bildungsroman has been written during the colonial Ireland and thus is to be regarded as a ‘colonial text.’ The Irish Subject, therefore, stands to represent such a nuance.

simultaneously the principles that shape the very concept of a provincialist, traditional Irish identity.

My contention is that ‘meta-national’ Bildungsroman must be considered “a product of hybridity and dislocation”, the sort which defies tradition and mocks the localization of heteronomous norms, for instance, postcolonial Irish identity and literature (Lanters 37).<sup>56</sup> Meta-nationalism, in other words, is not internationalism, nor is it post-colonialism or -revisionism; rather, it can be perceived as an amalgamation of Celtic revisionism – to repel *Englishness* and the Catholic Church – and anti-revisionist radicalism. The fruit of such a dichotomous wedlock becomes a form that encourages literary rebellion as in the form of Joycean ‘Dedalusism,’ Beckettian formlessness, and Flann O’Brien’s labyrinthine multifacetedness, while at the same time discourages hybridization of British and Irish cultural values. As I shall illustrate in chapters I and III discussing texts from Nuala O’Faolain, Edna O’Brien and Roddy Doyle, meta-nationalism manifests itself in radical narratives which all exhibit contradiction and tension within a non-linear historical context of Irishness; and in narratives that have been regarded by traditionalists as immoral or inappropriate and subject to censorship, as they depict dissidence and resistance towards a timeless past by abnegating the retreat to a condemnable past, and reveal a contradictory perception of the future; or in narratives that cross the lines and question sacred codes such as marriage, religion, freedom and nationhood. In other words, the meta-national narrative of formation bears a Joycean perception of traditionalist Ireland and traditional Irishness, in which:

Ancient Ireland is dead just as ancient Egypt is dead. Its death chant has been sung, and on its gravestone has been placed the seal. The old national soul that spoke during the centuries through the mouths of fabulous seers, wandering minstrels, and Jacobite poets disappeared from the world with the death of James Clarence Mangan. (Joyce, “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* 10).

For the modern youths, as a result of such a denunciatory and radical description, tradition and nationalism become mere memories, or an ineffectual recollection of the past, mostly poignant, that only leads to a temperamental delirium; and postcolonial Irish identity becomes as trifling, “contradictory and confused” as

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<sup>56</sup> As James Hardin notes, the Bildungsroman should not be regarded as a solid framework that only fits the German definition of nationalism or nationalist Bildung; rather, the novel of formation stands as a “supranational” narrative that allows for both national and counter-national, historical or ahistorical reading of a nation in formation or resistance. See James Hardin, *Reflection and Action*, xxiii.

nationalism (Maley 35).<sup>57</sup> In Willy Maley's terms, "post-colonialism, in its Anglo-centric form, is British nationalism at its most intense" ("Varieties of Nationalism" 37). My contention is that despite all its contradictoriness and discontent meta-national Irish identity transcends the boundaries of post-colonial identity, or a post-national variety of Celtic revisionism by disregarding colonial or postist frameworks and instead creating a novel standard of self-formation for its subject. Therefore, concepts such as post-colonial nationalism emerge as "easy assumptions" and pure memories for the meta-nationalist protagonists which need to be questioned, as they maintain their Irish roots by honouring "the 1916 men" (Stuart, *Black List* 20).

In his discussion of modern Irish identity and 'postist' identity – as in post-colonial or post-modern, Maley introduces the modern Irish identity as yet a 'variety' of Irish nationalism. Definition of Irish 'postism' by scholars such as Maley, whose perception of Irishness connects with Roy Foster's categorization of nationalist Irish identity, simply highlights the Eglintonian revisionist concept of Celtic nationalism, namely "a way of circumnavigating the grip of Catholicism and of Englishness" by reverting to Irish roots ("Varieties of Nationalism" 35).<sup>58</sup> My suggestion, however, for a 'meta-nationalist' rather than post-nationalist reading of modern Irish identity transcends the boundaries of post-nationalist Irish identity, which Maley considered a copy of Irish nationalism.<sup>59</sup> For not only does meta-nationalist Irish identity challenge the socio-culturally "flat" (and static) nature of nativist Irish identity, but it also transcends the revisionists' pattern of unification and demythologization of an Irish Ireland (Maley 37). However, it should be noted that while 'postism' emerged as a fully functioning Irish manifesto for the ruling party during the 1980s and beyond, giving birth to a pluralistic understanding of Irish identity, my argument of a meta-national Irish identity as modern Irishness only fills the gap between an anti-colonial, post-independence Ireland that struggles for a proper sense of detachment and civil peace in the 1920s, and a postnationalist sense of Irish identity which, as Richard

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<sup>57</sup> Willy Maley, "Varieties of Nationalism: Post-revisionist Irish Studies" in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol 4, Issue 15, 1996, 35-6.

<sup>58</sup> On Douglas Hyde and John Eglinton as the most notable revivalists see David Pierce, *Irish Writing in The Twentieth Century*, 70-76; and Douglas Kanter, "Joyce, Irish Paralysis, and Cultural Nationalist Anticlericalism", *James Joyce Quarterly* Vol 41 No 37, 2004, 381-396.

<sup>59</sup> While Willy Maley's explication of modern Irish nationalism exhibits a subtle sublimation of Roy Foster's liberating conception of revisionism, it still sympathizes with a fixed socio-political framework of formation for the Irish. See Peter Berresford Ellis, "Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing: The New Anti-Nationalist School of Historians" in *Irish Democrat*, <<http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/bookshop/publications/revisionism/>>.

Kearny notes, emerged in the 1980s and materialized by the presidency of Mary Robinson in the 1990s.<sup>60</sup>

What these two distinct forms of Irish identity have in common, I shall argue, is a radical sense of anti-revisionism, which dominates the post-independence Irish literature as a non-unified, non-identarian sense of characterization. The result, hence, is a radical narrative that along with the Joycean concept of ‘double yoke’ regards nationalism and revivalism as the other main elements that have hindered the development and emergence of an opportune Irish modernism and modern Irish identity. ‘Meta-national’ Irishness, however, corroborates Foster’s and Maley’s explication of ‘postist’ forms of Irish identity as a mere variation of nationalist Irish identity, for it in itself rejects a unified stratification of Irish identity in being nationalist, Celtic, or post-nationalist. In addition, a meta-nationalist engagement with the concept of Irishness highlights a sense of rootedness in Irish values, albeit distant, both individually and nationally, that was in flux and “discontinuity” (Maley 34). In other words, while the vision highlights the revisionists’ obvious detestation of the Empire and the colonial subjugation of Irish identity, it too corresponds with a widespread sense of failure and dejection that surrounded the very same revivalists in the mid-1930s as they expressed their “disappointment at the quality of life in the new Ireland that [they] held [themselves] in part ... responsible” (Boyce 339).<sup>61</sup> Such an apparent sense of alienation and disconnection, and perhaps betrayal, formed the impetus that underlay a radical Irish identity, which defined itself by introducing the Irish revolution as an “incomplete” project of formation (Boyce 341). The Irish wars, therefore, were rekindled by radical non-conformists, who questioned the pseudo-independent state and introduced it as an inefficient, Janus-faced government that abandoned modernism and modern Irishness in favour of a retrospective, provincialist vision of Ireland.

The culmination of the conflict between the binary of retrospective nationalism and modern Irishness, can be seen, among many, in the works of Edna O’Brien’s *trilogy*, as well as the retrospective works of Francis Stuart, Roddy Doyle and Dermot Bolger. In Dermot Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter* (1987), for instance, a group of young boys gather together at the “water main”, that is the water purified

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 1997, 61-65.

<sup>61</sup> This includes the revivalists in the early 1930s who found their efforts in revisiting a Celtic Ireland crushed by ultra rightist groups who sought Irishness in the politics of confinement.



from the river water (302). They “jive, running in and out of the high spray” of the water that runs through the Dublin, highlighting the geo-historical significance of the river ‘Liffey’, that is ‘Life’ in English (Bolger 302). Around Liffey, however, there is “graffiti... smeared across its patriotic inscription”; yet the most contradictory part is the young men, gathered around Liffey listening to “Reggae” music, rather than an Irish or Celtic Music, say, ‘*Sliabh na mBan*’ or ‘*Príosún Chluain Meala*’ (Bolger 302). The modern non-conformist Irishness, in this regard, emerges as either ignoring that which constitutes the foundation of traditionalist or nationalist Irish identity such as the land and the monumental place, or an epidemic rebellion against the traditionalist principles with the intention of changing them. What Joanie as a nationalist narratorial voice highlights in Bolger’s narrative is plainly an apparent sense of non-nationalism among the younger generation of Irish working-class. The tension described in Bolger’s novel, highlights a discontinued link between the people as the nation and the force behind nationalism, and people as a rising independent force leading towards a new definition of Irishness as a radical, anti -colonial, -national force in charge of deconstructing both colonial and national forces prevalent in the Irish novel, giving birth to a radical, independent form. The highlighted tension, however, leads to a narratorial stasis in *The Woman’s Daughter* as the voice, a nationalist modern girl nostalgic for a Celtic past finds herself marginalized and unable to contain the non-nationalist boys and their un-Irishness. Bolger’s discussion of widespread non-nationalist tendencies lead the narrative towards a non-identarian ending, leaving the nationalists marginalized and their musings impractically retrospective. The non-conformists, here in the form of young Irishmen who have painted graffiti on the walls, and listen to non-Irish music, however, are depicted as a growing radical majority that belongs to the land, as they gather around the river Liffey underscoring their Irish roots, and simultaneously defy the traditional, nostalgic Irish Bildung.

The collision between the young and the old underlines the gap between the traditional German and English definition of bildungshelden and their perception of nationalist formation and integration. The modern Irish bildungsheld, as the exemplar of Un-Irishness, is filled with ahistorical anti-traditionalism that changed not only the roots of Irish identity as a traditionally agrarian form but also the very description of Irish identity. According to Damien Shortt, the modern Irishness invigorates the young Irish with,

Ignorance, or disregard, of Ireland's history and what some could perceive as the desecration and undermining of traditional and national culture, [which] imbues them with a *joie de vivre* demonstrated through a freedom from association with place or time – since they seem not to care about either (“A River Runs Through It” 131).

For the youths with a meta-national understanding of *Bildung*, hence, ‘ignorance’ becomes the main point of departure that leads to reconstructing the non-functional definition of Irish identity imposed by the State. Nuala O’Faolain’s narrator in *Are You Somebody?*, for instance, counts ignorance an advantage: “He believed in starting again, from ignorance. I was rich in ignorance. I count it as one of the great lucky things in my life” (*Are You Somebody?* 106). Ignorance as the Adornian unknown, fed by the “unconscious”, becomes the very motive that initially charges the radical young Irish to indulge initially in a dialectic of negativity – and not the negative dialectics – and perceive the “unconscious ... the condition that allow[s] the culture [they] grew up in to exist” (O’Faolain 96). By exploring the unknown and the inherently contradictory form of ‘id-entity,’ the modern Irish *bildungshelden* challenge a traditional definition of Irish identity, advocated by revivalists, which prohibits sex, prioritizes religiosity, and insists on portraying a firm boundary of family. The *bildungshelden*, in addition, embrace the ‘unconscious,’ and by so doing they engage in deconstructing a nativist Irish identity and welcoming the counter-traditionalist nationalism, namely, a radical thought, rooted in the modern, Adornian concept of “think in contradiction” (*Negative Dialectics* 145). The result is a ‘meta-nationalist’ definition of Irish identity which blocks the retrospective disposition of the nativist State, and allows the spirited youths to further indulge in their libertarian interpretation of *Bildung*. In her symbolic depiction of meta-nationalist Irish identity, for instance, O’Faolain describes her protagonist mocking history and questioning the objective veracity of their nation’s past: “I interrogated the pavement, half as a joke. ‘You’re made of fine big slabs of granite,’ I said to it. ‘Are you the same stones I walked on then? And if so, why are you not crying out?’” (*Are You Somebody?* 109). Here, O’Faolain’s protagonist, an independent and socio-sexually non-conformist woman, establishes her identity by maintaining her distance from a provincialist perception of Irishness that so far has limited not only her socio-cultural but sexual presence, and confined her role as only the “instrument of male protagonist’s successful achievement of *Bildung*” (Castle 94).

As Eagleton notes in *Heathcliff*, discussing Irish modernity, Ireland's modernist renaissance resembles an act of awakening or a case of hybridity, in which the archaic principles were awakened to replace the undesired 'colonial' norms and merits, hence the name: "The Archaic Avant-Garde" (273). At the same time, however, the Irish avant-gardism itself was resisted and repelled by the very radicalized masses simply to eliminate any hope of recuperating the nationalist roots and consciousness. The motives behind such socio-literary insurgencies correspond with the ones that led to the emergence of the Irish Republic as an independent state in 1919, a state in which the very meaning of 'republicanism' is a rather literally ambiguous concept, as it repels authoritarianism and disregards the state-oriented government. In other words, the State originally emerged as an anarchic, 'structureless' social infrastructure founded on individualistic meritocracy, a "banana non-republic", a society wherein "every man fancies himself a part of the government" or a ruling authority (Boyce 339, 139). The rise and the fall of the Irish republic not only led to a series of radical awakenings, at once being against British colonialism and the separatists, but its fundamental principles worked in tandem, perhaps contextually, with the rising Irish avant-gardism and resulted in an endemic sense of division among the youths. It is the very concept of division that Weldon Thornton, Castle and Declan Kiberd acknowledged as the very root of inner split in the modern sense of Irish Bildung. The inner split and deformation instead of inner-formation can be understood in light of Lev Vygotsky's examination of the psycho-social effects of politicization of Bildung on the young Irish subjects. Inner split, social disintegration and internal exile, I argue, emerge as byproducts of a traumatic perspective imbued with the tension and chaos of pre-civil wars that reached its peak during the 1920s, was suppressed in late 20s and early 30s, and re-emerged as a radical understanding of Irish identity in the mid 30s and onwards. This constant oscillation between stasis, oppression, and conformity, on the one hand, and revolutionary identity, non-conformity and the rise of non-identarianism, on the other, makes the crux of my discussion in this thesis, examining a pattern of formation that regards separation and the individual's self-criticism as its founding impetus towards existence.

In his examination of 'minor Irish literature,' Richard Murphy highlights what Moretti and Thornton introduced as the demise of the traditional Bildungsroman in Europe and the emergence of a rather unconventional form, namely, the modern Bildungsroman. "Moretti agrees with Thornton", notes Murphy, "on the relationship

between genre and historical conditions” as they “date the demise of European Bildungsroman to 1914” (“A Minority of One” 276). However, I argue it is separation as a socio-cultural motive that gave rise to the modern Irish Bildungsroman, namely, a narrative that explores the formation of the individual more than it discusses social formation.

While Moretti and Buckley regarded Bildungsroman permissible insofar as it narrates the formation and reintegration of the individual to society, as I shall examine in this thesis it is in fact the separation of individual from social and national formation that emerges in the form of national Irish literature and introduces such a divide a product of not only modernity but also neocolonial decadence. To instil its relevance and rootedness, the form then engages in a retrospective reconsideration of the nation’s history, resulting in a critical examination of the untouched dimensions of nationalism and national formation in Ireland.<sup>62</sup>

## The Modern Irish Novel and the Narrative of Resistance

For critics, nationalism and in particular Irish nationalism equals a retrograde flow of formation that resides in a particular sense of the past.<sup>63</sup> The inherent backwardness in nationalism, or in Michael Rubenstein’s words, “postcolonial comedy of development”, not only rejects any other form of human organization and identity but also appears to be in constant contradiction with its own founding roots, namely, the people as the nation (*Public Works* 32). In other words, people as the nation find themselves governed by a double standard whereby their presence as well as significance are at once disregarded and confirmed. Nationalism, for instance, disregards the people with their tribal or organizational identity as an insignificant or irrelevant concept, while it incessantly, albeit only hypothetically, defends its roots in being original, Celtic, or Gaelic. The result is a bedizened paradoxical discourse that conjures up a history that is partial and instrumental at best, disregards the nation as

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<sup>62</sup> On neocolonial discussion of decadence see Ayo Kehinde, “Writing the Motherland from the Diaspora”, in *Afroeuropa: Journal of Afro-European Studies*, Vol 3. No 1, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> On Irish modernism as an anachronistic, retrospective variation of the movement see Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2010.

its origin, and simultaneously depends on the nation, on whom it practices and imposes its politics of normalization.

According to Smyth, such a totalitarian shortsightedness in dealing with the nation and at the same time with its “inability to constitute itself as a coherent narrative of human activity” emerge as flaws of nativist States (*The Novel and the Nation* 12). Irish nationalism, too, taunted by eight hundred years of colonial suppression, emerges as yet another exemplar of a paradoxical politicized discourse that needed the national support to thrive but at once repressed the nation, especially the youths and deprived them of their basic rights of freedom by indulging in what Jonathan Bolton defines as “the politics of chastity” and confinement (*Blighted Beginnings* 125).

To maintain an optimal understanding of nationalism and the nationalistic principles of confinement, the State creates a unifying discourse and a mouthpiece. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, this unifying discourse, “monoglossia”, emerges at once as literary and political, leading the nation away from traces of colonial subjugation and oppression, and towards national singularity and cultural reformation (*The Dialogic Imagination* 79). While in Britain and other European nations the novel has already been embraced as a leading narrative of socio-cultural formation and national unity in the absence of epic, taking advantage of its multi-layered dialectical discourse in distinguishing between nationalism, nuances of cultural mobility and individual nobility, the Irish authors only reluctantly and belatedly shifted towards the critical discourse of the novel, distancing from poems, drama, short stories and oral narratives of Celtic - folk myth.<sup>64</sup> In other words, the novel, albeit antithetical to the founding principles of nationalism and anti-colonial Irishness in being a “double-voiced” dialectical discourse, became less an obscure form in the nineteenth century as the revivalists struggled to find a dialectical discourse that could be uniting, didactic and at once resistant, allowing the deconstruction of the foundation of colonial discourse from within (Bakhtin 53). It is the latter quality, however, that dominates the Irish variation of the novel and subordinates the Bakhtinian concept of national unification via monoglossia. The resulting form at one and the same time emerges as a narrative that is not only non-identarian and recalcitrant with regard to

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<sup>64</sup> Gerry Smyth’s discussion of novel regards epic the form that is at once national and unitive, drawing upon the national folk myths. See Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, 27-28.

the colonial discourse in Ireland but also multi-voiced and contradicts the “monologic authorial discourse” of nationalism (Bakhtin 53).

While in Smyth and Moretti’s classification such a formation should pose as an anomaly, combining an inherently anti-colonial, resistant form with an allegorical discourse of formation, I regard this as the very dialectical discourse that made the crux of the modern Irish novels of formation, or in Smyth terms the *new* Irish fiction. In this regard, the modern Irish novel bypasses poetry and drama, as the most notable and influential literary device in the history of Irish literary resistance, and becomes the actual mouthpiece that allows the author to critique the socio-political and cultural aspects of the modern Irish identity, by taking the novel, as Castle notes, as the site of their negative critique, resulting in what I shall discuss in this thesis, namely, a critical dialectical discourse that as Kate O’Brien claims in *The Land of Spices* (1941) would enable the Irish to laugh at their political weaknesses too (*The Land of Spices* 79).

To entertain the anti-colonial and anti-national audience, the author engages in a series of techniques such as anti-mimetic and highlighting the apparent contradiction between narrow nationalism, modernism and modern Irish identity by incorporating a non-conformist resistant voice, with two main objectives: firstly to dismantle the colonial discourse still prevalent in the postcolonial Irish novel, and to reduce the necessity of having a nativist State. For it is the former that demands the formation of a rigid, neo-conservative nationalist government or a political group by highlighting placelessness and deculturalization as possible consequences awaiting an anti-colonial nation that refuses to return to its roots, namely adhering to an Irish traditionalism presented by political groups.<sup>65</sup> Secondly, to strengthen the need to introduce protagonists whose contribution towards Irish identity challenges the nativist attempts to revive a traditional perception of Irish identity, creating bildungshelden who re-introduce Bildung as a non-conformist and self-referential critique of social and political norms imposed by the postist State. According to Foucault, this new form of protagonist emerges at once as the “justice and the criminal”, a dichotomous being whose determinations are inherently non-conformist

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<sup>65</sup> The second movement, namely, provoking nationalism and Irish identity in the face of neocolonialism or apologists, accompanied by a cultural return to Celtic heritage in fact are the founding ideological forces prevalent in the writings of leading revivalists such as Hyde and Yeats. See Douglas Hyde “The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland” in *Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century*, 2-13.

and socially radical, defying tradition and the unity that is promised by the nativist State (“Truth and Subjectivity” 1980).<sup>66</sup>

The modern protagonist in the modern Irish novel of formation, as Foucault defines, therefore, pursues Bildung in and about himself, and in his non-conformist mindset which allows him to explore the unknown, libertarian dimension of formation. The non-conformist protagonist emerges as the leading voice in the Irish critique of their conservative society giving rise to what Smyth regards as “the novel as resistance” (*The Novel* 21); it becomes a voice, though socially distant and detached, that at once defies the politics of confinement and the mere possibility of union with the colonizing neighbour, deconstructing the colonial discourse and definition of reality from within.

The modern Irish novel, I argue, is not a mere categorical mimesis of typical postcolonial efforts to liberate the nation from colonial oppression;<sup>67</sup> rather, it is a result of a series of techniques exploited by the Irish authors who condone neither nationalist retrospection nor colonial submersion. The most exhausted example is Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus, whose *non serviam* attacks not only the above mentioned politicized formations but any stereotypical categorization of Irish identity as in anti-colonial, nationalist or modern. The resulting form, as I shall illustrate in chapters I, II and especially IV is a detached, independent narrative that attacks political parochialism, under-developed and mostly agrarian social mobility, and a belated modernism in post-independence Ireland up until the 1950s. In other words, the modern Irish narrative of formation engages in a critical examination of elements that worked in tandem with post-independence economic volatility and resulted in a nationwide internal and external, mental and physical exile among the Irish, in particular the youths. Among all the reasons perhaps such a national fragility is most notable when searching for the root of an intrinsic sense of nostalgia or retrospection in the modern Irish novels of formation. In my reading of Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* and Nuala O’Faolain’s *Are You Somebody?*, for instance, such a blanket nostalgia either leads the protagonist towards marginalia and submersion in a solipsistic sub-reality, as in McCabe’s characterization of Francie, or oppresses their perception of Bildung.

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<sup>66</sup> Michel Foucault, “Truth and Subjectivity”, Howison Lectures, California, University of Berkeley, 1980. Online. < <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/foucault/howison.html>>.

<sup>67</sup> On what makes a typical postcolonial body of literature see Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

What Boehmer did not include in her examination of the post-colonial Irish novel as a narrative of national re-formation and unity, and this thesis will, is the role of the modern Irish Bildungsroman as a national dialectical critique of the State's narrow boundaries of formation, where nationalism as a blanket State-sponsored disposition is interrogated.<sup>68</sup> As I shall illustrate in chapters II and IV, the modern Irish novel of formation transforms into a critical discourse that interrogates nationalism and the (neo-) conservative governing power in Ireland, becoming a narrative rife with a dialectic of negativism, typical of modern Irish novel, which provides a carnivalesque portrayal of the nativist State and questions the concomitant Irish identity.

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<sup>68</sup> On the postcolonial novel as a narrator and a teacher, investigating the routes of freedom while interrogating "the received narratives of the dominant culture" see Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and Nation*, 22-25.



## Chapter 1.

### The Nationalist Mirage and the Modern Irish Identity

This chapter examines the ways in which socio-political non-conformity informs the formation of a modern Irish identity, namely, a resistant consciousness that according to Lev Vygotsky enables the young (Irish) protagonist to transcend the static politics of formation by “internalizing” that which appears as the antithesis of State-sponsored Bildung.<sup>1</sup> To define such a radical counter-formative sense of Bildung, I shall initially analyse the relevant dialectic of formation that originally emerged in Ireland in 1916 but matured almost a decade later. This is the very resistant variation of Bildung which allows the Irish protagonist to develop in light of a self-referential and self-critical understanding of formation, welcoming socio-political and cultural change, and embracing an expedited sense of formation by omitting certain periods of formation, creating young men who never have been a child, or as Roddy Doyle illustrates in *A Star Called Henry* (1999), “I was never a child” (15). This is the very concept that I shall examine in this chapter and the one that follows, namely, exploring the ways in which the modern novel of formation incorporates an intentional non-temporality and impatience when it comes for the narrative to unfold and produce mature, responsible characters. All characters, I argue, comprehensibly suffer from a psycho-social immaturity, as in dealing with their family, jobs, or in having their emotional side expressed properly.<sup>2</sup>

Socio-political resistance in Ireland emerges as a historical Wildean *fruit* of a nation that has struggled with the duality of experienced and unexperienced;<sup>3</sup> the known and the unknown;<sup>4</sup> the nationalist normalization and the modernist radicalization. While unifying concepts such as nationalism and revivalism endeavoured to restore the nation’s glorious past by rooting to a Celtic heritage and

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<sup>1</sup> On Lev Vygotsky and his thesis on the influence of politics on children’s psychological development see *The Vygotsky Reader*, eds., Rene Van Der Veer and Jaan Valshiner, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994, 175-185.

<sup>2</sup> On the psychosocial immaturity of modern Irish Bildungsheld see Jonathan Bolton, *Blighted Beginnings*, 23-45.

<sup>3</sup> On symbolization of social dissidence as *fruits* see Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis: The Ballad of Reading Gaol and Other Writings*, 68.

<sup>4</sup> As I explained in the last chapter, my reading of concepts such as ‘unexperienced/experienced’, and ‘non-identarian/identarian’ formation are influenced by Theodor Adorno’s distinction between identarian identity, formed by bourgeois social subjectivism, and its contradictions. See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, London: Palgrave, 2007, 145, 147, 149.

language, and thus warranting their relevance, the modern Irish emerge as a catalyst avid for experiencing the unexperienced. Such a historical passion for the Irish to experience the unexperienced can be seen in the works of radical writers such as Oscar Wilde. In his letters, *De Profundis* (1905), Wilde explains to Alfred Douglas that his literary and social footprints, which are largely reprimanded by the dominant air of colonial British identity in Ireland, are nothing but his mere individual decision to “eat of the *fruit* of all the trees”, be it forbidden and unexperienced. Wilde’s only error, however, as he recounts is, that “[he] confined [him]self so exclusively to the trees of what seemed to [him] the sun-lit side of the garden, and shunned the other side for its shadow and its gloom” (*De Profundis* 68).

The modern Irish formation, I argue, becomes a witness to a starkly non-identarian fragmentation of a nation as culturally rich as Ireland by external and internal forces, leading to a formation that manifests itself in breaking away from the “sun-lit trees” of colonialism, oppressive postist regimes and the Empire (Wilde 740). It is the very path that the radical modern Irish writers agreed to embark upon, reflected in their candid portrayals of the island, which matured during the Irish wars of the 1920s. Formation, therefore, during such a hectic period transformed into a path of unbecoming, and of self-criticism. However, for nationalists and proponents of establishing an Éire-Ireland, from Douglas Hyde, George Birmingham, John Eglinton to modern nationalist-feminist radicals such as Dorothy MacArdle, such an un-Irish and unknown formation appeared vampiric and thus unknown; it is a *Bildung* that has taken its essence from the “loch” as MacArdle puts it, resulting in protagonists who stood distant and were “done with” the land (*Earth-Bound: Nine Stories of Ireland* 82).<sup>5</sup>

To defy politics of normalization and to delimit the State’s labyrinthine architecture of formation, the modern Irish protagonist engages in an internal deconstruction of the nationalist and (post-) colonial form by, for instance, asking fundamental questions about the nature of the (nationalist) narrative;<sup>6</sup> or by providing

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<sup>5</sup> Dorothy MacArdle, *Earth-Bound: Nine Stories of Ireland*. Dublin: Harrigan Press, 1924.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnamable*, and Francis Stuart’s *Black List, Section H*, to name but a few, serve as exemplars of anti-nativist, anti-colonial modern texts, which question the foundation of tradition and the future in retrospect. “Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning” asks the unknown voice in Beckett’s *The Unnamable*, defying the stylistic norms of having an omniscient voice, whose identity emerges as a questionable byproduct of transitional times. See Samuel Beckett *The Unnamable*, New York: Grove Press, 1994, 291. On the concept of non-Irish, *hidden* Ireland see Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, London: Gill & Macmillan 1967, 35-48; also see *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature*, London: Mercier Press 1966.

a stark portrayal of the nationalist Irish identity in post-independence Ireland;<sup>7</sup> or by utilizing a self-critical, self-referential voice which not only regards nationalism as the root of current hardships but criticizes people's reluctance in breaking away from such flawed formations;<sup>8</sup> or finally by escaping from society that poses as a collective consciousness of the nationalist ethos of normalization, fixated on historicization of their future, and seeking refuge in a quasi-anarchic pseudo-family of his own, consisting of fellow radicals and rebels as in Roddy Doyle's *The Last Roundup*.

To understand the relevance of anti-authoritarian perception of Bildung, I shall begin by reading Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*, a carnivalesque critique of Irish formation rooted in 1916, which allowed the Irish to see beyond the State's politicized historical memory.<sup>9</sup> This is the very resistant dialectical understanding of Bildung which enabled the Irish protagonist to question not only the State's politics of formation but his personal perception of the concept by decentralizing a State-sponsored definition of psychosocial development.

### Meta-Nationalist Formations in Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*

As Gerry Smyth claims in *The Novel and the Nation*, Doyle's novels "depict a side of Irish life that had never found its voice in the nation's fiction" (67). The style and the tone in his novels, in particular in *A Star Called Henry*, resonate with what Declan Kiberd regards as the founding elements in the works of modern elites who embraced change, and despised an apparent touch of retrospection in the nationalist narratives.<sup>10</sup> These formed the literature that transformed into a unanimous, radical vehicle for expressing the nation's disgruntlement with narrowness of Irish nationalism and their retrograde perception of the nation's future. The result is a narrative that is either

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<sup>7</sup> In an autobiographical sense of Bildung, Frank McCourt recounts the life of the youths in the formation as "miserable" and a life that "hardly worth your while". "Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood." See Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes*, Glasgow: Flamingo, 1999, 1.

<sup>8</sup> In my reading of Dermot Bolger's *The Woman's Daughter* I shall explore such dichotomous disagreements among the Irish.

<sup>9</sup> On Doyle's carnivalesque criticism of the State see Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, University of Illinois Press, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> As Kiberd notes in his *Inventing Ireland*, it was the voice of radical modernists such as Patrick Peasre, Joyce, Synge, and Beckett that first emerged as the force behind the radicalization of Irish identity. A voice which boldly asserts that "the time had come to end such stereotyping." See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, London: Vintage, 1

stylistically or narratologically resistant, a genre that provides a unique mode of perceiving modernity and modern Irishness, and introduces a protagonist to whom the past is simply history, or as Jonathan Bolton claims, “the past is in many ways relegated to the past” (*Blighted Beginnings* 221). For the modern Irish protagonist, such a bohemian sense of Bildung appears as at once favourable and especially progressive, for by abiding by its radical norms they will further distance themselves from anything traditional, resulting in a broadly negative reconstruction of the Foucauldian understanding of Bildung, namely, forming young Irish rebels whose perception of their present and future only minimally resonates with the State’s perception of the past, and whose discourse of formation is nothing but negative self-criticism.<sup>11</sup> For they find their childhood to have been marginalized either by their nativist families who have subordinated self-formation to national initiation, namely, the conservative State and society, or the State and society.

Doyle’s depiction of history and certain nationalist myths such as the Rising, and the wars of independence emerge as ironic self-reflecting critiques that at once were to challenge the intolerant forms of Irish nationalism and, as Kim McMullen argues, provide a “mock-unmasking” of events significant in the formation of an Irish nationalist history (“New Ireland/Hidden Ireland” 130);<sup>12</sup> these emerge as concepts that according to Diarmaid Ferriter’s reading of Kate O’Brien’s *The Land of Spices* (1941) could be ridiculed and laughed at by the Irish if only they were directed at other nations.<sup>13</sup> By inserting purely fictional and ironic characters of Henry, his father, and Miss O’Shea, but to name a few, into nationally cherished historical events, Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* at once transcends the conventional definition of historical novel and becomes a critique aimed to deconstruct and then reconstruct the nation’s perception of an accepted history.

In *The Historical Novel* (1974) Lukács defines the historical novel as narratives “written with a sense of how the individuality of character derives from the

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<sup>11</sup> According to Foucault “one’s sense of identity is forged out of the behavioral patterns established through the psyche’s reckoning with particular experiences, especially those of childhood. The way in which the psyche has dealt with experiences in the past sets the course for its dealings with experience in the present.” See Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, 123.

<sup>12</sup> Kim McMullen, “New Ireland/Hidden Ireland: Reading Recent Irish Fiction”, in *The Kenyon Review*, New Series Vol. 26 No., 2, 126-148.

<sup>13</sup> In *Occasions of Sin* (), Ferriter astutely critiques the way the Censorship Board had engaged in an inconsistent, questionable fashion of banning literature that only vaguely and “obliquely” had dealt with concepts such as homosexuality and aberrant sexual formation. These later, Ferriter argues, became concepts that needed revisions and re-evaluations. See Diarmaid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland*, London: Profile Books, 2010, 218-220.

historical peculiarity of an age and with an awareness of human existence as always historically conditioned” (24). In the Irish context, however, James Cahalan identifies historical novel as “a form that deals with periods of political crisis in modern Ireland prior to the author's experience, that concerns itself with a public political focus, and that depicts at least one real historical personage” (*Great Hatred, Little Room* xiii). Although Doyle’s account of the Rising or preparation of the Proclamation is pure fictionalization of such events, what he achieves by reconstructing such central points in the Irish history is to remind one of how political hostility and definitional narrowness of Irishness was as unforgiving and intolerant as it was, for instance, for Hannah Lynch to critique the Empire and the harsh realism of Dublin street life in her famous *Autobiography of a Child* (1899).<sup>14</sup> The result is what Linda Hutcheon introduces in *A Theory of Parody* as “transcontextualization”, namely, a narrative that engages in an “ironic recoding of the past” with the aim of exposing the absurd and possibly parodic side of any nationalist history (103).

Doyle’s *A Start Called Henry* emerges as a narrative of negativity and dialectical ‘transcontextualization’ that constantly oscillates between a negative dialectics of formation and a nationalist dialectics of negativity to produce an acceptable, unbiased, and inclusive definition of modern Irish identity; it becomes a concept that resonates with Umberto Eco’s understanding of the novel wherein “the past [...] must be revisited, but with irony, not innocently” (*The Name of The Rose* 111). In other words, while Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* poses as an inherently conscious narrative of national resistance, and succeeds in questioning the clichéd totalitarianism of Free Staters and challenging the stereotypical backwardness of nativists such as Yeats, it also falls prey to another web of clichés, developing a consciousness of deformation and social anathema shaped and led by an incessant stream of negativity and blind radicalism. For instance, although Doyle criticizes the divide between the rebels and the revolutionaries, highlighting the opportunistic nature of Ivan as Henry’s prodigy as the byproduct of the State’s double-standards vis-à-vis the telos of revolution, he fails to draw the line between the negative dialectics of formation embodied by revolutionaries such as Henry and the dialectics of negativity manifested in rebels such as Ivan. This is the very dichotomy that

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<sup>14</sup> Hannah Lynch’s *Autobiography of a Child* (1899) is one of the earliest instance where the critical discourse of Irish Bildungsroman engages in critiquing and deconstructing sub-realities that were contained by the dominant government.

Doyle's parodic depiction of the Rising fails to portray properly, which symbolizes the betrayal of the ethos of resistance and re-formation developed by the men of 1916 manipulated by the nativist State. Instead of providing a realistic portrayal of revolutionaries such as Henry, Doyle's final product emerges as a negative caricature of dissidents like Henry, namely, a "strange mix of man – dissident and slave, a man who was quick with his brain and an eejit" (*A Star Called Henry* 240).

The modern Irish narrative of formation, at this moment, namely, in post-independence Ireland will find its Germanic merits of self-formation and appreciation imperceptibly alien, while appearing irreconcilably distant from its English definition of social mobility and integration. The confluence of such a negative form and the anti-historicism of modern Irishness, emerges as a socio-historical consciousness at the crux of modern Irish novels, creating radical characters like Doyle's Henry. Robert Garratt refers to such narratives as "trauma novels," disregarding any actual sense of identity behind such non-conformist characterization (*Trauma and History* 114).<sup>15</sup> A novel which emphasizes the "use of traumatic history to engage contemporary social issues", claims Garret, falls under the rubric of trauma novel (*Trauma and History* 114). I contend, however, that such a narrow categorization of trauma, novel and Irish history as a singular vehicle of expression only reveals the limitation of the established theories of trauma. For while negative formations emerge as an inseparable part of the modern Irish novel of formation, affecting a nation rather than a selected group, Garratt's definition of traumatic novel of formation appears as a mere mimesis of the Caruthian model whereby only a selected number of people might be affected.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the novel of formation, such a narrow and selective narrative neither has roots in the history of the nation nor does it crisscross modern anti-historicism and nationalist anachronism to discuss historical, nationalist *malformations*.<sup>17</sup>

Roddy Doyle's engagement with the concept of formation in *A Star Called Henry*, the first from *The Last Roundup* trilogy, turns twofold as it at once provides a

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<sup>15</sup> Garratt, Robert F. *Trauma and History in Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> On Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma and traumatic novel see Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Also see Robert F. Garratt, *Trauma and History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011, 45-63.

<sup>17</sup> My usage of the word *malformation* is influenced by Erik Erikson's conception of the term. See Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994.

stark and vastly fictionalized portrayal of national formation in the years before the 1920s, and then discusses the individual deformation of the Irish in the later 1920s. Doyle's treatment of known and unknown formation, in this respect, is presented within a labyrinth of characterization, and a cartoonish derision vis-à-vis the nationalist perception of history. While each of these elements emerges as a distinctive theme in a nation's narrative of formation, they both work in tandem to undermine the retrograde, normalizing principles of formation under a nationalist authority. Formation, as a concept, in Doyle's war-stricken depiction of Ireland is introduced as a doubly ambivalent idea, with no significant promise for the young Irish protagonist. Such a constant to and fro between traditions and an immature nativist tendency to develop renders Bildung as just an uninvited extension of modernity while the nation is recovering from centuries of colonial subjugation.

As the narrative progresses, such an interminable oscillation between negative dialectics and traditionalism, or in Kiberd's terms "internal colonialism", becomes clearer through the symbolic references made by the narratorial voice to different but relevant concepts (*The Irish Writer* 163). For instance, in describing his mother's illiteracy and vague dullness in dealing with the dire socio-economic conditions of her family, Henry depicts her as though "her heart cried for Leitrim but her tits sang for Dublin" (Doyle 2). In this example, while the former astutely references a quasi-modernized, yet essentially agrarian county Leitrim of the pre-1920s, the latter targets the chaotic Dublin, a traditional city lulled by the colonial stasis; this is a city which is about to witness its greatest and most poignant wars of resistance on Easter.

In another example, the voice highlights an incessant ideological and religious ambivalence which contradicts the very foundation of Easter Proclamation. The voice remarks: "they [were] going blind for God and Mitchell... Mitchell wanted them to pray" (*A Star Called Henry* 3). Arthur Mitchell, a notable national celebrity, suddenly transforms into a symbolic messiah whose request not only contradicts freedom of religion, or at least freedom from possible prejudices promised by the Proclamation but relegates the national will to power and independence to the abstract power of religion and prayer. The ambiguity Doyle sharply critiques, at once introduces his narrative as a radical, modern narrative of formation that according to Smyth incorporates a double-voiced dialectical discourse to identify dualities and (historical)

contradictions in the State's politics of formation.<sup>18</sup> What Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* identifies, targeting the sixth article in the Easter Proclamation, appears as an unfulfilled promise of "religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its [Irish] citizens" (National Library of Ireland poster collection); of society-centrism versus national socialism and national Darwinism.<sup>19</sup> According to Doyle's novel, the assertion mentioned above appeared as nothing but a broad promise that only lasted for hours, a notion that George Boyce too clarifies in his historical account of the rise of nationalism in Ireland.<sup>20</sup> As Boyce remarks, the ambivalence was an intentional design stressed by the State simply to win more support from the young Irish such as Henry, his brother and his peers,<sup>21</sup> and as Doyle fictionalizes, "promises [that] weren't kept in the slums" (*A Star Called Henry* 3).

As Henry's narrative unfolds, Doyle introduces such Foucauldian biopolitical vagaries as Wildean *fruits* of an inevitable change that has reluctantly been acknowledged or accepted by the motherland and those who have kept her occupied with conservatism and stasis.<sup>22</sup> A traditional feminization of Ireland – and Britain as the "witch" – provides Doyle with sufficient leeway to clarify and criticize the dichotomous concept of a modernized agrarian Ireland, a concept that contributed to the formation of a generation of non-conformist revolutionaries which I shall call meta-nationalists such as Henry, who defied nativist opportunists such as Dolly Gandon, Alfie Oblong. "What age was she", Doyle references Ireland's acknowledgement of its condition of stasis and totalitarian conservatism, "when she learnt the truth, when she found out that her life would have no music? The name was a lie, a spell the witch put on her" (*A Star Called Henry* 3). By posing such bold questions in a retrospective fashion, namely, by discussing the childhood of Henry's mother, Melody Nash, *A Star Called Henry* transcends the boundaries of post-colonial novel of resistance and trauma, which deals with traumatic deformations of young revolutionaries while questioning the heavily politicized history of the nation through

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<sup>18</sup> According to Gerry Smyth, double-voicedness and in other instances many-voicedness emerges as one of the most notable elements of modern novel, which provides space for a critical engagement with the history of a nation. See Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, 29-31.

<sup>19</sup> On national socialism and social nationalism see Adel Bshara, "Social Nationalism VS National Socialism", [http://www.ssnp.com/new/ssnp/en/ssnp\\_001.htm](http://www.ssnp.com/new/ssnp/en/ssnp_001.htm). Retrieved Nov 18, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> As Boyce explains in *Nationalism in Ireland*, religious bifurcation was the other factor that contributed to the formation of a partitioned Ireland(s). See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 20-45.

<sup>21</sup> See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 20-45

<sup>22</sup> On biopolitics see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.



the magical realism of his characters. By revisiting and reassessing the history of revolution and a historically conditioned revolutionary identity, therefore, *A Star Called Henry* transforms into a critical niche, albeit through a parodic discourse, which not only questions the nation's static past by using a young rebellious protagonist but also dismantles a critical attack ascribed to his dialectical discourse in critiquing the Irish history, marking them as apologetic and anti-modern.<sup>23</sup>

In *A Star Called Henry* Bildung is introduced as a conceptual convergence of social radicalism, anti-British bourgeoisie, historical anathema, and an insatiable urge to break away from the Yeatsian Celtic heroism. Bildung, in this respect, transforms into a non-identarian elixir for the restless youths, whose only reason for joining radical military clubs, such as Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, Four Courts Garrison, and *Cumann na mBan* (The Irishwoman's Council), was to form what their immediate predecessors did not, namely, to break away from an already broken Deleuzian familial relationship of *mother*(land) and *sons* of Éire,<sup>24</sup> which under provisional or postist governments was reduced to a colony of individuals who only co-existed. The narrative, in this regard, becomes an amalgamation of various forms and themes, namely, of family matters; of irreconcilable socio-political dichotomy between an agrarian Ireland as a post-colonial reality, and visions of a pastoral Ireland conceived by nationalists and political nationalist rebels such as Yeats, de Valéra, Pearse and Hyde; of the novel as a post-colonial vehicle for resistance; of re-emergence of variations of gothic, such as *Bog Gothic*, psychological terror, Irish macabre, and Celtic myth as conscious mouthpieces that expressed a national fear of an obscure future that was being dictated in retrospect by nationalists; and finally of a growing disillusionment with the traditional description of Irishness that marks the Irish as either anti-colonial, nationalist and Celtic or simply unknown and doubtlessly un-Irish.

In the course of formation of such an incongruous generation, a new wave of protagonists needs to be introduced; those whose intention for individualism and appeal for singularity and self-referential formation remains unchanged in the narratives produced during the 1920s until 1950s, as they "invent ... and reinvent" themselves (Doyle 7). Doyle's Henry Smart emerges as a broad epitomization of such

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<sup>23</sup> Gerry Smyth, for instance, is one of the critics who criticized Doyle's anti-historical perception of Irish history. See Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, 68, 97, 99.

<sup>24</sup> On Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'daddy-mommy-me' see *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, York: Continuum, 2004.

a neglected, rebellious generation, who in proving their identity will challenge not only their family and the State but anyone who tends to question their formation and presence:

“Shut up, Henry!”

“Was I obedient? I screamed back at him... I shoved my terror up into his face. And he stopped... I’d scream my life away before I’d let him better me. What about *meeee*?”

In defying a dominant parochial patriarchy and a unanimous national tendency to glorify the past and ignore the present, non-conformists like Henry engage with the unexperienced, the unknown, namely, a new standard of formation which generally sounds antiauthoritarian and radical. In a symbolic embodiment of such non-identarian formation, namely, by distancing from a past-oriented nativist mentality, Doyle depicts a young Henry whose mother’s obsession with stars – each representing a dead child all named Henry – has made him hostile not only towards stars and symbolically the past but also the very memory that relegates his existence to an ominous event in the past. A blanket morbid obsession with the past, in this respect, has made Henry reluctant to learn about past Henrys and to have a retrospective look at their lives; for while the latter would take away his mother’s attention the former will rid him of his identity and sense of belonging. In another symbolic attempt, Henry is shown yelling his true identity, “My name is Henry Smart! The one and only Henry Smart! ... I’d yell until I could no longer see its shadow against the blueness of the night, until there was nothing out there”; and finally, in order for his identity and rootedness to emerge and be recognized he concludes by denying his familiar links with his dead brothers: “I killed my brother every night” (Doyle 35). To gain rootedness and independence, Henry engages with the non-identarianism of the men of 1916, namely, to defy at once the colonial State and those who supported colonial subjugation; Henry symbolically denounces his familial links with the stars, and kills the link, albeit psychologically.

As Doyle takes the narrative through the formative years of independence, he depicts a radical variation of *Bildung* which not only opposes the traditionalist perception of self-formation but emerges as the opposite of formation. It is a variation of formation that resonates with the traumatic social conditions of post-Easter Ireland, opposing the classical definition of *Bildung* as social and educational mobility. Henry, as a radical, modern *Bildungsheld* initially appears with an identarian understanding

of society, which at times sounds Victorian; this is a perspective that perceives (self-) formation through social mobility and class-based development, an ideological subjectivism that has been passed to him from his family: “This is how society works. Money. Making it, taking it, spending it” (*A Star Called Henry* 42). It is only after he reveals his inner placelessness, however, that such Victorian social subjectivism appears as mundane shallowness of a rising working class. Henry’s formation emerges as a reverberating echo of such harsh and notable events: the fall of Parnellism in the 1890s; a national surge that led to literary and political revivalism; an internal religious dichotomy between the Protestants and Catholic nationalists, as the latter was negatively propagated as unfit and leading the nation to further political stasis and conservatism;<sup>25</sup> and the beginning of a military and parochial divide between those who joined the nativists and those who distanced themselves from the State or left Ireland for alternative destinations.

Institutions such as People’s Rights Association were introduced as the family for a neglected generation of young ambitious rebels like Henry who “loved the street, from the second [they] landed on it” (*A Star Called Henry* 45).<sup>26</sup> These were the “infested, hungry and unloved” generation, with a socio-economically disintegrated family, who had no other choice but to “[fall] in with the crowd” (*A Star Called Henry* 45). Although Henry as a broad example of his generation appears self-centred and antiauthoritarian, he neither forgets nor gives up the power of community. Unlike later generations of Irish rebels, such as those in Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* (1992) and *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998) and Francis Stuart’s *Faillandia* (1985) and *Black List, Section H* (1971), Henry and his peers console their traumatized self with the daily tumult of urbanization and city life. For instance, Henry can only lessen his sense of placelessness by “looking at misery that matched [his] own”; by “gobbl[ing] ... the action, the noise and smells” of a city as violent and yet colourful as Dublin (*A Star Called Henry* 45). He and his generation “hit the bad streets of Dublin, a three-

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<sup>25</sup> This was the time when Protestants and unionists joined forces to prevent any possible variation of nationalism from formation, for as I discussed earlier, only briefly after the internal wars, and despite various assertions in Easter Proclamation, religious separation torn Irish unity apart.

<sup>26</sup> People’s Rights Association emerged in 1892 as a result of the parliamentary division between the Parnellites and the anti-Parnellite on the one hand, and the Dillionites and the Healyites on the other. During the 1920s, however, many nationalists and republicans supported the institution, regarding it as a second home to orphans and street children. See Daniel Desmond Sheehan, *Ireland Since Parnell*, London: Daniel O’Connor, 1921.

year-old earthquake, ... a complete and utter brat” and become “instant street arabs”; they roam the streets and yet feel “at home” (*A Star Called Henry* 45).

They experience the unexperienced, namely engage with what the Constitution tends to contain, and identify with the unknown, forming the invisible drive that resulted in the Rising and revolution. Placelessness, in this respect, transvalues into a meaningful significance for a generation who find their homes and families “in rags and scarcity, dirt and weakness” (*A Star Called Henry* 45). For them the street becomes their “world”, and fighting their “corner” transforms into a concomitant Darwinian Bildung (*A Star Called Henry* 45); for them, the past generation, namely, those who led the nation, for all their deficiencies and political vagueness, are all “liars” with repetitive stories that “kept them going” and alive (*A Star Called Henry* 7). As Henry understands, historical and national stories and nuncupative tales become a source that feeds the old and the poor, and those who wish to express a national weakness rather indirectly.

In *A Star Called Henry* Doyle engages in a dichotomous critique of the symbolic and national significance of the novel as a medium of pedagogy and education. For instance, only to access critical information buried in Henry’s grandmother’s memories, Henry is depicted inundating Granny Nash with her favourite books. Books in the forms of novels, in this instance, are nothing but instruments by which Henry obtains directions that would take him closer to Mrs. O’Shea. In another instance, books play no significant role in Henry’s radical formation, yet he shows interest to go to school and learn. However, such a sudden show of interest is founded on Henry’s puerile emotions, and deals with neither the concept of self-formation nor the significance of pedagogy in his hectic process of formation. Rather, for rebels such as Henry education is learned for the sake of education and serving his needs to conquer an identarian sense of *becoming*; for he prefers to remain a ‘street arab’ and explore and conquer ‘corners’ that belong to no one, and thus to quench his inner sense of social recognition. Henry’s engagement with the concept of pedagogical Bildung, in other words, corresponds with what Deleuze and Guattari regard as a sudden release of an internal antiauthoritarian urge to defy the State’s limitation and the dichotomy of formation. His Deleuzean “desire” to deconstruct the State’s politics of containment, achieve societal recognition, and eventually to obtain Mrs. O’Shea’s whereabouts, however, is channelled through education and his *desire* to learn (Deleuze and Guattari 165).

Henry's conscious involvement in a pedagogical oblivion and educational indifference contributes to his classification as a *Shinner*, namely, a non-identarian, antiauthoritarian generation for whom the only way to develop was to defy the State governed by the British: "Why had I told the King of Great Britain and Ireland to fuck off? Was I a tiny Fenian? A Sinn Feiner? Not at all. I didn't even know I was Irish." (*A Star Called Henry* 52). However, his *anger* in rejecting a culture as foreign and limiting as the British culture, and his intolerance in acknowledging the normalizing discourses would distance him and his generation from the conservatism of nationalist groups such as Sinn Féin, resulting in a generation of non-conformists whose only concern was growing up, proper or otherwise. Henry's socio-political radicalism, I argue, can be read as the founding impetus that made notable events such as the 1916 rising, and later Irish wars of independence achievable possibilities. In critiquing the national history by way of 'transcontextualization', Doyle highlights a politically conscious generation, who embraced non-identarianism as they rejected the categorical identarianism of postcolonial nations, most apparent in the form of post-colonial, nationalist, anti-unionist. The confluence of an anarchic dialectics of formation and a childish excitement in pursuing the unexperienced, produces 8 and 9-year-old protagonists who consider themselves as "never a child", "beggars who never asked for money", and street rebels who "sold newspapers we'd stolen. We stole back flowers we'd sold... there was nothing I wouldn't do" (*A Star Called Henry* 65).

Bildung, in this respect, emerges as a counter-intuitive radical momentum among the sons of Ireland, a contra-formation that targets social and individual perception of self-development. What Henry and his contemporaries experienced was not just an epidemic traumatic formation; rather a radicalization of the Geothean perception of self-formation, whereby self-referentiality and social disconnection replace social mobility and social re-integration. Moreover, while their narratives illustrate traumatic isolation and social segregation, it cannot be classified as a novel of trauma, for a traumatic novel of formation limits such a formation to a certain number of individuals rather than what a realistic account of formation suggests. In Henry's puerile words, they "survived but never prospered" for they only "were allowed the freedom of the street – but we'd never, ever be allowed up the bright steps and into the comfort and warmth behind the doors and windows" (Doyle 66).

This stark detachment from a clichéd sense of formation, which in itself forms a cliché of negativity and betrayal of the concept of Bildung, however, becomes the pivot of the modern novel of formation, a narrative with a distinct understanding of reality, society, and formation. This is the very form that Castle regards as the negative site of criticism, a self-questioning narrative centred on the formation of a self-referential, egoistically isolated protagonist; or as Bolton finds it, a narrative of “frustration and resistance” which turns into a radical critique of the State (*Blighted Beginnings* 27).

Such a negative critique especially can be seen in the novels of formation produced during 1922-37, when the Yeatsian Parnellite hero fails to achieve what he originally was invented for: to save the nation and redirect it towards a purely Celtic Ireland. Works like James Plunkett’s *The Strumpet City* (1969), Eimar O’Duffy’s *The Wasted Island* (1920), Seán O’Faoláin’s *The Irish: A Character Study* (1947), *The Nest of Simple Folk* (1933) and his short stories especially *Midsummer Night Madness* (1932) which chronicled life experiences during and after the civil war, for instance, are the exemplification of such a radically negative critique of formation under William T. Cosgrave and later de Valéra. For instance, in his autobiography, *Vive Moi* (1964), Seán O’Faoláin finds that all efforts of revolutionaries to break free from a colonial Ireland have ended up giving birth to yet another form of colonial mentality: “the combination of an acquisitive and uncultured middle class and a rigorous and uncultivated Church meant that the fight for a republic as I now understood it ... had ended in total defeat” (171). In these narratives, the concept of formation manifests itself as an unquenchable tendency to seek beyond an identarian, social subjectivism; and beyond a politicized categorization of ideological and social identity. It is the latter, however, that differentiates between the post-colonial and national narratives of formation and a meta-national one.

This tendency, manifested in Doyle’s ironic characterization of Henry, emerges as a radical impetus, albeit disparate and disunited, rising from within the nation to dismantle not only a colonial sense of Irishness but also any totalitarian, neocolonial despotism, which was to be practiced by the State. In the midst of formation, moreover, this movement appropriates the novel, and especially the novel of formation, to highlight a dramatized sense of deformation influenced by the State’s socio-political efforts. The result is Doyle’s Henry Smart, namely, a protagonist who has the least respect for the past, his society (and societal rules), and regards the future

only as a response to his actions, eliminating any reference to society or the Free State. The protagonists found themselves as “gods” in their rite of passage relegating society and the national will to formation to stories and tales in books (*A Star Called Henry* 186).

According to Smyth, by providing its subjects with an alternative sense of reality, the “discourse of decolonization” enables the post-colonial subjects to transcend the limits of colonial narrative, and to expand their own realization of reality and formation (*The Novel* 32). Such a radical, non-identitarian discourse which I call the meta-nationalist discourse, manifested in Henry’s narrative of formation, defies not only a colonial or anti-colonial perception of reality and formation but any other form of reality except the narrator’s. Henry and other rebels, in this regard, may have to re-invent what they perceive, and thus experience the ‘freedom of streets’ rather than an open door to a house in which they may psychologically and socially develop.

While reinvention appears as a concept shared by the State, rebels and moderns, it is only the rebels and modernists who re-create and re-evaluate in a progressive fashion; and it is only among the young modern Irish radicals that an antiauthoritarian hegemony gains an irrevocable significance. For instance, in one of his speeches, de Valéra reimagined Ireland as only an agrarian State in which modernity and modern thought have no place;<sup>27</sup> it is the unfading egoistic power contest that made Henry ridicule and upset the King of Britain, and only years later turned Henry’s prodigy, Ivan, against him, making him rebel as just an opportunist. It is the same game of authority and formation, and formation and deformation that leads Henry and other young radical men of 1916 to love military formation rather than proper formation. By defying other ‘brats’ in the ‘slums of Dublin,’ Henry gains a level of social authority and recognition that his 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors could reach only after successfully completing an arduous university life.

“I was more important now ... I loved the silence that I could make with my eyes. It was power... I’d hold it a while ... letting them all know that I was the one who was giving them their night out” (*A Star Called Henry* 67).

However, Henry’s social recognition, unlike his predecessors, emerged as a result of a hegemonic authoritarianism prevalent in the pre-independence Ireland of 1916-1920, namely, a period when sectarianism and ideological division become some of

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<sup>27</sup> See Maurice Moynihan (ed), *Speeches and statements by Eamon de Valéra, 1917-1973*, Dublin: Clover, 1980, 334-335.

the most notable elements that contributed to the Rising and the Civil Wars. Henry's social authority and recognition, in addition, must be seen as an aftermath of Irish structurelessness. Henry, now leading a group of young street rebels, divides his authority among his fellow rebels, and by so doing he gains even more control. The result, as Doyle explains, is a complete anarchic hegemony, or in Jo Freeman's term, 'tyranny of structurelessness.' Henry and his gang become one radical, rebellious voice in spreading out chaos and order side by side: "they paid us to make sure that none of the cattle or sheep got lost. And butchers with back doors and deeper pockets paid us to make sure that a few of the beasts went astray... the police started to join us" (*A Star Called Henry* 68). Such an antiauthoritarian, 'structureless' perception of formation opposes the Fenian's definition of Bildung. Although a Fenian conception of Bildung regarded the nationalist Irishness as the very motive behind self-formation, incorporating it in the name of their movement 'Sinn Féin' [we ourselves], Henry's generation introduced formation as a broadly personal and generally self-centred perspective. This is the definition that sounds not only anti-Fenian and thus anti-nativist, and in Adorno's terms 'unknown,' but also essentially self-referential: "I had refused to hear it... we were all that mattered" (*A Star Called Henry* 83).

Such contradictoriness in perceiving the concept of Bildung, namely, the conservative nationalism and the radical, independent formation, according to Boyce, can be found in the history of Irish identity formation. As Boyce argues, for instance, a dominant conservatism imposed by nationalists who unwittingly ignored the emergence of a military sense of Bildung among the youths as a result of militarization of Ireland, and the on-going disagreement between the British and the revolutionaries on the one hand, and the emergence of unionists in the 1880s further complicating the concept of Home Rule were some of the most notable socio-political crises that divided the Irish and their perception of Bildung.<sup>28</sup> "Times have changed", notes Dillon in his speech, drawing the nationalists' attention towards the fact that their effort towards an all Éire-Ireland is no longer uniquely uncontended, "and the methods of carrying on the struggle for the liberty of Ireland must be changed in accordance with the times" (Boyce 263). Henry, his brother Victor, and many others emerged as a result of such a redundant and dichotomous perception of Bildung: a

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<sup>28</sup> According to Boyce nationalists such as John Dillon ignored an uncomfortable military presence of local Catholic Irish militia as a way to defend their nationalist presence and significance. In other words, by ignoring other military forces, nationalists strived to prove their unshakable strength and unity with the Irish. See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 259-294.



dichotomy which was embraced by nationalists, unionists, rebels and revolutionaries, for only chaos could serve their game of dominance and hegemony.

To radicals such as Henry, Ireland and Irishness are conceptual products they have inherited from their normalized family and society. As Henry's father is revealed to have been murdered by Oblong's gang, for instance, the narrative progresses to replace the father with the son, depicting Henry as a safe substitute for his father. As his narrative develops, for Henry Irish formation only translates as an anarchic binary of hegemony and dominance. Rebels like Henry, therefore, won't "serve neither King nor Kaiser", a bold message highlighting their doctrine of formation, while they don't "give a shit about Ireland" (*A Star Called Henry* 91). In other words, for rebels the Irish myth of formation was demythologized as mere stories, which only old people, the poor, and "survivors" were able to retell and remember (*A Star Called Henry* 91). Under such a vague and contradictory understanding of formation, Henry's anticolonial potential is revealed to have been instrumentalized by the rising State to establish a de Valéan agrarian conservatism; for Henry, therefore, "Ireland" and Irish formation become a myth or "something in songs that drunken old men wept about as they help on to the railings at three in the morning and we homed in to rob them; that was all" (*A Star Called Henry* 69). In another instance, albeit chronologically set a few years after the Civil Wars, Frank McCourt *Angela's Ashes* highlights an imbedded vagueness in dealing with the concept of Ireland, Irish identity, and national love. Francis's father, Malachy McCourt a nationalist rebel who has done "his bit" in the formation of Ireland, only talks, sings and cries about Ireland, being shown as a drunkard who has lost not only his wage but his social recognition in bars and pubs. Francis's father in McCourt's novel would come home drunk, knocking on his boys' door, and offer "a nickel for everyone who promises to die for Ireland" (*Angela's Ashes* 18). This is the nightmarish memory that Francis and his brother Malachi, and their contemporaries would talk about only in retrospective disgust. Henry, a fictionalized character who experiences the roughness of revolution, like McCourt's protagonist perceives Ireland and Irishness only self-referentially, introducing his self-centred sense of formation as the most notable reference.

As I discussed earlier, rebels, revolutionaries, and the non-conformists emerge as the Irish who have detached themselves from a retrospective, nativist perception of Irish identity. Nevertheless, by supporting anti-bourgeois movements and maintaining their anti-colonial unity, they transformed into a hybrid of anti-colonialism and

nationalist Irishness. To show their Irish dimension and satisfy their sense of belonging, rebels in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* appear to have 'done their bit' in the formation and establishment of a free Ireland. In a fantastic tête-à-tête with James Connolly, Henry represents not only his non-identarianism in dealing with the nationalists' policy of confinement and oppression but his liberating intentions to eliminate the gap between the street children, as the founders of the republic, and the nationalists. Henry's suggestion, as the epitomization of young, ambitious Irish non-conformists dismantles the limiting politics of nationalism when he offers Connolly to amend the draft of the Proclamation of Independence, addressing the rights of street children and young rebels like himself:

What do you think? He asked.

There should be something in there about the rights of children.

He looked at me. He saw my pain, and the pain of millions of others. And his own. You're right, he said. (*A Star Called Henry* 97)

The position of the article suggested by Henry, namely, between the part on religious and social equality and "the bit about the alien government", in addition, bears a significant weight, as it contributes to the formation of an investigative attitude vis-à-vis the Irish trinity of the church, family and the motherland (*A Star Called Henry* 97). Not only did Henry seek to change the history of maladaptation in Ireland by making such a bold suggestion but he also questions, albeit only symbolically, what makes the ideological crux of a group of nationalists such as Michael Collins, Pearse, and Connolly himself in preparing what is known to be the most important written text in the history of Ireland. His independent voice, therefore, emerges defying the authoritarianism of the nationalists and revivalists; those who have previously neglected the youth now need to bow down before such a resistant generation of non-conformists to win their support, otherwise they will lose not only their military power, which generally consists of young and underage 'street arabs' like Henry, but also the argument of authenticity to unionists and other separatists.

The other instance when an antiauthoritarian, anti-colonial voice of Henry defies a superior authority is when Henry emerges as an independent ideologue, albeit broadly self-referential, and symbolically eliminates a British bourgeoisie that had dominated the Irish social norms, and claims that "the peasants will form the backbone of this nation" (*A Star Called Henry* 253). Henry's introspective musings lead him to separate himself from "all that [he] had been denied, all the commerce

and snobbery that had been mocking [him] and other hundreds of thousands behind glass and locks, all the injustice, unfairness and shoes” (*A Star Called Henry* 105). What Henry does, in other words, is further engaging with a personalized and self-referential sense of Bildung, and as a result finding his own voice to oppose not only the empire but also an internal colonialism that was about to paralyze the nation.

In the narrative he shoots at expensive shoes and all that he and his brother could not have, and symbolically deconstructs the divide caused by the colonial authoritarianism. By so doing, Henry accomplished his objectives in two separate ways: firstly as mentioned before, although a non-conformist revolutionary, he reconfirms his anti-colonial Irish identity by shooting that which according to his logic had caused the divide; and secondly, he proved his Irish roots by disengaging with anything British and modern. As the narrative unfolds, Henry’s symbolic non-identarian decision to shoot anything and anyone corresponds with a de Valéran perception of modernity in the 1920s. The State’s conviction was to forbid any sense of modernization, for modernity, for nationalists especially de Valéra, was nothing but a variation of British imperialism. It was extreme decisions like this that not only prevented a proper emergence and development of modernity in Ireland until the 1950s-60s, and let Ireland regress towards a pastoral haven as envisaged by conservative ideologues such as de Valéra,<sup>29</sup> but also led rebels and revolutionaries such as Henry to raise concerns over the fate of their nation and their movement. “What sort of a country were we going to create?” wonders Henry, as he finds his “colleagues and comrades, fellow revolutionaries” surrounded by a consciousness of stasis and inactivity, symbolically introduced as a hard sleep (*A Star Called Henry* 114). “If we were attacked now, we were fucked”, ponders Henry, further highlighting a growing mistrust among his ‘fellow revolutionaries’ towards their nationalist leaders such as Griffith, Collins and de Valéra (*A Star Called Henry* 114). As the narrative continues, however, it is the same sense of mistrust that develops into a “counter-revolution”, gradually distancing the principles of revolutionaries such as Henry from those of nationalists: “the revolution, the counter-revolution and the Civil War were all waiting to happen” (*A Star Called Henry* 114). For nonconformist revolutionaries such as Henry, the binary of revolution and stasis was a counter-formative impetus that at once eventuated in the emergence of extremists such as Ivan

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<sup>29</sup> On a pastoral vision of Ireland by de Valéra see Boyce, *Nationalist in Ireland*, 351.

and his gang and an epidemic disappointment at nationalists' plans and political mobility.<sup>30</sup> Doyle's critique of post-revolution Ireland targets a variation of *postist* stasis that not only decentralized the socio-cultural boundaries of revolutionary Irish identity but also denounced the very revolutionary consciousness that created nonconformists such as Henry and his brother, flagging them as un-Irish, and ignoring them as remainders of a colonial identity which needs to be contained.

To contain nonconformist revolutionaries like Henry, the State introduces characters such as Ivan, whose only concerns are about their economic growth. In *A Star Called Henry*, while Henry is introduced as the embodiment of modernist egoism and a growing negative dialectics of formation, seeking his identity in the unknown, Ivan, a young helpless street child appears as a blatant exemplification of the other sense of formation: a rebellious, formless, negative Bildung. Doyle introduces Ivan and his gang as the other dimension to a political radicalization of Bildung imposed on 'street children', namely, neglected children with no clear future in prospect, and turned by the counter-revolution of which Henry and others were warned. Henry himself emerges as an example of youths being exposed to such negative rebellion. Nevertheless, Henry's dialectical discourse of formation, albeit self-criticizing, carried neither Ivan's greed nor his need to be recognized, becoming a formation which seeks formation in deformation rather than destruction. Ivan's sense of self-formation, on the contrary, represents the remainder of the IRA who developed according to their self-set rules, transforming into a collective persona non grata.

Figuratively, through a confrontational conversation between Henry and Ivan, Doyle explores the dialectical discourse that separates the two generations of nonconformists. While Henry embodies the revolutionary ethos of the men of 1916, determined to win their independence and non-identarian Irishness, Ivan represents the non-conformists who embraced a negative identarian pattern of formation: the one which seeks social recognition through scaremongering and imposing a different path of social normalization: "all these years I thought I was a soldier, a warrior even. A fuckin' nation builder. Fighting for Ireland...", confesses Ivan, unravelling an internal bourgeois identarian consciousness that has dominated his formation; "But here's the truth now. All the best soldiers are businessmen" (*A Star Called Henry* 314). For Ivan

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<sup>30</sup> As mentioned earlier in my discussion of modernism in nationalist Ireland, notable nationalist such as Yeats found their nationalist ethos betrayed by politically unfaithful figures such as de Valéra, as he remodeled revolution to serve his objectives. See Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 339.

the only reason to ‘fight for Ireland’ was to “control the island”, a predictable symbolic return of the *Bildungsheld* to his origins, which in Ivan’s case is to return to his history of street insecurity and robbery (*A Star Called Henry* 314).

The only concept that Henry and Ivan, as the extreme ends of the pole of radical formation, have in common is their perception of Ireland and their contribution to its freedom. While Henry regarded Ireland as only available in songs and stories of old, drunk Irish men, Ivan appears to have a more materialistic but still distant understanding of his motherland: “a sweet doesn’t get sucked without a good coating of the profit ending up on Ivan’s tongue” (*A Star Called Henry* 315). While Ivan and Henry regard *Bildung* as being detached from the nationalist identarianism, their telos of formation reflects an essentially different perception of nationalism. For instance, Henry’s introspective examination of his actions and formation, especially after the conversation with Connolly, reflects a hidden variation of patriotism and rootedness: “I was one of the chosen. I was a gunman” and “I was shaping the fate of my country”; while Ivan finds the “reason for the killing and late nights, wasn’t Ireland” (*A Star Called Henry* 209, 208, 314). In other words, although Ivan “freed fuckin’ Ireland”, he had done it for the benefit of developing his own principles and rules, centring on financial development. On the contrary, Henry’s non-conformism results in his meta-national Irishness, namely, being at once detached from and related to his motherland. Ivan emerges as the embodiment of radical rebels who sought anti-Irishness, namely, finding formation in deconstructing Irishness rather than ridding the nation from ineffectual boundaries.

As the narrative unfolds, Ivan and his fellow rebels are shown to have transformed into a body of military force, which not only have turned against their ex-comrades, such as Henry who symbolically mentored Ivan through his rite of formation, but began a series of anti-national attacks against the Dáil: the very cause that meant to unite revolutionary forces. Ivan’s self-referential radicalism, compared to Henry’s non-conformist *Bildung*, I suggest can be read as Doyle’s ironic critique of a sense of non-belonging and detachment which emerged in the wake of the Civil Wars and continued into the 1930s. Ivan’s radical non-belonging I argue embodies the very voice that in Doyle’s narrative tends to reveal a widespread yet hidden anomalous pair, namely a psychological exile and a national fascination with political control, where the former further divided the nation by contributing to an already

developed internal othering, as the latter became the reason behind Ireland's 'archaic' modernity.<sup>31</sup>

In *The Transformation of Ireland* (2005) Diarmaid Ferriter revisits and appreciates Doyle's characterization of Ivan Reynolds, identifying him as the voice which represents the Irish aiming to subvert a politicized equilibrium imposed by the State. According to Ferriter, the ragged-trousered non-conformists such as Ivan represent "the attitude of certain architects of the State" (*The Transformation* 267), for whom revolution was "about control of the island, and not the harps and martyrs and the freedom to swing a hurley" (*A Star Called Henry* 314).

For rebels like Ivan, exile has been internalized as a psychological partition which further separates them from the nationalists or even from other non-conformist revolutionaries such as Henry. As Doyle's symbolic description of Ivan and his gang reveals, their deformation can be read as a result of an antagonism towards their roots, and simultaneously their insignificant presence in where they belong. In other words, prior to their radical presence, they were "harmless poor eejit[s]" that no one noticed; yet now "nobody works without the nod from Ivan" (*A Star Called Henry* 315).

Such a drastic transition was founded on two distinct reasons: first, the demands of Henry and Ivan's generation to be limited neither by the British nor their Celtic heritage; and second was the State which, according to Charles Townshend, as it developed into a Free State its "neurotic defensive reactions" grew with it (*Ireland: The Twentieth Century* xi-xii). Ivan, I argue, embodies a generation of shell-shocked rebels, hunted by the very same State that helped them through their rite of passage.<sup>32</sup> Henry's ironic introspective musings, as once a mentee and now a radical mentor, too, reaffirms such a hereditary concept: "I'd killed more men than I could account for and I'd trained other men to do the same... just like my father" (*A Star Called Henry* 318). What the radical men of 1916 and rebels such as Ivan have in common, I suggest, is the conviction to defy social subjectivism and normality, be it British colonialism or nativist oppression; this is a determination to strive towards freedom and experiencing the unexperienced, namely, liberation and unity even though that would mark them as un-Irish and unknown. The confluence of Henry, Ivan and other

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<sup>31</sup> As Michael Hopkins explains, in the mid and late 1930s military radicals became the very force that not only betrayed the Dáil by calling Feiners as traitors but also engaged in advocating socialism in an Ireland which was damaged from both within and without. See Hopkins, *Green Against Green – the Irish Civil War*, Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 2004, 70-98.

<sup>32</sup> On rebels being commissioned and decommissioned by Free Staters see Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 339, 347.

revolutionaries would create a nation that is “eager to prove itself to the world”, an apolitical generation turned severely political and intrinsically ahistorical by the socio-political exigencies of their nation in flux; the generation that “must kill the past” in order to reach “saoirse”, namely, freedom (*A Star Called Henry* 336, 341).

In fulfilling such a national conviction, the revolutionaries, betrayed by rebels and nationalist leaders,<sup>33</sup> transform into a neglected yet socio-politically conscious group of radicals, who neither abandon their non-identarian principles of formation and defiance, nor will they change into an aggressive mode advocating their ethos of free Irish formation, creating a Deleuzian critical impetus which eventually succeeds in deconstructing the State. As Gilles Deleuze claims in *Desert Islands* (2004), the individual’s desire to form and develop opposes a similar tendency externalized by institutions, namely, power-oriented circles formed by socio-political elites who seek to satisfy their need to dominate and control. The result is the binary of instincts and institutions, each of which is meant to satisfy the desire to independence and self-referential formation. In the post-independence Ireland fictionalized by Doyle, however, such a dichotomy is a creation of the power struggle between the nationalist revolutionaries who have established institutes such as the State which would benefit them by legitimizing their objectives and presence as national projects on the one hand, and radical revolutionaries such as Henry Smart, on the other, who finally decide to deconstruct such illegitimate legitimizations by yielding to their Deleuzian desire to oppose and subvert. For revolutionaries like Henry, “institution like the State [...] does not have a tendency to which it corresponds. But [...] such institutions are secondary: they already presuppose institutionalized behaviours, recalling a derived utility that is properly social” (Deleuze, *Desert Islands* 19).

In *A Star Called Henry* such an ambivalence in the usage and relevance of the State is made obvious as the narrative illustrates how the nativist State transvalues into a power-oriented politicized sub-category, subjecting the revolutionaries and rebels either to other tasks or elimination which further divides the nation, as it transforms into a medium of dominance and control, satisfying the socio-political demands of political elites such as O’Gandúin and other nationalist revolutionaries. For radical revolutionaries like Henry, therefore, such a discriminatory purpose of the State is at odds with what they originally fought for, namely, to liberate the Irish from

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<sup>33</sup> On nationalists exploiting the telos of revolution see Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland: 1900-2000*, London: Profile Books Ltd, 2005, 280-358.

not just imperial but any other form of colonialism. For them, “it is not enough to say ‘the institution is useful,’” as they will ask, “useful for whom? For all those who have needs? Or just for a few (the privileged class)? Or only for those who control the institution?” (Deleuze, *Desert Islands* 20).

In his novel, Doyle provides a stark portrayal of a group of nationalist revolutionaries: a secretive, Janus-faced group of politically conscious businessmen whose only concern was to push their business plans. Mister O’Gandúin, also known as Alfie Gandon, for instance, is initially introduced as an emerging proto-capitalist Irish businessman, making profit by running brothels and controlling sex workers. Doyle’s cartoonish critique of Dublin life reflects the other side of Alfie Gandon: serving revolutionaries and the revolution by eliminating politically or financially unwanted individuals. Although Henry’s father, Henry Smart Sr., had served him well, carrying out his orders perfectly, he eventually fell prey to his employer’s revolutionary politics of transition, and mysteriously disappears as a result. As Ireland witnesses wars, of 1916 and independence, it is revealed that Alfie Gandon has now decided to turn his back on his murderous past, and to appear as a nationalist, supporting what Jonathan Bolton claims as the de Valeran “politics of chastity” and confinement, betraying and then erasing any ideology and revolutionary that either obeyed or defied his vision of Irish Bildung (*Blighted Beginnings* 226).

What Gandon or now O’Gandúin does in the name of nationalism, namely, oppressing anyone who has refused to join their cause, corresponds with Timothy Brennan’s postcolonial hypothesis, critiquing the foundation of the State as an oppressive institution which relegates individual formations to those of the state in its quest for “form” and legitimacy (*The Post-Colonial Studies* 173).<sup>34</sup> Intentional forgetfulness as a product of the State’s politics of containment emerges as one of the most notorious concerns in the history of Ireland, which provides only a selective proportion of what really happened. Henry and his brother Victor along with many other ‘street children’ like Henry fall prey to the same ambiguous, devious historical memory appropriated by the nativist State. As Henry’s narrative progresses, such a politicized consciousness develops to form a national memory glorified by the State and society, initially appearing as a unifying, and religiously moderate perception of independent Irish identity in the formation, which pursues “vindication of the rights of

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<sup>34</sup> See Timothy Brennan, “The National Longing for Form”, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft et al, London: Routledge, 1995.



women”, and stirs any speck of patriotic emotion left in the youth to force them to join their side (*A Star Called Henry* 164). This became the very movement, in other words, that Doyle mocks through a parodic depiction of a politically ambivalent State, which as Bolton claims seeks nothing but to “implement the ideals of an indigenous cultural” Irishness (*Blighted Beginnings* 28).

In the latter part of the novel, depicting the earliest years of the free State Nation, when Henry meets Ivan, his mentee now turned into a formidable nemesis, nationalism simply emerges as a historically selective, and ideologically biased consciousness that either partially forgets or randomly represses. According to Tim Pat Coogan, the Free State in this respect becomes a narrative of “high heroic gradually diminishing into one of old men incapable of leaving, or leading from, positions of power” (*Ireland in Twentieth Century* xi). To maintain such ‘positions of power,’ the State re-enforces its selective memory and engages in sustaining a selected sense of the past, which introduces Irish life as an anachronistic understanding of the nation’s present plights seen in retrospection.<sup>35</sup> As I shall discuss shortly in my reading of Dermot Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter* (1987), such a chronological sense of internal colonialism imposed by the State, which I shall refer to as temporal colonialism, not only failed to unite the nation but contributed to social disintegration and a further partition of the Irish.

To show the nation’s discontent with the State’s fascination with an anachronistic perception of Irish Bildung, Doyle symbolically presents Henry, embodying the non-identitarianism of the youths, deciding to eliminate Alfie Gandon and “kill the past” (*A Star Called Henry* 336). It is the very concept of mistrust that Boyce highlights in *Nationalism in Ireland*, where not just the “new State” but all the revolutionaries “could not even rely on its own forces” (340), leading to another revolution that would “devour its own children” (Mallet du Pan 80).<sup>36</sup> However, in the context of revolution in Ireland, the children of revolution such as Henry, especially as narrated in the last book of the Henry Smart trilogy *The Dead Republic* (2010), subvert the revolution as they get devoured. For Janus-faced nationalists such as Alfie Gandon, for instance, revolutionary concepts such as patriotism, as Boyce argues, emerge as conceptual “enemies of freedom” (*Nationalism in Ireland* 350), thus

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<sup>35</sup> On Irish life and the State’s politics of formation see David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution*, Dublin: Gill&McMillan, 1977, 165-178.

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Mallet de Pan, *Considérations sur la nature de la Révolution de France, et sur les causes qui en prolongent la durée*, Bruxelles: Imprimeur-Libraire, 1973.

demanding to “see the back of” revolutionaries as close to them as Henry or his father, for instance (*A Star Called Henry* 313). In other words, non-conformist revolutionaries such as Henry who felt betrayed by the State’s “stale air” of political vagary, and showed that they have separated their Bildung from the State’s retrospective politics of Irish life, now being regarded as “trouble-makers”, are to be repressed, or in Ivan’s terms “to be rid of them” (*A Star Called Henry* 317). The final result is a flawed appreciation of a national ideal, namely, celebrating freedom in Ireland, marred by the State’s politics of dominance and control, being astutely fictionalized by Doyle through the symbolic birth of Henry’s daughter called Saoirse (Freedom), who was born in the State’s prison.

My argument here is that the post-revolution understanding of Irish life on the one hand, and the Irish perception of Bildung on the other were so intense, interconnected and at the same time different that they not only changed the founding principles of postcolonial Irish identity, revolution and socio-political independence but allowed the Irish to see the other dimension of politically conscious groups and leaders. For instance, the original meaning underlying the concept of Sinn Fein, namely, ‘we ourselves’, was about how an Irish spirit of unity would bring together apolitical people from street urchins like Henry and his generation to farmers and librarians and change them into a politically radical crowd and give them the courage to fight an 800-year-old threat to “get rid of the English”, to “take over everything” and act “like they’re not even here”; and to have hope “that things ... would be different. That it was in [their] hands. [They] could change the world” (*A Star Called Henry* 179, 127).

Doyle’s sharp-witted critique of post-Easter Rising Ireland problematizes how post-revolutionary dialectical discourse of formation was built on the same oppressive rules that rebels and revolutionaries once tried to subvert. Concepts such as social “absurdity” and political “callousness”, in this respect, make the foci of his critique, attacking an internal variation of socio-cultural colonialism, which “set Irishman against Irishman” (*A Star Called Henry* 179, 182). Under such an oppressive political consciousness, as Henry recounts even “being Irish was becoming seditious” (*A Star Called Henry* 186). For the State, rebels and revolutionaries were the same: “nameless and expendable” (*A Star Called Henry* 208). For meta-nationalist revolutionaries such as Henry, such a perception of formation is not only identarian but also a variation of colonial subjugation whereby the Irish have substituted the British to subjugate the

Irish. The Nationalist ethos, I suggest, transforms into a paranoiac psychological colonialism that resulted in further oppression and normalization.

Doyle's parodic characterization of non-conformist rebels such as Henry reveals how the State had become so paranoid that they needed to contain "their betters, and that means virtually everybody they encounter[ed] outside of their own tight circle. It's the result of hundreds of years of colonialism" (*A Star Called Henry* 218). As Boyce argues, what Doyle recalls as nationalist paranoia was in fact nothing but nationalism "thriving on the glamour of the physical force" and tradition, becoming a hollow glamour which is more about control and dominance than rootedness (*Nationalism in Ireland* 346). Ironically enough, Henry explains such a dichotomous formation as "looking for a strange mix of man – dissident and slave, a man who was quick with his brain and an eejit" (*A Star Called Henry* 240).

### Radical Meta-national Formations and Apologist Anti-Nationalism in Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault*

To discuss the other dimension of Irish formation during the Irish wars, I shall examine William Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault* (2002), an apologetic novel of formation, which centres on extreme concepts vis-à-vis the nationalist and anti-nationalist sense of formation. The novel, despite its antithetical engagement with concepts such as revolution and revolutionaries, provides a lucid understanding of rebels and revolutionaries such as Ivan and Henry, respectively, and their significance in the deformation of the nation, especially the youths.

Lucy Gault, daughter of a Captain Gault, finds herself abandoned as her parents leave Ireland for England, a compulsory exile which occurs as a result of her father opening fire at rebels, and injuring one of them, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 1921, a hectic time of national turmoil and formation. Despite the thematically apologetic nature of the novel,<sup>37</sup> leaving a girl with Anglo-Irish roots behind, severing any hope

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<sup>37</sup> The novel is incessantly apologetic as it subtly introduces the revolution, revolutionaries and the rebels as the actual reason behind Lucy's traumatic formation. For Trevor, it seems, Ireland could be better off its own, without the trauma experienced by revolutionaries and caused by wars of independence. This is an apologetic perspective that Peter Beresford Ellis tackles in "Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing" in *Irish Democrats*:  
<http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/bookshop/publications/revisionism/>.

of support, and letting her face her worst socio-economic nightmares when the nation is burning with anger at anything British, Trevor successfully portrays rebels and their narrative of unbecoming, resulting in a depiction that closely mimics Doyle's description of rebels such as Ivan and their narrative of negative formation. According to Trevor, rebels make the very force that thrust the nation into a socio-historical oblivion, and made the glorious past look like "the enemy in Ireland" (*The Story* 10). While Trevor's protagonist finds rebels and revolutionaries as the source of stasis and retrospection, I argued earlier in my reading of *A Star Called Henry* that it was nationalists who deviated from the very path of formation set by the revolution by developing a politically selective memory, which concealed the past and showed it only partially.

Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault* portrays a third dimension in the conception of formation advocated by nationalists: a unionist rebellion which neither accepted nor condemned the radicalism of meta-nationalists and rebels and the wars of independence. For Lucy, the past still holds rich memories of intellectual and social development, when the O'Connellite gentle politics of formation,<sup>38</sup> compared to revolutionaries' radical principles, were the factors influencing the telos of Irish Bildung. In Lucy's retrospective stance, therefore, the present, imbued with war and chaos, holds nothing but "unrest, one that amounted to war" (Trevor 3). For Lucy, in addition, revolutionaries were just as subversive as Ivan's rebellious gang who were to control the island for their own benefit. Under such hegemonic circumstances and temporal oblivion, formation too transforms into an amalgamation of "only confusion and contradiction" (Trevor 27). For the fundamental cultural values, or in Sandra Joireman's terms "primordialism", on which social union and individual formations are established suddenly appear to be in conflict with Lucy's unionist and potentially nativist perception of Bildung (*Nationalism* 18).

According to Joireman, primordialism is the very concept on which a society builds its pattern of formation,<sup>39</sup> contributing to the formation of the individuals within that society. In the context of Irish formation, the element that leads to Irish primordialism is produced as a romanticization of a bygone, family-oriented Celtic history merged with a mythologized conception of Celtic art. Such a concept,

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<sup>38</sup> On Daniel O'Connell's politics see Fintan Cullen, *Visual Politics: The Representation of Ireland 1750-1930*, Cork University Press, 1997; and Maurice O'Connell, *Daniel O'Connell: The Man and His Politics*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990.

<sup>39</sup> See Sandra Joireman, *Nationalism and Political Identity*, London: Continuum, 2003.

considering the chaos of independence and modernization, proves to be not only impossible but also inefficient, for the resulted variation of individualism will at once lack any sense of belonging and relation to the harsh realism of post-war Ireland.<sup>40</sup> Lucy's perception of post-independence reality, in this respect, emerges as a flawed sublimated longing for the re-emergence of Celtic culture and nineteenth-century definition of Bildung, wherein family, education, culture and social mobility play an irrevocable role. The result, therefore, is a dichotomous ambiguity in her accepting the reality. For instance, although she regards intellectual maturation pivotal to any sense of Bildung, Ireland's anti-colonial, war-trodden reality in the 1920s proves intellectualism as a failed quality. According to Fintan O'Toole, intellectual formation in light of Free Staters' definition of Bildung, "proved very bad at constructing a broader ideology in which the state would support the artists and the artists would support the state" (*The Ex-Isle of Erin* 96). In other words, as intellectualism and the concomitant form of Bildung failed to develop under the rule of Free Staters, so did the Irish appreciation of the fundamentals of nationalism and national Bildung. The result, in this respect, is an even wider divide between the labyrinthine layers of Irish society, and a sharp disillusionment with nativist norms. This is where Captain Gault, after accidentally abandoning her daughter, finds her Irish heritage, namely, defending family and the motherland, in contradiction with the post-independence reality of rebellion and self-induced exile, as he is depicted "[standing] alone... cursing himself, cursing the ancestors who in their prosperity had built a house in this place" (Trevor 33).

Formation, as Trevor depicts, is nothing but "regret" and "empty consolation" (Trevor 33), an unceremonious maturation, which finds "hopeful speculation" as its discourse, and time as its "enemy", so did Lucy, Ralph, and Lucy's parents, Gerard and Heloise (Trevor 34, 10). Ironically, however, while revolutionaries and rebels force Lucy's parents to leave Ireland amidst chaos and war, contributing to the disintegration of her family, and thus standing out as mischievous, it was they who make *The Story of Lucy Gault* a novel of formation, albeit emotionally poignant and categorically a traumatic variation.<sup>41</sup> Lucy's narrative, nevertheless, is not a novel of formation, but rather a narrative of disintegration and deformation, as it narrates not

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<sup>40</sup> By impossible I refer to Baudrillard's description of a plausible social reciprocity between social demands and individual formations. See Jean Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange*, 37-77.

<sup>41</sup> On trauma as the leading drive in the modern novel of formation see Robert F. Garratt, *Trauma and History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011, 45-63.

just the fall of O'Connellite principles but also the deformation of national and individual perception of formation. The fall of the "new Irish Free State" and war were what made unionists such as Lucy at once feel triumphant and dispirited, for in their eyes revolution, nationalism and independence were nothing but great mistakes that rendered "exile part of" the Irish (Trevor 80). For Lucy, formation as experienced by revolutionaries such as Henry, Ivan and other street children who came to set their house on fire, equals to being "troubled" and mad (Trevor 95). Although Trevor's unionist disposition deserves further examination, especially when reviewing Ivan's appreciation of Irishness, questioning Irish non-identarianism most prevalent in Henry's rite of passage will result in the reemergence of the Kiberdian concept of internal colonialism and Coogan's "positions of power" (*Ireland in Twentieth Century* xi). Under such chaotic and hegemonic circumstances Trevor's Lucy finds herself neglected not just by her parents but by anyone who shares her incongruous, retrospective mentality, and who "entreat[s] you to give a little company to a young girl who lacks the company of her own generation" (Trevor 94). To withdraw from such a conundrum, Lucy, as the narrative unfolds, indulges in a self-induced solipsism, a world into which only those whom she approves can be admitted, otherwise she would continue inventing and reinventing her romanticized variation of a Gaelic republicanism, and "ideals of pre-industrial, sectarian, family-based culture" (Bolton 29).

Trevor's novel is most interesting, I would argue, for the apologetic dialogism it introduces as the true Irish dialectical discourse of formation; this is a discourse that not only did not break away from the stasis caused by war and revolution but further engaged with a consciousness of paralysis by romanticizing individualism and *Bildung* inasmuch as they appear as mere reflections of an archaic definition. Lucy's romantic perception of formation does not even correspond with nationalists' retrospective variation of *Bildung*; rather, it emerges as a severely anachronistic personal consciousness that builds *Bildung* only on romanticized recollections of family and the motherland. To be able to continue, Lucy "must make do with memories"; for to a traumatized, abandoned person like Lucy, who has been obviated not only emotionally but socially and professionally by her generation, "memories can be everything if we choose to make them so" (Trevor 119).

Representing the sectarian division among the Irish in the 1920s, Lucy and her house servants emerge as those whose sense of formation has been subordinated by

the deformation rather than the formation of the state. Her perception of Bildung, in this respect, appears as a microcosmic formation whose aspirations were subordinated by the repressiveness of the macrocosm, namely, the state. As a result, Lucy's 'hopeful speculations' are limited to what I shall call as the *future in retrospect*, and her formation will reflect romanticization of an anti-nationalist Bildung, namely, that which involuntarily opposes the State's oppressive politics of formation. Lucy's understanding of formation perhaps best resonates with the Yeatsian perception of Irish formation, which allows for changes to take place yet conservatively reminds the masses of their bygone Celtic cultural heritage.

For youths such as Lucy, modernism and modernity appear as a vague and meaningless concept that can be ignored. The only thematically lasting concept reverberating in Lucy's mind, in this respect, is neither nationalist formation nor modern Irishness resistance, thematic binaries that dominate the novels produced in the 1920s and 30s. Rather negating independent formations, nationally and individually, and reconsidering possibilities of a union with the origin, namely, Britain manifests itself the very motive behind Lucy's symbolic formation:

Was it not likely that the hiatus in her parents' lives had run its course, that six years of war, and the peace that had come, were enough to bring them back to an Ireland in which there had been change also, which had itself been peaceful for generation? (Trevor 137).

Trevor's engagement with the concept of formation in *The Story of Lucy Gault*, ironically hints at the other dimension of anti-nationalist Bildung, where formation at once appears un-Irish, non-nationalist and indentarian. Bildung, in other words, becomes an anti-nationalist, though apologetic, socio-political impetus invented by Trevor first to symbolically apologize for what British and Irish did to one another, resulting in a damaged form of Irish formation embodied by rebels such as Ivan in *A Star Called Henry* and the unnamed young rebel who started Lucy's disillusioned formation; and second to highlight the dehumanization of Irish values and romantic Celtic republicanism caused by the revolution, independence, and revolutionary rebels from 1916 to the 1940s. Finally, by hinging on the destructiveness of war, justifying the nationalist retrospective mentality, or in Lucy's words: "what strangers made of past events was influenced in the present by the observation of a lonely life" (Trevor 138).

In *The Story of Lucy Gault*, Bildung is introduced as a bohemian concept that has dominated Lucy's understanding of life, resulting in a protagonist who struggles with not only social but psychological dichotomies. In spite of her fragile façade marginalized by social and ethnic unfairness, for instance, Lucy emerges as a protagonist who has resisted social integration by limiting her psychological formation to fragmented dialogues with a selected number of people such as the maids in the mansion and her very close friends. It is the same resistant variation of Bildung that can be found in Roddy Doyle's depiction of Henry Smart, creating characters who defy post-colonial social subjectivism by transforming into independent and at the same time antiauthoritarian individuals. However, Lucy's traumatized childhood appears as the other element that further complicates the concept of Bildung in her narrative of formation, resulting in a static, despotically retrospective formation which follows neither Henry's radical, antiauthoritarian progressiveness nor nationalists' political historicization of their Celtic heritage. Lucy's conception of formation, in other words, is a hybrid of anti-nationalist sentiments which defied the State's retrograde definition of Irishness, and the Yeatsian revivalism which sought re-construction and independence; this emerges as a dichotomous formation, being rooted in at once identarian and non-identarian Irish identity, which was bound to fail, as did nationalists' and revivalists' perception of national identity.<sup>42</sup>

An unsystematic engagement with the process of Bildung poses as the other element that enabled Trevor to critique the nation's fragmented and multifaceted process of independence, postist colonial tendencies, and a vague image of national Bildung. Lucy's narrative not only does not follow the systematic pattern of formation, which captures the protagonist's stable and continuous psychosocial maturation, but by maintaining a narratorial silence on Lucy's childhood and how she has survived the harsh reality of street life the narrative treats the nation's history of formation and independence as a pardonable, if not ignorable, proxy. For instance, although the novel centres on Lucy's isolated formation and devaluation of Bildung, the narrative illustrates her father experiencing other phases of formation such as leaving his home, which in his case is exile: a latent rite of passage, by moving from

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<sup>42</sup> As Boyce notes Yeats and de Valéra emerge as the two most notable socio-political leaders whose anomalous perception of national Bildung ended fruitlessly. See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 325-370.



one country to another while contemplating on his national cultural heritage at a very late age; mentorship, in Captain Gault's case the mentor appears as his dying, English wife, Heloise; and finally, the inevitable return to his origin, and coming to terms with a rough and unforgiving past, which for unionists like Captain Gault is unfortunate and unfruitful.

Such a formulaic and belated rite of passage, however, only happens to Lucy's father while Lucy remains intact and still socially isolated pondering over the apparent differences, sympathizing with her Celtic ancestors and her defunct principles. Although such a change in the process of formation initially might appear as just a stylistic revolution, I argue that Trevor's dialogical apologetics originally were intended for something more important than a literary artistry. I argue that such misplacement in the process of formation in Trevor's novel not only illustrates the failed mechanics of Irish revolutions and independence, by portraying a decayed foundation of family, society and economic relations under the autonomy of Free Staters but intelligently strives to restore the pre-revolution values, namely, the Victorian ideals of the novel of formation, which Franco Moretti argues are no longer functional after the second world war.<sup>43</sup> These ideals regard national and individual achievements and loss as parts of one solid chain reaction, wherein failure of one side will lead the whole ecosystem towards deformation and failure. Therefore, a chaotic and failed society will affect the individual's psycho-social formation, and the novel, as a vehicle for national and individual expression, will transform into a negative site of criticism, as did Lucy's narrative. As Bolton explains, while "the development of the individual is dependent on the workings of the Free State government", I argue that modern self-formation is hardly society-oriented (*Blighted Beginnings* 28); for the protagonist as well as the text that narrates their formation emerge as clear opponents of social subjectivism that can be witnessed in the novels of formation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The modern Irish novel of formation, in this respect, engages with the Deleuzean understanding of the relationship between the State and the organism's instinct, in which the State as a representation of institution fails to justify its existence while the organism's will to satisfaction and *Bildung* appears as the only pertinent reason behind the subject's formation and transformation.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*, 229.

<sup>44</sup> On the clash between organism's *will to power* and development and the State's politics of oppression see Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Island*, 18-21.

The modern Irish *Bildungshelden* emerge as radical, independent narratorial reservoirs who refuse to share their perception of post-colonial, nationalist reality with any other sub-narrative of Irish realism, be it national or cultural. Trevor's novel, however, emerges as a resistant form that endeavours to dilute such modern patterns by matching the national losses with individual deformations, and by blaming anything un-Celtic, such as Irish modernism, revolution and especially revolutionaries, for the apparent national disunity, individual fragmentation and division.

Trevor ends Lucy's unconventional rite of passage by emphasizing what she could not achieve and be, rather than what she did and could do to change her perception of post-independence reality, being "used to being different as she was to feeling alone, [...] respected for what she was, not belonging" (Trevor 209). Trevor's critique of psychosocial exile manifested in Lucy's isolation revisits nostalgia as a psychological pattern of formation that dominated not only revolutionaries' and rebels' perception of postist reality but also the youths', as "all the three of them [were] remembering how years ago this, too, had been the other way around" (Trevor 202). Her *Bildung*, in this respect, can be read as a psychosocial paralysis that resonates with a Beckettian dramatization of post-independence Irish stasis,<sup>45</sup> in which the voice of Lucy will remain as an unknown, post-colonial Irish subject, who finds herself to be a "nobody for eternity" (Beckett, *The Unnamable* 72).

After Lucy completes her static rite of formation, which takes her as far as only different rooms in their mansion, she finds herself a deserted individual who can live only retrospectively with no contribution towards her changing surroundings, for she is neither a radical nor a revolutionary, or in Lucy's own words someone whose only possession was "oblivion" (Trevor 222). Despite her internal intellectualism, she finds herself silent towards the dynamism of the without, as for her "everything's long ago now" (Trevor 174). Her story emerges as a mere echo of a Beckettian voice of isolation and internal exile in *The Unnamable* (1953), bearing nothing to relate her to her society, "de nobis ipsis silemus" [we can say nothing about ourselves], which clearly obviates the Fenian axiom of 'we ourselves' (329). Instead of challenging placelessness and her identarian rootlessness, Lucy indulges in a self-induced, internal exile to find her individuality and role in her formation, and forgets society as an

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<sup>45</sup> See Mark Quigley, *Empire's Wake: Postcolonial Irish Writing and The Politics of Modern Literary Form*, Fordham University Press, 2012.

influential factor; this is when “oblivion” and “exile” as she recounts becomes “an inmate’s last, [...] sole, possession” and “part of [her]” (Trevor 222, 80).<sup>46</sup>

It is the same state of oblivion that defies the “chronologocentrism” of the State’s nativist definition of Irishness (Maley 34), and plunges the modern Irish Bildungshelden into a chronologically contradictory perception of their sense of being and rootedness, forming “a reality that will not last is not meant to” (Trevor 115). Such a chronologically displaced rootlessness manifests itself as a temporal vagueness, magnified by the State’s politics of forgetfulness, which I shall examine in my reading of Dermot Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter*, and Seamus Deane’s *Reading in the Dark*.

### Meta-National Irishness in Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter*: Against the State’s Politics of Oblivion and Formation

Dermot Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter* (1987) can be read as an exemplar of modern Irish narratives that resisted the concept of nativist, linear Irishness: a nationalist concept imposed by the State that strived to join the historical, Celtic Irishness with its modern variation, and repress anything else that would stand between such extremes. The novel reads as a narrative that combines the inevitable uncertainties of transition from colonial to postcolonial to modern, pluralist Ireland with doubts over those to keep and those to let go after such an extreme socio-cultural shift. During such a transition, however, the Irish had to face not only the chaos of independence and national formation but also a radical generation of Irish youth who sought formation in self-centrism and self-referentiality such as Henry and Ivan as examined in *A Star Called Henry*. These formed a generation that helped the Irish defy decades of nationalist lethargic formation, and question the feasibility of a Celtic Bildung, while preparing the nation to embark on a modern to postmodern transitional perception of reality. The result obviously was not a ludic dialogical discourse of formation, as Smyth puts it, for the nation “was bound to... confuse [...] what was worth hanging onto” (*The Novel* 79). The nation eventually embraced modern and

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<sup>46</sup> In contrast to the concept that regards exile as the “nursery of nationality”. See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 2.

thus un-Irish concepts, albeit belated and untimely; and incorporated non-identarianism in the form of dysfunctional family and deformation in its narratives of national and individual formations, stigmatizing them as byproducts of modernity and the partition, albeit psychologically.<sup>47</sup>

Bolger's novel emerges as a historically conscious memory, which narrates an on-going process of psychological colonialism imposed by the State and society on the youths caught between the dichotomy of the State's selective memory and an un-Irish perception of a new Ireland and Irish identity advocated by radicals and revolutionaries such as Henry. The binary of 'old and new', in other words, appears as the very concern of not only Bolger's novel, which serves as a conscious example, but the modern Irish novel in general.<sup>48</sup> It transformed into a concern which raised questions on various levels, for instance regarding the authenticity of the nationalist State's manifesto, revolutionaries' radical principles of formation, the reasons behind national disillusionment with the State, and finally the displacement of the Irish population after submitting, albeit largely involuntary, to the State's politics of national and individual formation.<sup>49</sup>

Bolger's socio-historically interrogative, tripartite novel begins with an astute illustration of such dichotomies by quoting P. W. Joyce and James Joyce, examining the contradictoriness embedded in the basics of Irishness such as the perception of *finn* and *Revulet*, as used by "so many old authorities" (*The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places* 272).<sup>50</sup> According to P. W. Joyce *finn*, as in *finn-glais*, or in James Joyce's terms *Finglass*, refers to once a "relicts of Conal O'Daniel" and a transparent, "little stream" that brings unity (*The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places* 272). Bolger's treatment of *finn*, however, introduces his novel as a narrative that is produced to highlight the dichotomous air of traditionalism and modern Irishness: "there is a city of the dead standing sentinel across from her window. Through the gully between them a swollen rivulet is frothing over smooth rocks

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<sup>47</sup> The partitioned Ireland not only damaged the socio-economics of the island but also left an irreparable psychological scar on the younger generation, seeing their families and friends suddenly separated. See Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes*, 25-54.

<sup>48</sup> On the binary of 'old and new' Ireland see Willard Potts, *Joyce and the Two Ireland*, University of Texas Press, 2010; also see Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, Dublin: Profile Books Ltd, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> See Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, Dublin: Profile Books Ltd, 2005, 64, 125, 700-702.

<sup>50</sup> See P. W. Joyce, *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, Dublin: Phoenix Publishing co, [http://archive.org/stream/irishnamesofplac02joycuoft/irishnamesofplac02joycuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/irishnamesofplac02joycuoft/irishnamesofplac02joycuoft_djvu.txt). Also see James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, London: 20<sup>th</sup>-century Penguin, 1999 625.

brimming with the effervescent waste of factories” (*The Woman’s Daughter* 3). Bolger’s revelation is not limited to such socio-ecological contradictions of ‘the old and the new,’ as he provides a stylistic critique of how such a stasis has damaged the life of the Irish, “broken glass in the car-park dreams of tyres” (*The Woman’s Daughter* 3). As the narrative continues, Bolger’s dramatization of post-independence Ireland changes into a stylistic critique that negates the nationalist shibboleths of having a nation live in a retrospective future. *The Woman’s Daughter*, in this respect, transforms into an expressive vehicle that ridicules, albeit at times realistic and thus poignant, the grotesquery of nationalist principles, and, as Smyth puts it, “caricatures [the] empty tokens” of the post-independence Ireland under the rule of Free Staters, a period that “exploit[ed] a false past and a corrupt present” (*The Novel* 78).

The first narrative begins by portraying a young girl, “suppressed” by a traditionalist perception of womanhood and “childhood”, whose incestuous relationship with her older, irresponsible, and principally radical brother, Johnny, ends in an unexpected pregnancy and a baby, and simultaneously her psychological decline (*The Woman’s Daughter* 9). The only notable feature of his brother remains to be his rebellion against their father, defying his authoritative and symbolically nationalist father. The narrative of the female protagonist – Sandra, whose name appears only once and haphazardly – is told retrospectively, providing her with a non-temporal leeway to cross the conventions of the novel of formation and reside in shreds of memories. Retrospection, in other words, appears as the only mode of narration available to not only Sandra but all other characters, who share a similar perception of formation under the autocratic command of the State. In fact it is her “chain of memories [that] sustain her” urban, female presence in a past-oriented, masculine world dominated by nationalists’ postist, retrograde ideology (Bolger 13).

This is the very conservative understanding of Irish development that regarded Ireland as an “essentially rural and agricultural country”, discarding the city-dwellers and urban life as “an alien subculture with no place in the national imagination” (Smyth 76). By dwelling on her stream of memories, Sandra similar to Lucy in *The Story of Lucy Gault*, strives to maintain a sense of identity and belonging that although appears ex post facto and therefore ineffectual, allows them to find a point of relevance in time and history of the land. For Sandra, time and temporality have lost their identarian, social subjectivism, and in themselves transform into irrelevant concepts that belong to the past. Such anachronism and non-temporality in perceiving

formation make the founding elements in the modern Irish Bildungsroman, and introduce the genre to be founded on a state of formlessness that opposes the ‘chronologocentrism’ of not only its postist variations but also its British and German origin. In other words, in a society that does not recognize the failures of its oppressive principles, and functions only retroactively, time emerges as a luxury of modernity and urban life, concepts neither of which are understandable under the State’s politics of forgetfulness. However, not all Sandra’s memories reference the past positively and as a socio-cultural point of departure. Rather, Bolger’s critical approach emerges as a negative dialectics and changes such mental flashbacks into a negative site of historical criticism, attacking the State’s selective memory: “there are stories with nobody left to remember: of smallpox and cholera secreted in the breath of children..., and of the headland where two streams met at the forest edge” (*The Woman’s Daughter* 17).

Bolger’s description of society and people, raises one notable fact: such a society does not need corrupt radicals such as Ivan to break the city into irrecoverable pieces, for it is already a ghost land that “grew inward in ignorance and fear” of being further oppressed (*The Woman’s Daughter* 31). According to Smyth, it is an urban life that is ignored by nativists and “inhabited by morally bankrupt authority figures”, and people who seek progress by dwelling on the ghost of once notable ruins of the cross (*The Novel and the Nation* 82); and memories that as Bolger argues are “forgotten now of course, [and] nobody ... is interested in those things” anymore (*The Woman’s Daughter* 34).

While the story of Sandra barely adds anything new to the canvas of Irish urban life, exploring the pathos of individual deformation and social isolation, Bolger presents her story in a radically non-sequential chronology, which not only reduces the significance of Bildung and time but ridicules the relevance of such concepts under the oppressive authority of The State. The narrative, therefore, loses its narratorial tempo and relevance as a vehicle for revelation, and emerges instead as musings of an ‘inwardly growing’ voice that presents its narrative in broken, suspenseful tone, simply to disintegrate the chaotic postist reality and yield more safety, “like being in the womb again, all black and safe, all loved and warm” (Bolger 22).

Non-linearity, in this respect, manifests itself as a genuine form for the Irish voice, rather than a variation of a style. By indulging in a chronologically

disorganized pattern of narration, Sandra at once can chase the “ghost of [her] dead dreams” and assign herself a point of social relevance in her history of formation, and be able to identify with her past, which in her case is a lamentable childhood (Smyth 82). Moreover, such temporal escapism and ‘to and fro,’ presented in intensely crisscrossed chronological dimensions of the novel, I argue contributes to a sublimated form of social resistance, defying at once and the same time a nativist cultural revivalism and the nationalist politics of forgetfulness and oppression.

Sandra, Johnny and other characters in the next two parts of Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter*, all emerge as stock characters whose sense of social mobility and cultural dynamism have ceased to flourish as the static ‘bog’ of nationalism versus modernism engulfs the nation. By losing herself and narrative in such a to and fro, Sandra, symbolically representing the Irish, not only negates the nationalist retrospective principles but also challenges modernity as a concept experienced by the nation’s immediate neighbour, Britain. The result she seeks, despite its socio-cultural incongruity, is an Irish form of modernism, which has been in the making since the Rising:

Nobody lives on the main street any more, the car-park of the vast, guarded shopping centre covers the site of the last few cottages and the post office. Graffiti on the high wall of the lane proclaim Bob Marley’s immortality, lovers pledge themselves with aerospray cans and illicit armies canvass support (Bolger 49).

To find her voice, Sandra similar to Trevor’s Lucy utilizes a radical narratorial structure, namely a chronologically disorganized role-playing, identifying at once with her childhood and adolescence; and engages with an internal restlessness in the form of ‘to and fro’ which references an on-going internal sense of colonialism, the potential to live retrospectively and perceive present reality through the lens of cultural and ethnic stereotypes. The ‘to and fro’ targets the nationalist State’s politics of chastity and retrospection on the one hand, and the non-identarian aspirations of the youths on the other, forming a dialogical binary which manifests itself in Sandra’s fragmented narrative of (de-) formation. While she longs for a pre-industrial perception of family, she is, like other Bildungshelden, enamoured with the non-identarian glamour of modernity. Although she finds herself embittered by the ignorance of her fellow citizens towards their cultural heritage – as in ignoring ‘the cross’ or ‘the ruins’ or seeing graffiti on walls, she finds herself fascinated by the possibility of seeing “Brigitte Bardot in *A Very Private Affair*” in a local cinema, or

listening to a rock hit single “Rock Around the Clock”, despite the non-Irish roots of the music (Bolger 49).

To escape the nativists’ oppressive politics of formation, Sandra shows interest in the modern un-Irish world that lives only beyond the limiting boundaries of the State, and identifies with a modern perspective of reality, in which her identity is perceived as a self-referential pattern of formation that disregards society and social integration. However, while embracing modern Irishness her narrative clashes with her traditionalist background and thus emerges guilty of completely denouncing the Irish life, and thus surrenders to the aforementioned ‘to and fro.’ As the story reaches closure, her relation with her newly born daughter reveals to be as inconsistent as her erratic social and psychological behaviourism, as in “one moment she held her like a prize and the next she wanted to kill her” (Bolger 76). Her narrative remains authoritatively successful in hiding the identity of her daughter, creating a fictional matrix which symbolically introduces her unnamed daughter as the younger generation of Irish people, who were given an unceremonious birth during the war-trodden 1920s. As I shall examine in the following chapters, Sandra’s daughter will make the backbone of a new resistant generation of youths who finally succeeded in subverting the State’s parochialism, leading the nation towards modern Irishness and pluralism of the 1960s and 1970s.

Bolger’s engagement with revolution and revolutionaries, I argue, results in a demythologized characterization of Johnny, a radical, non-conformist young man who seeks formation in a self-induced perception of reality. Throughout the novel, Johnny appears as a recurrent character, who heralds disillusionment with retrospective governments – personified as Sandra’s father, the girl’s autocratic grandmother in the second part of the novel, and the ignorant people, in the third novel, to whom Irishness means nothing but only a geographical coexistence. It is Johnny’s Yeatsian heroism that forces authoritarian characters into an abyss of isolation, mistrust, and (social) separation. A “strong and defiant” rebel, Johnny’s only influence on other characters representing the Irish at large, is to allow them to find their non-identarian side of existence, and to ‘think in contradiction’: “Johnny seemed to be right that we were free, there was no longer anything to believe in, and yet the secret gnawed like a cancer inside me” (Bolger 64). He, I suggest, can be read as the only postist character in the novel who defies the nationalist patriarchy, belittles identarian norms, and embarks on his path of formation by accepting a self-induced exile, that is leaving his



father's home, and going to a clichéd destination, London: "the children of the estate were growing up and finding jobs [...] or waiting [...] for the boat train. All the way to London [...]" chanting "you'll never go back" (Bolger 60).

As the narrative unfolds, Bolger remodels Johnny to illustrate the sudden change in popularity and acceptability of revolutionaries such as Johnny, Henry in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*; this is a change that, as Boyce notes, suddenly rendered rebels as "the enemies of freedom" (*Nationalism in Ireland* 350). After an unexpected appearance at his father's house, Johnny is introduced as a "timid, hesitant young man stripped of all childhood bravado" (Bolger 72). To non-revolutionaries, therefore, non-conformism and resistance emerge as negligible concepts that as Bolger highlights resonate with immature, 'childhood bravado.'

The radical transition from "a city of the dead" as depicted in the first page of the novel to a childish bravado (*The Woman's Daughter* 3), chaos, national mistrust, ignorance, dominance of the politics of forgetfulness, and again to a bohemian re-emergence of "a city of the dead", evokes a stark imagery that was used in the beginning of the revolution by proto-modernists, especially George Moore, warning the Irish of the reappearance of a culture of stasis under parochial dominance and nationalist conservatism (*The Woman's Daughter* 91).<sup>51</sup> It is the same provocative imagery that heralds paralysis by the same internal, spontaneous force, namely the State's parochial provincialism which has promised to award the Irish at once freedom and isolation. "Death is only when growth stands still", claims the voice, reminding the Irish of the stasis caused by a confrontational perception of modernity by the nationalist State (Bolger 92). "To pass into light," the voice continues, discarding the State's retrograde politics of formation and regarding it as a "sentimental invention" (Smyth 83); and reminds the Irish that "to [be] open to change" and "to burn on in slow decay [...] is to be born again" (Bolger 92).

Bolger's engagement with the binary of nationalism and Irish modernism continues in the last two narratives in *The Woman's Daughter*, depicting the Irish, especially the young generation such as Sandra's unnamed girl, still stuck in a paralyzing dichotomy. The youths, in this respect, find themselves as though "torn

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<sup>51</sup> In *Esther Waters* George Moore provides a culture of stasis, socio-political corruption, and subordination of women. His notable reference to such an inclusive culture of paralysis manifests itself when the first page and the last page of his narrative, covering a vast 18-year of change, are reproduced with exactly the same words and style, hinting at a static Irish society which continues to ignore anything non-identarian, be it women and their forgotten rights or an improper sense of formation.

between worlds like a hare caught by hounds”, a generation fed up with traditional backwardness, and who “want[s] to forget as much as [they] need to remember” (Bolger 98). For them Bildung, however, is the only concept that has been granted a new definition, becoming a defining criterion that, for instance, no longer finds usurping a land a genuine aspect of national formation. While they remain self-referential and inherently self-centred, they appear as a radical generation with an obsession to learn and develop their other side by “knowing the path [they] will take, the other me that [they] will become – younger, with an obsessive hunger”, as notes the voice, emphasizing a growing hunger for a more feasible sense of Bildung (Bolger 98). For these non-conformist Bildungshelden, the past, for instance an ancient cemetery in Bolger’s second story, “has been bulldozed to make space” for the new Ireland (*The Woman’s Daughter* 98), and “new possibilities” (O’Faolain 91). They also find the State’s vision of an agrarian Ireland alien and absurd, as for them it “[i]s hard to imagine anybody wanting to live at that halfway point between the city and nowhere” (Bolger 102).

While for the provincialist State “recognizing contradiction as the basis of society” is a traumatic experience, the non-conformist youths establish their self-formation on such dichotomous socio-political imbalances, embracing non-identarianism as the only practical means that would lead them out of the dominant politics of paralysis (Knight 32).<sup>52</sup> As Bolger argues, for this young generation of radical revolutionaries such as Johnny, classical pedagogical discourse is either inefficient or plainly dated, even though they like Henry Smart find betterment in attending schools: “we need to better ourselves” (*A Star Called Henry* 70). For them, “the outline of Latin and Greek”, though sophisticated and elegant, were only part of a game, “an exercise to lend a veneer of sophistication to the stark, pure power” of those with money (Bolger 104, 125). This emphasizes the modern perception of Bildung, in which the protagonist is shown to have only learned bureaucratic and technical skills, rather than aesthetico-spiritual skills. In other words, by learning the modern Irish protagonist only seeks to survive the cruel temporal dynamics of the street, so did Henry and Ivan. The modern Irish bildungshelden, therefore, either had to be “strong and good at thieving” like Henry and other street children of 1916, or educate themselves on how to take advantage of their bureaucratic skills of their own

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<sup>52</sup> On contradiction as the basis of society see Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong’s Thought*, London: Lexington Book, 2007.

accord: “I knew who I was going to be, the boy who had run to meet the Devil” (Bolger 106).

Johnny, a recurring name with similar radical attributes, appears in the second part of the novel at once as an exemplar of modern, meta-national Irishness with not only a proper understanding of Bildung but also a radical consciousness that even doubts the bureaucratic skills of their 1916 predecessors. Johnny’s non-conformist and thus un-Irish perception of time and progress, such as “we live in an age of science and change”, appears as a radical continuation of a pro-modern ideology of change, which was advocated by early nationalists but subdued by their fierce conservatism (Bolger 110).<sup>53</sup> The divide between radicals such as Johnny and Henry and nationalists such as Dillon and especially de Valéra widens when the latter espouses conservative unity and normalization, and the former’s perception of modern reality flourishes, further transforming them into an unknown and forcing them to assume that they “belonged to no one, stripped of the hungers of [their] class and given ones no feast could satisfy” (Bolger 120).

To keep their rebellious “destiny free”, Johnny recognizes that “work, money, women” and all the ideological boundaries designed by nationalists were nothing but “traps” (Bolger 133). This is a critical moment not only in the formation of the modern meta-nation Irishness but also in the development of the modern Irish novel of formation to illustrate the dominant postist reality. After Johnny makes such a revelatory comment, not only his narrative but also the one that finishes Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter* changes into mythologized sites of criticism by presenting two different kinds of reality, as in real and mythic, nationalist and anti-nationalist, resulting in a dichotomous combination, in which the latter, by indulging in an Irish mythic sub-text strives to overthrow the “humdrum text” of the former (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 311). Formation, in this respect, fades into its theoretical framework and loses its significance as a viable concept. In contrast, however, dramatization of the concept of formation, mostly radical and negative, emerges as the only possible type of formation that can survive the nationalist hyper-realism of parochial patriarchy, deceitfulness, mistrust and stasis. The result is a counter-narrative that was envisaged by proto-modern Irish writers such as George Moore, who argues if “reality can

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<sup>53</sup> Although John Dillon in his 1898 speech advocates changing the conservative measures of the nationalist manifesto, it appeared it was only a political jest to entertain more support from the neutral sides. See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 259-294.

destroy the dream, why shouldn't the dream be able to destroy reality?" (*Hail and Farewell* 120).

The dream-like vision of a modern Ireland prepared for 'change and science', as Johnny claims, engages in reviving stories of fairies, bog gothic, and unexperienced formations just to subvert the authoritarian narrative of formation under nationalist manifesto. The struggle, therefore, as Bolger illustrates in his novel, will no longer be about demystifying the individual's social immobility or reluctance to integrate with society, but rather about the conflict between individuals' ideals, which form their perception of Bildung, and a subject-oriented society into which they are introduced.<sup>54</sup> The modern Irish narrative of formation, thus, transforms into a site of contradiction and conflict, which reverses the mechanics of the novel of formation by prioritizing the formation of the individual over national. It is the 'how' and 'when' the Irish fulfil their rite of formation that affects the national formation. It is the unrealism of such a reversed formation that makes Johnny feel as though he "was pushing [his] way into an impassable future, like piercing the weight of nothingness" (Bolger 139).

I argue however, for non-conformists such as Johnny it is not the future that is 'impassable', but rather the nationalists' perception of the past. Passing the "ghost locked in the past" should enable them to embark upon a present that signals development and maturity. Nevertheless, as I shall discuss in the following chapters and my reading of Seamus Deane's novel, *Reading in the Dark* (1996), lack of a national binding force and enthusiasm in embracing this sense of the present, amplifies the Irish apprehension of an indentarian existence which they hate, which appears as an internalized fear that led them towards isolation and negation:

I am filled with an unease that we are somehow both ghosts, that we will never arrive back to the warmth of that kitchen where Mary waits even after we think we have reached there, that we are trapped for eternity on this corner, indistinct and lost beneath the first squalls of evening rain (Bolger 211).

The Nationalist Isolation and the Phantasm of Modern Ireland in Deane's

*Reading in the Dark*

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<sup>54</sup> On the conflict between ideal / real, individual / society in Irish modern novel see Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 311.

Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996), a quasi-Bildungsroman narrativizes the socio-politically radical changes the Irish experienced,<sup>55</sup> and provides a more personal approach to the dichotomy of individual and national formation. Set in 1945, the narrative begins with a figurative portrayal of how families were still under the influence of the State-approved norms, and how such a cartoonish dominance was fading away, changing into superstitious belief of elders who advocate believing in the unreal: "'Don't move,' my mother said. 'Don't cross that window. There's something there between us. A Shadow. Don't move.' I had no intention. But I could see no shadow" (Deane 5).

As Smyth argues, such an internal and autonomous engagement with the unknown and the unexperienced, for instance fairies and the supernatural, emerges as a key point in post-colonial texts that find "hyphenated identity" surrounded by "alien population" to which the narrator is neither willing nor allowed to relate (*The Novel* 52). The internally oppressed Irish begin to distance themselves from the dominator, while externalizing their fears, "unhomeliness" – as in Homi Bhabha's terms, and negativities through a mythologized dialogical discourse which is in English language but completely unknown to the colonizer (*The Location of Culture* 9). To an outside reader, therefore, such a melancholic superstition of backwardness squarely appears as irrelevant, and part of a literature of "madness", as Smyth claims, whereas the Irish find it as an inseparable part of the narrative of resistance (*The Novel* 53).<sup>56</sup> It was the same effect that narratives by Bolger and Trevor tried to include, namely, a feeling of detachment and eeriness. Deane's narrative, however, endeavours to break such post-colonial stereotypes most apparent in the post 1920s Irish literature, by having a more realistic engagement with history and politics that changed under the nationalists' authority. To this end, Deane's candid narrative of his formative years leans to distance itself from the dream reality that Moore and other anti-colonialists advocated, and presents a demythologized perception of Irish reality,

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<sup>55</sup> I call Deane's *Reading in the Dark* a quasi-narrative of formation as it emerges as an amalgamation of memoir, reflecting on the relevance and significance of 'the lives of others' on the protagonist's life, and the Bildungsroman, in which the author inserts himself into the phantasmagoric reality of the fiction. On the differences and similarities between autobiography, memoir, and bildungsroman see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 70-80.

<sup>56</sup> On fairies and their relevance to Irish literature and culture see Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, Harvard University Press, 1997; also see Roy F. Foster, *Words Alone: Yeats and His Inheritances*, London: Oxford University Press, 2011.

which at once is anti-colonial, modern – as in being progressive rather than retrospective, and independent. Although his narrative deals with the gothic dichotomy of modern formation under the State’s oppressive principles, and portrays the melancholic mechanics of modernization in Ireland, Deane tackles such contradictoriness through various binaries of realism and idealism, and individual and national formations, illustrating the nation’s transition from provincialism and nationalist conservatism to modernism and republicanism. His account of formation, in this respect, is neither postist nor nationalist, but rather a meta-national understanding of modern Irish values.

As Eagleton argues, “drama, fiction, often ... give birth to reality”, and Deane’s novel of formation was no exception, as it transformed mythic and thematic engagement with Irish perturbations into a real, albeit symbolic, dialectical discourse (*Heathcliff* 235). His narrative, for instance, begins with a secret about a shadow that just exists, which separates generations through mere Othering, “there’s something between us. A Shadow” (Deane 5). This secret, as the narrative expands, remains to form the crux of Deane’s novel, as the shadow metamorphoses into a real secret, that his grandfather was the person responsible for the death of the protagonist’s uncle. This is a secret that, if revealed, would not only hurt their family emotionally but damage the Irish foundation of family as an unbreakable union. This symbolic shadow haunts the young protagonist up until his twenties, and leads him towards further isolation and disintegration. Under the pressure of such a transformative secret, which influences his individual and national formation, the protagonist finds *Bildung* nothing but a mere shadow itself: “inner peace ... is what your childish innocence once was” (Deane 26). He can, therefore, trust neither the limiting realism of nationalist *Bildung* nor the ideals of modern, individualistic formation. In other words, neither the outside nor the inside can be relied upon, for “outside was the bad weather; inside was the fire, implied danger” (Deane 19).

Deane’s narrative of formation begins underlining the socio-political binaries that dominated the Irish life under the nationalists’ authority. The novel emerges as a historical consciousness that defies the nationalist politics of forgetfulness, illustrating a political polarity that dominated the nationalist ethos of unity and Irishness by incorporating a non-mythic, candid narratorial discourse. For instance, Deane’s narrative of individual formation illustrates how a rising

dissension between de Valerans, Fine Gael, and other nationalists in 1945 led to further sectarianism, ideological schism, a nation-wide isolation and an eventual frustration with Free Staters; and how such a political divide enabled the modern meta-nationalist Irishmen to break away with nationalists' politics of deceitfulness and parochialism. "Innocence was no guarantee for a Catholic then. Nor is it now", notes Deane's protagonist after an authoritative and discriminatory speech by Brother Regan whose parochial nationalism openly condones keeping secrets.

In 1948 John A. Castelo, a member of *Fine Gael*, finally defeated de Valéra after 16 years of 'controlling the island', and by taking office he intensified an already ambivalent political air in Ireland. His pledge, to gain further independence, resulted in Ireland leaving the Commonwealth, and at once and the same time emerges as one independent and isolated nation. Radical and revolutionaries, who were either imprisoned or spending life in internal or external exile, neutralized and became the other ghost of a chaotic past, haunting the new generation. Narratives of formation, in this respect, began to reflect such a radical socio-cultural phantom of change. Families of characters such as Doyle's Henry Smart or Deane's protagonist suddenly became the 'enemy of the freedom', and thus a new round of 'internal othering' began: "since we had cousins in gaol for being in the IRA, we were a marked family, and had to be careful", notes Deane's protagonist, referencing an already heightened political othering (*Reading in the Dark* 27).

For parochial nationalists, revolutionaries were part of a despicable past, a generation of "brain-dead and memory-less, who are in the usual slogging majority" (Deane 90). The anti-colonial dialogical discourse of independence and formation, in other words, replaces the colonial identity with revolutionaries and non-conformists, and engages in a retaliatory sense of 'othering.' The concept of the past, too, changes to include recent socio-cultural dissensions. The past, to which nationalists would rather happily revert, hence changes from the historical Celts and Gaels to a pre-Easter time, with a Yeatsian nationalist hero ready to prevent the nation from embracing modernism and the 1970s pluralism and beyond. Under the new parochial nationalist principle, non-conformist Bildung results in the formation of "litigant", and an uninvited "person who creates disturbances by abuse of the rule of law", or in other words the non-conformist youths who have embraced 'science and change' and

distanced themselves from Father Gildea, Brother Regan as well as nationalists, unionists and apologists (Deane 90).<sup>57</sup>

Such a shift towards socio-political insulation and internal othering emerged as an aftermath of a coveted independence and years of internal and external chaos. In Deane's novel, the youths appear as though they are torn between a haunting past and a future that is haunted by promises of proper individual formation and social reconciliation. To such young meta-nationalists, therefore, history and historical monuments such as Grianan, "a great stone ring with flights of worn steps on the inside leading to a parapet that overlooked the country", mean "nothing but the groan of the light breeze in that bronchial space (Deane 56, 57).

In Deane's novel, concepts such as Irish gothic and ghost stories, haunted individualism, and madness are indicative of an internal force leading towards at once union and resistance. However, unlike other texts discussed in this chapter, this resistance is not aimed at a domineering imperial force; rather, the concept represents a haunted betrayal by those who have fought alongside Henrys, Ivans, Johnnys and other revolutionaries, and simultaneously sought union and separation. The secret that haunts the young protagonist in Deane's novel reveals nothing but a feeling of betrayal; of negligence and abandonment by those whom he knew and cared about. The unsolicited binary of formation, namely, joining the separatists or sustaining one's roots, transforms into a nightmarish, if not necessarily gothic reality, which complies with neither modern nor colonial specificity of realism; there is neither individualism nor nationalism intended in such a sense of realism and formation. In fact, Deane's candid depiction challenges the Eagletonian dichotomous classification of reality, namely idealism against realism; and individualism and society. Rather it is a symbolic limbo that is caused by neither the Empire nor the nationalists; it emerges as a static vacuum that is left hanging "between this world and the next" (Deane 210).

As a young meta-nationalist, Deane's protagonist strives to decode such a political limbo, and what he finds only exacerbates his bewildered childish perception of postist reality, as he finds himself transfixed only with fantasy, ghost stories, and "their bad history" (Deane 210). His childish apolitical understanding of the past invokes haunting stories of a glorious past with mythologized aspects of Irish life, and fantasies in which individual and national formations were parts of one process. As

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<sup>57</sup> 'Science and change' references Johnny's perception of Ireland as presented in the second novel in Bolger's *The Woman's Daughter*. See Bolger, *The Woman's Daughter*, 110.



the protagonist grows up, however, his illusory perception of reality and Irish identity gets darker and more unimaginatively melancholic. For instance, mythic stories about his lost nationalist uncle, Eddie – once a revolutionary hero; family reunions (of a disintegrated one); and resurrection of a large nationalist army lose their romantic idealism and emerge as politically conscious news. Reluctant to forget and grow up, he gathers that his grandfather, for instance, has been a radical ex-IRA member, responsible for many murders, and the actual person of whose existence Brother Regan warns his class. The thin line between reality and dream in Deane’s narrative attenuates as the young protagonist understands the history behind not only his family but his nation, and the constant dissension between them and the Northern Irishmen, a spiteful division that has passed from his parents to him.

The ecstatic beauty in the stories of *Cúchulainn*, Fort Grianan, and many more, in this respect, suddenly demythologize into a bitter, power-oriented truth. “History, what history?” notes one of his friends, undermining the relevance and authenticity of the history of their land (Deane 85). “[Roman history] couldn’t be ancient enough . . . There’s a lot of ancient history in this town they couldn’t teach and wouldn’t if they could” notes the protagonist’s grandfather, at once expressing a growing mistrust towards nationalists and their politics of forgetfulness, and the history of the island, reducing it to a ghost story (Deane 85). In other words, by reducing the veracity of such a questionable past, of his family and the island, to folktale, ghost stories and supernatural, the protagonist succeeds, albeit ignorantly, to express his mostly negative understanding of the nation’s and his family’s intermingled past and dissension, which has been rich with betrayals and power-oriented scaremongering.

The unnamed protagonist yearns to distinguish fact from fiction, reality from children ghost stories, yet at the same time he finds himself lost in a self-induced stasis, paralyzed by his reluctance to further understand the actual ‘bad history’ behind his family and the nation, as it would only inflame his feeling of guilt and anger, namely, internal binaries he decides to bear throughout his life as a young man, building his own world, being loyal to his mother(land).<sup>58</sup> It is a unique understanding of loyalty, as I will explore in the next chapter, that costs the youths their free and

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<sup>58</sup> The narrative ends depicting the unnamed protagonist being loyal to his mother, by keeping her secret safe with himself, telling “no one else, not even Liam, what I knew and hoped my mother would notice I was keeping pact with her” Deane 228.

spontaneous formation, leaving them with parochial limitation and patriarchal isolation.

## Chapter II

### Isolationism, Containment, and Defiance: Decolonizing Anti-authoritarian Irish Identity and the Nationalist Politics of Containment

In this chapter I shall examine a socio-cultural clash between the revolutionary Irish identity embodied by Patrick McCabe's Francis Brady in *The Butcher Boy* (1992) and the State's architecture of formation and its patriarchal selective memory. McCabe's Francie, as I shall illustrate shortly, emerges as a symbolic embodiment of a young generation of Irish rebels enraged by failures of the State, whose telos of formation resonates with that of the men of 1916, namely, to break away from possible variations of a colonial psyche, be it internal or external. The result is a dialectical account of Francie as an antiauthoritarian character, who sets out to revisit and challenge the nation's dualistic historical memory of abuse and oppression. By indulging in his fantasy-oriented narrative of formation, Francie portrays the harrowing aspects of Irish formation censored by the State's parochial patriarchal politics of containment, creating a narrative that in spite of its fictional allures introduces starkness of socio-political antiauthoritarianism as the locomotive drive behind independent modern Irish identity.

As Paul Ricoeur argues in *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, "fiction gives eyes to the horrified narrator... to see and to weep" (7). To appreciate the historical labyrinth of modern novel, Ricoeur claims, one needs a social and cultural understanding greater than the "selective testimony" of new historicism (*Time and Narrative* 16).<sup>1</sup> In addition, Ricoeur notes:

We must remember, however, that the historian is also embedded in history, he belongs to his own field of research. The historian is an actor in the plot [...]. The historian's testimony is therefore not completely neutral, it is a selective activity. It is, however, far less selective than the testimony of the dominant class. (*Time and Narrative* 16)

Unlike other modern narratives, the phantasmagoric realism of the modern Irish novel is "a mode of social criticism and a means of dramatizing" the nation's "blighted" formation and defiance under regimes that Willy Maley regards as postist (O'Duffy

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<sup>1</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, "Imagination, Testimony, and Trust: A Dialogue with Paul Ricoeur" in *Questioning Ethics: Debates in Contemporary Philosophy*, eds. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, London: Routledge, 1999.

192).<sup>2</sup> According to Foster, what all the post-independence modern Irish novels have in common is a narrative of blighted beginnings, and in his terms were “problem-novels”, exploring malformations under an oppressive State. These narratives, therefore, transcend their clichéd purpose of entertainment and emerge as fictionalized voices that narrativize a sublimated reality of ‘problematic’ Irish formations.

Irish novels of formation support Ricoeur’s argument not only by portraying the starkness of Irish childhood and a divided social *malformation*<sup>3</sup> but also by incorporating Ricoeur’s socio-historical criticism as the epistemological core of their narrative, namely, the concept which reintroduces fiction as a reliable socio-historical critique.<sup>4</sup> The modern Irish novel of formation, Bildungsroman, especially written between the 1920s and early 1960s, in this respect, transforms into a dialectical socio-political critique that provides a dramatized perception of Ricoeur’s definition of fictive realism, namely, narratives that fictionalize Irish reality, and depict the concept of Irish formation between the 1920s and 1960s, which according to Eimar O’Duffy leads to nothing but “blighted beginnings” (*The Wasted Island* 192).<sup>5</sup> This is the fictive reality, in other words, that illustrates the wasted potentials of what I shall label as the *street children in transition*, namely, youths who transformed into either radicals and rebels – such as Roddy Doyle’s Ivan and Henry in *A Star Called Henry*, Dermot Bolger’s Johnny in *The Women’s Daughter* – or marginalized characters – such as Lucy in William Trevor’s *The Story of Lucy Gault* and Sandra in Bolger’s *The Woman’s Daughter*. In this chapter I shall discuss such polarity dominant in Irish formations under the oppressive rule of the State. To this end, I will explore Patrick McCabe’s haunting bog gothic realism presented through *The Butcher Boy*, a

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<sup>2</sup> See John William Foster, *Irish Novels 1980-1940: New Bearing in Culture and Fiction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 37-43.

<sup>3</sup> On individuals’ psychosocial non-conformist formation, namely, malformation see Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994, 44-51.

<sup>4</sup> Previously such readings were refused by new historicist critics, regarding meaning and socio-culture criterion of definition being self-referential therefore independent of history or historical interpretations. See Benedetto Croce, *Theory and history of historiography*, Douglas Ainslie (trans.), Ulan Press, 2012, 120-154.

<sup>5</sup> Eimar O’Duffy, *The Wasted Island*, Dublin: Martin Lester, 1920. Digitized by Microsoft and California Digital Library on Aug 29, 2007: <<http://goo.gl/vuMtH>>.

narrative that at once resists the nativist perception of the past and acts selectively in remembering the statist socio-political norms.<sup>6</sup>

As I explained in previous chapter, my reading of nationalism and its nativist ethos of formation reflects a postcolonial perception of the term in which nationalism as a unifying drive is regarded as a fantasy and as Kiberd notes “a malignant fairy-tale responsible for most of the ills of the twentieth century” (*Inventing Ireland* 12); and a concept which leads nations towards either repeating their past or altering what makes the original ethos of revolution through reconciliation, resolution and amendments. In addition my perception of nationalism is informed by Declan Kiberd’s non-revisionist critical essay on the topic of nationalism and Irish identity entitled, “Inventing Irelands”, published in 1984. Narratives like McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* then emerge as critiques that question not only the foundation of postist Irish formations but also the nationalist politics of forgetfulness and political parochialism. In this respect, isolationism and containment on the one hand, and socio-political radicalism and resistance on the other, shaped the pivots of formation in the modern Irish Bildungsroman: concepts that gave voice to the blighted beginnings of youths by dominating the modern Irish novel, and by helping the nation remember the past.<sup>7</sup>

### The Telos of Modern Man: *Non serviam*

In “The Ideology of Modernism”, discussing modern self-formation, Lukács finds political isolationism and ahistorical formation as the drives that lead to the individual’s social irrelevance, and finally indulgence in a subjective perception of reality.<sup>8</sup> According to Lukács, the modern man not only externalizes his sense of irrelevance to his current state but criticizes his status quo ante, especially social

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<sup>6</sup> On postcolonial reading of nationalism also see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, 1983; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Part two of a Contemporary History of Historical Materialism*, University of California Press, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> By replacing drama and poetry in early twentieth century, novel in Ireland, and in particular its modern variation, transformed into an overtly expressive vehicle that could present the nation’s socio-political frustrations as well as their economical whims. See Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation* (London: Pluto Press, 1997) 18-25.

<sup>8</sup> By isolationism I mean to highlight the State’s social insularity, especially its politics of containment especially those which as I shall explain in this study not only further divided the nation into the internal colonial norms of *one of us and one of them* but separated its direction, envisioned by the nativist politicians of the time, from a modern, pluralist definition which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.

integration and formation of a social self.<sup>9</sup> The result is a man “reduced to a sequence of unrelated experimental fragments”, who is “as inexplicable to others as to himself” (Lukács 1222). For such a socially isolated person, reality will be reduced to “only human consciousness, constantly building, modifying, rebuilding new worlds out of its own creativity” (Lukács 1222); in other words, reality will be an individualistic psychological sub-stratum built on centring a radical perception of formation which relegates social interaction and integration to individual development. This non-socially conformist and isolated sense of selfhood also appears in Adorno’s definition of a non-identarian, anti-social subject who defines itself through its particular features and principles, especially its split, self-referential identity.<sup>10</sup> The result is an antiauthoritarian, whose reality and “concern”, according to Max Stirner, are founded “only [on] himself” (*Ego and His Own* 3).

Under such egoist formations the individual engages with society insofar as his “cause”, namely, self-formation, allows (Stirner 3-4); his understanding of social, historical and cultural boundaries of a nation, in this respect, is naturally antiauthoritarian and lacks the balance that harmonizes individual and national formations.<sup>11</sup> Their narratives of formation, in this respect, transform into a fictive realism, or in Ricoeur terms “eyes”, which allows them to fictionalize the hardships of formation under such oppressiveness, and at once to read the past and present of their nation (*Time and Narrative* 7). It is a phantasmagoric narrative, rooted in the formation of non-conformist individuals, that engages with a radical interpretation of their history: the one that at once rejects and affirms the rule of the republic in its formation.<sup>12</sup> Such a Janus-faced perception of history, as Boyce and Eagleton note, becomes the very foundation of nationalists’ definition of history in Ireland, a fragile narrative which is founded on people and their revolutionary potential while at once ignores their relevance as the developing force. The result of such an intentional political dichotomy is what reaffirms Mallet de Pan’s adage: “revolution devours its own children” (*Considérations* 80). In this respect, the narrative of the modern, nonconformist protagonist substitutes the fundamental questions of “what to do? How to act? Who to be?” with their individualistic variations, namely, what do you want to

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<sup>9</sup> Georg Lukács, ‘The Ideology of Modernism’, *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. Ed. David H. Richter. London: Bedford Books, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 2006, 1220-1223.

<sup>10</sup> See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 144-148, 214-220.

<sup>11</sup> On self-referentiality as a modern variation of egoism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and egoists’ engagement in formation of their nation see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 70-85.

<sup>12</sup> See Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 285-330; and Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 358-370.

do?; how do you want to act?; and who do you need to be? (Giddens 70). As I shall discuss in my reading of Francis Stuart's *Black List, Section H* in the next chapter, these are the self-referential questions that disturb not only the foundation of the classical, Goethean Bildung but also the modern variations which emphasizes self-formation rather than social mobility and social integration, as illustrated by Stuart's self-centred protagonist, H.

Such an insular and radical perception of selfhood, in colonial nations, however, manifests itself as a non-conformist process of individuation that abides by neither colonial nor post-colonial socio-cultural norms. The result is a character who finds post-colonial Ireland too limiting, submerged in the nationalist vision of agrarian Ireland and full of "dirty bog-trotters" and "bogmen" (McCabe 75, 76). For such a character, nevertheless, the Empire is still the source of this socio-cultural apathy and historical anachronism; for instance, for Francie the Englishness of the Nugents in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* stands as an unforgettable source of enmity: "if only the Nugents hadn't come to the town, if only they had left us alone, that was all they had to do" (167). Francie in *The Butcher Boy* emerges as the embodiment of an antiauthoritarian impetus that, according to Maia Ramnath, at once finds the post-colonial norms as well as the State's neocolonial principles contradictory and contentious to their core.<sup>13</sup> Such a rebellious characterization emerges as a self-referential, self-seeking force that finds its formation in the way it has paved for itself: a split, separatist, insular path that leads to individualistic formation, albeit unexperienced and unknown.<sup>14</sup>

As I discussed in my reading of Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*, such chaotic, nonconformist characters are nothing but the continuation of a wave of young radical Irishmen who obeyed neither the Empire nor the nationalist politicization and division of Ireland. They embody a rebellious consciousness rooted within the nation, striving to dismantle not only a colonial sense of Irishness but also any totalitarian, neocolonial despotism. This anti-authoritarian impetus in departing from the empire and the nationalists, provided chaotic characters such as Francis Brady in McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* with the necessary leeway to emerge as non-fictional manifestation of post-nationalist, modern Irishness. This became the anti-Imperialist Irish momentum

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<sup>13</sup> See Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle*, 132-150.

<sup>14</sup> See *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical investigations*, eds. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.

that embraced not only modernism and thus modern Irishness but also an informal sense of internationalism by joining forces with other European nations; and at the same time kept British identity and the Empire as an uninvited “passive periphery” (Ramnath 32).<sup>15</sup> By replacing the political binaries of nationalism and non-traditionalism with modernism and internationalism, the Irish anti-authoritarian movement joins a pattern of national formation that other colonized nations have already experienced, becoming a slow, albeit continuous, socio-cultural and economic growth by following an antiauthoritarian sense of development.<sup>16</sup>

Internationalism and non-conformist Irishness resonates with Willy Maley’s post-nationalist categorical definition of Irishness, being a unique non-identarian Irishness which discards not only the Empire, religious sectarianism but also the economic shadow of the Empire, while simultaneously seeks to amend its Celtic roots.<sup>17</sup> I argue, however, the nonconformist self-referentiality embedded in meta-national Irish identity transcends the binary of national vs. international, and modern vs. nationalist; since the modern youths seek Irishness neither in nationalist or anti-nationalist suppressive norms nor in post-colonial, revivalist conformism. Rather, they identify with Stephen Dedalus’s *non serviam* towards the Nation State, namely, a non-identarian form which pursues Irishness in modern re-visualization of Irish norms. This non-conformist form critiques the non-functional political frameworks of the nation by presenting it, for instance, in a historically haunted, carnivalesque narrative of an Irish boy early in his formative years, who not only defies the binary of moral and immoral formations by indulging in his rebellious passion of “eat[ing] of the fruit of all the trees”, just as a Wildean rebel would, but also mocks the nationalist perception of formation as a narrow, and apologetically English objectification of Irish identarianism (Wilde 68). To understand the root of such antiauthoritarian rebellion and non-conformity prevalent in the modern Irish novel of formation, and especially in McCabe’s characterization of Francie, I shall briefly explore the roots of anarchic anti-colonial Irishness in post-independence Ireland.

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<sup>15</sup> On the Irish welcoming (informal) internationalism by joining other European nations see David McCullagh, *The Reluctant Taoiseach: A Biography of John A. Castillo*, Dublin: Gill&MacMillan, 2010, 270-300.

<sup>16</sup> Other nations with similar anarchic patterns of formations are Argentina, Cuba, Ukraine, Mexico, South Africa, and Egypt. See Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism*, 35-41.

<sup>17</sup> See Willy Maley, “Varieties of Nationalism: Post-revisionist Irish Studies” in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol 4, Issue 15, 1996, 35-6.



## Decolonizing Anarchism in Post-Colonial Ireland

I am an anarchist. I suppose you came here, the most of you, to see what a real, live anarchist looked like. I suppose some of you expected to see me with a bomb in one hand and a flaming torch in the other, but are disappointed in seeing neither. Anarchists are peaceable, law-abiding people. What do anarchists mean when they speak of anarchy? Webster gives the term two definitions chaos and the state of being without political rule. We cling to the latter definition. Our enemies hold that we believe only in the former (Lucy Parsons 1886).

Anarchism in Ireland emerged as an anti-colonial, originally apolitical movement in the early 1880s, aiming to rid the nation from variations of colonialism; and to provide the nation with what Lucy Parsons regarded as a state of social harmony “being without political rule” (“I Am an Anarchist” in *Kansas City Journal* 1886).<sup>18</sup>

While British Imperialism remained as the most dominant form of (external) colonial mentality in Ireland, internal and psychological colonialism were counted as the other notable dominant variations that plagued the nation after the wars. Anarchist groups such as the Socialist League appeared as a counter-response to such a dominantly imperialist air of nationhood in the late nineteenth century. On April 26, 1894, for instance, Irish Times reports a large anarchist crowd led by Dr. Fauset McDonald in Dublin at Central Lecture Hall, Westmoreland street, explaining how anarchist communism can be utilized to better the process of national formation.<sup>19</sup> It was during and after the Easter Rebellion, however, that the movement transformed into a severely political consciousness shared by the proletariat and the leading political figures. The movement then incorporates a recalcitrant psyche with plans to lead the nation from colonialist to Nationalist, to pluralist and republic, and finally to internationalist. It was during the Irish wars that Irish anarchism reached its zenith, and transformed from being only a libertarian Celtic doctrine into a non-conformist, proletariat mass movement, sympathizing with the “suppressed” (Ramnath 103-105).

While the historical origin of anarchism in Ireland has been mythologized by both revisionist and nationalist historians, to further highlight their triumphant emergence over one another, notable non-conformist proletariats were involved in the

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<sup>18</sup> Lucy Parsons, “I Am an Anarchist”, *Kansas City Journal*, December 21, 1886. Web, retrieved Jan 5, 2013: <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=1886-lucy-parsons-i-am-anarchist>.

<sup>19</sup> See Irish Times, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1894: < <http://irishanarchisthistory.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/an-anarchist-communist-in-dublin-1894/>>. Also see Fauset McDonald, “On the Social Question” in *Worker*, July 18, 1896: < <http://www.takver.com/history/raa/raa29.htm>>.

formation of the nation-State and the republic. Historically obscure anarchists such as Matt Kavanagh (1876-1954), a Liverpool-based anarchist factory worker whose strategic contributions during the Irish lockout of 1913 helped revolutionaries and nationalists such as James Connolly and James Larkin eventually accomplish what they started even in their absence;<sup>20</sup> the Fabian society at Trinity College Dublin with 200 members (generally students from low-income families) whose aspiration for establishing anarchist fraternities was rooted in seeking a fair, independent Ireland;<sup>21</sup> Captain Jack White (1879-1946) - an exception to this class-based study of Irish anarchism, belonged to the landowning class, and was one of the founders of Irish Citizen Army 1913-1919 and one of the early supporters of the formation of a Republican Congress, led by worker and small farmers.<sup>22</sup> These whose paths crossed one another through the obscure history of anarchic decolonization in Ireland were among the earliest anticolonial Irish anarchists who not only defied the empire and its hegemonic dialectics of dominance but also later questioned the State for its politics of silence and dominance.

My contention is that, although anarchic formation has been side-lined by the nationalist history of Ireland, which introduced it as only a product of critical and literary lightheartedness in the 1960s and beyond, the movement, as I shall explore shortly in my reading of McCabe's novel, has been at the crux of Irish resistance. As Alan MacSimón and Nick Heath put it, while the proletariat anarchist rebels, such as Jack White, were "never under any illusions about Irish nationalism which finally triumphed over the original revolutionary aspirations of 1916", their contributions towards independent Irish identity, decolonization, and republicanism of the later twentieth century have been critical, yet unknown and thus unsung ("Mat Kavanagh" 2008). It is the very liberating movement which resurfaced in the 1960s and 1970s, forming socio-politically nonconformist groups that were run by ex-members of the IRA and other expatriates who returned home. Prior to such a broad re-emergence, however, the movement grew substantially as a mass proletarian socio-political impetus under the disguise of Irish Labour Party, especially in 1935 when an internal

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<sup>20</sup> See Nick Heath, "Kavanagh, Mat, 1876-1954", Libcom.org, Web, retrieved, Jan 21 2013: < <http://www.libcom.org/history/kavanagh-mat-1876-1954>>.

<sup>21</sup> See Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood, from the Land League to Sinn Fein*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 1997, 218-225.

<sup>22</sup> See Alan MacSimóin, "Anarchism's Greatest Hits No. 4: Jack White", *The Struggle Site*, Web, retrieved, Jan 21 2013: < [http://struggle.ws/ws/ws50\\_jack.html](http://struggle.ws/ws/ws50_jack.html)>.

conflict between *Fianna Fáil* and the Irish Citizen Army led a vast number of ICA to leave *Fianna Fáil* and join this politically dynamic party.

While the Irish Labour Party emerged as a major opposition party in *Dáil* in the 1930s and beyond, there were other minor, albeit politically active if not fully anarchy-oriented, opposition parties during the early years of the State, namely, 1923-24, which functioned as a recalcitrant political response to conservative parties such as the de Valeran *Fianna Fáil*. The Irish Worker League, among many, appears as an opposition party, established by James Larkin after his return to Dublin in April 1923. Shunned by William O'Brien, whom Larkin himself had selected as his substitute until his return from America, Larkin established the Irish Worker League, which according to historians was founded on communist manifestos rather than anarchic principles. While Larkin's Worker Leagues precedes the Irish Labour Party, they both worked in tandem as mass proletariat socio-political parties to further the libertarian principles which, as I earlier noted, formed the constitution of other parties and groups in the 1970s. Their mission, however, remained the same: to further their anti-imperialist ethos while advocating a free, non-conservative Ireland.<sup>23</sup> For them, decolonization meant a decentralized egalitarianism in which there were only Irish people and no Others, as in Catholic or Protestant, Northern or Southern, Shinner or Unionist, concepts which under the neoconservative State had led the nation towards a silent fragmentation.<sup>24</sup>

Decolonizing anarchic Irishness shared one origin and path of formation with other antiauthoritarian movements, such as street children and the deprived working class, or in Ramnath's terms, "underprivileged proletariat" (*Decolonizing Anarchism* x). Such an antiauthoritarian identity not only helped the nation to dismantle the English values and norms but also allowed the younger generation to experiment with the unexperienced, resulting in, for instance, a Wildean rebellious characterization contemplating the fruit of the unknown; or George Moore's experimentation with reversing the binary of slave/master relationship in his novel *Esther Waters* [1894]; or J. M. Synge's carnivalesque critique of social taboos and norms in his plays,

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<sup>23</sup> See John Goodwillie, "Glossary of the Left in Ireland, 1960 to 1983", *Graltion* Issue 9, Aug/Sep 1983.

<sup>24</sup> On socio-political fragmentation and how political parties coped with it see John Coakley and Michael Galagher, *Politics and the Republic of Ireland*, London: Routledge, 1999, 116-117. On the political fragmentation as a historical concept see William Keys Anderson, *James Connolly and the Irish Left*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994, especially Chapters 3 and 11.

especially *The Playboy of the Western World* [1907], ridiculing the politics of suppression.

According to David Lloyd, for nationalists the radical proletariat who helped build the State transform into an anomalous, hegemonic crowd that must be suppressed. Those who refrain from such a forced silence will join a history that under the State's policies must be forgotten.<sup>25</sup> This is the blanket consciousness of forgetfulness that finally fails to dominate as nonconformist characters fictionalized by McCabe and Doyle as in Francie in *The Butcher Boy* and Henry and Ivan in *A Star Called Henry* further their participation in a self-referential formation of their selves and consequently their nation. As a result, instead of obedience the nationalist politics of forgetfulness conversely gave birth to a troop of defiant youths whose deeds can be justified as socio-cultural counter-conformist responses to the State's politics of suppression and containment, and whose perception of *Sinn Féin* is nothing but a libertarian self-formation.

According to Ramnath, decolonizing anarchic movements have the tendency to split and to form forked anarchic sub-cultures, forces and identities in a nation that itself has been divided, hence making an intranational binary of postist regime and those who oppose such postist formations (*Decolonizing Anarchism* 3-19). The Irish anarchic identity, too, manifests itself as a non-identarian variation of a modern sense of Irish resistance, emerging as a conceptual identity that defied postism and disavowed traditionalism, and during its process of maturation became a victim of such political sectarian bipolarity. On the one hand, therefore, there are revolutionaries, who challenged British colonial authoritarianism and were inclined towards the Yeatsian hero; and on the other, we have characters who neither accept revivalist, Yeatsian heroism nor comply with the State's politics of formation. These are chaos-driven anarchists whose sense of formation lies in deformation, or in other words, non-identarian, un-Irish formations. Counter-revolutionaries who were sent on psychological exile and thus separated from the cause that originally united them.

Anarchist decolonizing Irishness is a modern, counter-postist variation of the same movement that emerged in 1914 and 1916, forming non-conformists with a non-colonial vision of an agrarian Ireland. However, it was the same troop of non-conformists that redefined their own principles, and advocated the formation of a

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<sup>25</sup> See David Lloyd, *Anomalous State: Irish Writing and The Post-Colonial Moment*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

united Nation-State.<sup>26</sup> Those struck and neglected by nationalists' Janus-faced politics, then joined forces with a national counter-revolutionary impetus, defying the State's "politics of chastity" and forgetfulness by indulging in chaos and further deformation (Bolton 125). In other words, anarchic meta-nationalism, as at once a movement and an antiauthoritarian form of identity, emerges as a form of anti-colonial, ahistorical, counter-postist Irish identity that questions what makes the pillar of nationalist separatist mentality: nationalists' indulgence in the concept of sectarianism and separation, which manifests itself as religious partitioning of the same crowd of underprivileged proletariat that originally contributed to the formation of the State.<sup>27</sup>

By introducing the revolution as "unstable" and in need of military and political administration, nationalists further distanced their ethos of control and confinement from their original principles of potential republicanism, and took control of the physical force (Boyce 254). Counter-revolutionaries, then emerged as a force in charge of liberating an unconsciously suppressed and deprived nation that has been bound by the nationalists' normalizing politics of forgetfulness combined with a consciousness of internal colonialism. The result is a unique state of structurelessness most apparent after the Irish wars of 1920s, which at once unites and fragments; the former having both sides fight the Empire and the imperial identity, while the latter depicts one side advocating anti-nationalism and counter-sectarianism as the other persists in its neocolonial function of partitioning the nation.

My argument is that it was such a divided, rebellious, albeit liberating, perception of modern Irish identity that helped free a nation that has been ruled by oppressive governing forces: from imperial to anti-imperial, and to national and a range of overlapping sectarian units that were produced by the separatist, nationalist majority. Revivalists, nationalists, revolutionaries, and the post 1920s counter-revolutionaries, in this regard, emerge as illegitimate liberating forces that were produced as a result of the clash between the suppressive forces of normalization such as the Empire or the State, and non-conformist Others' leading the nation towards a multidimensional politics of non-conformist polity. While for the former

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<sup>26</sup> Political figures such as de Valera, Padraig Pearse, Cathal Barugha and many other non-conformists-turned-nationalist defended their separatist vision through military threat and fortifying a physical force. See Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 346-50.

<sup>27</sup> On nationalists' masked attempt at dividing the Irish into two distinct poles see Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 259-294.

normalization and independence are the main objectives, for the latter, namely, the Other, according to Ramnath, “the achievement of a national state was not the endpoint of liberation” (*Decolonizing Anarchism* 4).

In Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* Francis Brady may be read as a lovechild of such a dichotomous political polarity in post-independence Ireland; a socially Othered, Francie emerges as an outcast whose formation attests to his self-referential non-conformity which helps him break away from the oppressive postcolonial social norms and indulge in his self-induced realism. Francie’s antiauthoritarianism and insular formation, in other words, may be read as the youths’ response to a nation-wide politics of conformity which required the masses to either abide by the codes of the State or face socio-psychological marginalization. In the beginning of his narrative, Francie authoritatively introduces himself as a national manifestation of such a rebellion against the nationalist neocolonial narratives of formation, a rebel who has crossed societal norms by murdering Mrs. Nugent, and now is leading his narrative towards its distressful opening and closure: “when I was a young lad twenty or thirty or forty years ago I lived in a small town where they were all after me on account of what I done on Mrs Nugent. I was hiding out by the river in a hole” (McCabe 1). For Francie, society’s predictable narrative of formation, which includes the State’s ventriloquial voice, only dictates to the proletariat their ‘blighted beginnings.’ These narratives are predictable as they are set to follow the State’s metanarrative of stasis and conformism; obscuring unwelcome elements such as unmarried mothers, illegitimate children and severely impoverished families. Such an authoritarianism prevalent in Francie’s harrowing self-introduction can be seen in his lack of hesitation in combining violence, disorientation, trauma, and a broken perception of time in his narrative; “I was thinking of Mrs Nugent standing there crying her eyes out. I said sure what’s the use in crying now Nugent it was you caused all the trouble if you hadn’t poked your nose in everything would have been all right” (McCabe 2). It is this unhesitant rebellion in his narrative – blaming the authoritatively inquisitive Mrs Nugent for all his misdeed, which allows for his account of containment and re-formations, albeit fictive and representational, to emerge as a national voice to express the people’s discontent and disillusionment with the State.

Traumatized by the dominant politics of confinement and conformism in the post-independence nationalist Ireland, Francie emerges as a young rebel, unlearning

the very principles that defined the de Valeran nationalist Ireland;<sup>28</sup> he emotionally relinquishes his family— especially after his mother’s death; mocks society and societal norms: “I bought bubblegum and spread them all out on a park bench” (McCabe 39); and ridicules religiousness of the post-independence Irish society:

Bubble says to me what are you doing going on all these long walks. I told him I thought Our Lady was talking to me. I read that in a book about this holy Italian boy. One minute he’s an Italian bogman with nothing on him only one of his father’s coats the next he’s a famous priest going round the world writing books and being carried around in a sedan chair saying the Queen of Angles chose me (McCabe 77).

Francie’s understanding of formation becomes an obvious reversal of psychosocial *Bildung*, whereby the protagonist learns to ignore society and indulge in a self that his childish egoism finds fit; and that which allows him to compete against other more successful peers, except those with whom the protagonist had emotionally bonded, namely Joe. An outcast, Francie seeks refuge and solace in his platonic friendship with Joe Purcell, a companion who supports and shadows Francie’s rebellion only superficially, leaving Francie alone as he finds his dreams of dominance and control can be fulfilled by changing his direction. As Joe decides to pursue his dreams of social mobility and recognition, disregarding their friendship, Francie’s traumatic formation manifests itself as, most notably, a fractured identity which neither acknowledges the rural traditionalism of his agrarian nation nor complies with the national neocolonialist manifesto of formation most obvious in his small town life. His brief visit to Dublin, as part of his formulaic rite of passage, for instance, brings nothing but nostalgic memories of his mother, and further reminds him of his isolated circle of friends. Moreover, his frustration with his small town and agrarian life, and the systematic unbelonging imposed by the big city, doubles as he returns home and learns of his mother’s death, causing an emotional failure which leads him to at once refuse his father and the cruel society, and to indulge in his inward, nonreciprocal friendship with Joe. Such a split identity and perception of reality not only enables him to reject society and socialization but also to seek to unite with Joe which will compensate for his rootlessness and social marginalization.

Such a dualistic formation present in McCabe’s depiction of Francie targets the State’s failure in acknowledging and providing a unified national identity for its

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<sup>28</sup> On the concept of ‘unlearning,’ especially its manifestation in the modern *Bildungsroman*, see Elizabeth Dipple, *The Unresolvable Plot*, 218-220.

younger generation without suppressing their differences. The split identity, according to Ellen Scheible, illustrates the duality in having “a unified nation [which] depends on the erasure of personal identity, while individualism resists conformity, thereby evading the forward motion of cultural and national modernity” (“Reanimating the Nation” 5). It is the binary opposition of national and individual identity that leaves rebels such as Francie no option but to transform into cultural catalysts, and facilitate the re-emergence of individual identity.<sup>29</sup>

I call such radical awakenings present in Francie’s characterization re-emergence for in fact it is the same revolutionary consciousness that I explored in Doyle’s depiction of Henry and other street children in the previous chapter. However, this rebellious consciousness faced a sudden reversal and was contained by the nationalist State. From 1930, when revivalists such as Yeats found their hopes of Celtic awakening have been manipulated and crushed by the oppressive State, until the 1940s and early 1950s, what dominated the island was a culture of psycho-political paralysis, which was explored in my reading of Trevor’s *The Story of Lucy Gault*. Francie’s rebellion, however, rekindles non-identarianism in Irish formations as a response to the State’s politics of containment, leading to what president Mary Robinson, the first female president of Ireland with no links to *Fénnian* politics, recalled as the new beginnings. Under such a dichotomous air of domination, Francie’s dualistic formation is either met with incarceration, submission to promiscuous industrial schools, and finally suspension or has everyone in his small city after him. To be recognized by the State, non-conformists such as Francie either have to submit or to be contained. While the former can be exercised by various institutions, family emerges as the State’s most favourite one, as indicated in the Constitution, especially Articles 41 and 42:

41.1.1,

The State recognizes the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

41.1.2,

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<sup>29</sup> See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 339-375.



The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State,

41.2,

1° In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2° The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

42.1

The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

Considering the role of the State in the aforementioned Articles, it emerges as an institution whose boundaries are set by patriarchal norms, and a concept in which children are placed at the end of the circle of formation of “daddy-mommy, and me” (Deleuze and Guattari 111).

McCabe’s portrayal of Francie’s family corresponds with other politically motivated narratives of transition. For instance, in *A Star Called Henry* Doyle illustrates family as a fragmented, irrelevant, yet unique concept in which children as young protagonists will inherit all the miseries, social unpopularity, psychological marginalization and blighted formations of their parents. McCabe’s conception of modern Irish family is the same descriptive definition. For instance, while in Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* Henry Smart Jr. receives from his father, Henry Smart Sr., an involuntary engagement with un-Irish formation by introducing Mister O’Gandúin’s murderous business and the concomitant un-Irishness as a recurring theme in Henry’s non-identarian narrative of deformation, McCabe’s revealing narrative, too, depicts Francie as the heir to a broad anti-socialism that had included not only his parents but every other post-independence revolutionary. These are families that along with other counter-revolutionaries such as Francie have become the face of an ideological civil “crack” and division: “Joe said there was some crack in this town and there sure was” (McCabe 9).

Set in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, *The Butcher Boy* engages with concepts that under the de Valeran State were regarded as oppositional and non-identarian such as (revolutionary) rebelliousness, nonconformist formation, and modern Irish identity that the radical characterization of Francis Brady re-introduced as originally anti-authoritarian, anti-colonial notions that were lost as a result of the post-revolution / post-independence stasis of the 1930s and 40s. The result, fictionalized by McCabe as Francie's social incongruity, I argue is a socio-political clash between the Irish caused by the transvaluation of revolutionary Irish identity into an essentially static identarianism of post-independence. The generation formed amid such a political dichotomy and stasis emerged as young non-conformists who trust neither the sudden stasis of their revolutionary immediate predecessors nor the conformist norms of the State. Rather, they transform into yet another generation of revolutionaries who question the authority of the postist State by becoming an addition to what Maley and Graham claim as the "binary of thinking in Irish contexts", hence defying the postist equilibrium ("Irish Studies" 149). Characters such as McCabe's Francie in *The Butcher Boy* and Henry in Doyle's *The Dead Republic*, the third book in Henry Smart's trilogy, I argue, are the very non-conformist *addition* that question not only their Celtic history and the culture of postism advocated by the State and society but also the psychological and literary duality of nationalism and anti-colonialism, and as a result transforming into a touchstone that separates modern Irishness from the stereotypes of anti-colonialist, nationalist, revivalist. The result is a nonconformist impetus that stands as a product of a socio-cultural and theoretical clash between Irish nationalism and modernism.

McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* emerges as a broad delineation of Irish formations in the 1940s, as it provides a thematic portrayal of radical changes, though mostly retrospective, in the body of Irish politics, when a *Fenian* nationalism swept through the nation, establishing a poignant dialectic of forgetfulness, by rendering the opposing groups, rebels, and even pure voices of neglected children as unwanted elements that deserve to be silenced; or in Francie's words, to the State, rebels such as himself were "like fungus growing on the walls [and] they wanted them washed clean again" (McCabe 95). Among the two most striking examples are: Cavan Orphanage fire tragedy in 1943 and the government's reluctance to even acknowledge such a tragedy, refusing a proper burial, and even oppressing scattered news leaks by known and unknown sources. These, for instance, stand as exemplars of *Féinnian*

consciousness of forgetfulness. De Valéra's visionary speech, encouraging agrarianism and retrospective progression, "The Ireland that We Dreamed of", is the other political confirmation of such a suppressive consciousness.<sup>30</sup> The other harrowing narrative of mistreatment and nationalist silence can be found in Peter Tyrrell's autobiographical quasi-Bildungsroman, *Founded on Fear*, in which he warns "society against the child who has been hurt" (43).

McCabe's characterization of Francie introduces sectarianism and social disintegration as his founding features, reflecting on a society that has been based on political and ideological division. In the narrative, for instance, there are those who can afford to send their children to school and thus should pay the "pig tax toll", and those who like Francie's family have taught him nothing but disintegration and fragmented formation (McCabe 12). Religious sectarianism, as another example, emerges as the other notable element that tears Francie's insular society apart. For Francie, therefore, social mobility equates either submitting to promiscuous religiosity of the Church, or simply defy it altogether by caricaturing the institution; the latter in fact becomes the dominant concept that manifests itself in Francie's behaviour as he sets to ridicule priests' ignorance and the futility of religious submission: "Domino, exaudi orationem meam, he'd say with the hands outspread. Et fucky wucky ticky tocky that was what I said instead [...] it didn't matter [...] Father Sull never listened anyway" (McCabe 76). McCabe's Francis, in this respect, emerges as a caricatured depiction of Ireland in the 40s and 50s: an ambivalent, rebellious, and thus un-Irish character whose understanding of *being* with respect to society is neither a question nor a challenge. Rather, Francie appears as an outcry of what I shall call the *in-between generation*, the one which is caught between the revolutionary telos of their fathers and the developing stasis, and isolationism of their generation. To seek identity and recognition, therefore, they engage with the extreme, namely, the dialectics of negativism, rather than the negative dialectics of formation. To this end, Francie finds ideological and psychosocial solace in adhering to neither the bohemian principles of modernism nor the nationalist retrograde agrarianism; rather, Francie's own idyllic, inward perception of life becomes the founding pivots of realism. He,

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<sup>30</sup> On Cavan Orphanage tragedy see documents hesitantly released 70 years after the incident by the *Oireachtas* (National Parliament): <http://goo.gl/gjVEM>, and <http://youtu.be/StfwptHbzaI>. On de Valéra's speech see *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valéra 1917-1973*, Maurice Moynihan ed, Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1980, 440-466. See Peter Tyrrell, *Founded on Fear*, Dublin: Transworld Ireland, 2008.

therefore, “wasn’t complaining” when he soliloquized his thoughts on how he “liked rain. The hiss of the water and the earth. This is life I said. We’ve got all the time in the world” (McCabe 1-2). Francie’s childish understanding of life (in post-independence Ireland) and his isolated formation, marginalized by society, resonates with Giorgio Agamben’s analysis of bare life in *Homo Sacer*, in which life, politicized into a seemingly barren boot camp, can be ruled, as it has been, by the totalitarian State. Individuals in Agamben’s reading of life emerge as marginalized tools who should submit to the ruling sovereign power.<sup>31</sup>

Francie’s conception of Irish life, shared with his friend Joe Purcell, even though temporary, highlights my argument of perceiving the modern, meta-nationalist Irish as a third form to the duality of Irishness introduced by Graham and Maley.<sup>32</sup> Characters such as Francie have united to form a unique class: rebels whose perceptions and narratives of formation deviate from the generic dichotomous binary of nationalist and post-colonial, or nationalist and modernist. These characters, therefore, become the very force, most prevalent in the post-independence modern Irish novel of formation, that proved the postist theoreticians that barriers which would separate the text from its historical context, in this case post-independence national formations and self-referential individual deformations, have been demolished.<sup>33</sup> By becoming the voice of a lost, rebellious generation, traumatized characters such as Francie not only represent the psychology that dominated their society but also the transitional stages of Irish formations that had plagued the nation, namely, the shift from the psychology of revolution and objective rebellion to an egoist mentality of rebellion, blind subversiveness, and stasis.

In *The Butcher Boy*, McCabe re-imagines an Irish society dominated by the State’s architecture of containment and consciousness of forgetfulness. Francie’s non-conformity and rebellion appears at odds with such a society, in which those who share Francie’s non-conformism are exiled to places such as industrial schools,

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<sup>31</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Daniel Heller-Roazen (trans.), Stanford University Press, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> See Colin Graham and Willy Maley, “Irish Studies and Postcolonial Theory”, in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol 7, No.2, 1999, 149.

<sup>33</sup> In their introduction to an especial issue of *Irish Studies Review*, Colin Graham and Willy Maley discuss an obvious inconsistency in allowing for a text to be read in light of a certain theory while “keeping ... backgrounds separate”. They regarded textual and historical background necessary in reading any Irish text, especially the modern Irish novel. This, unlike what post-modernists such as Camille Paglia claim, reconfirms the relevance and necessity of historical readings in Irish Studies. See Colin Graham and Willy Maley, “Irish Studies and Postcolonial Theory”, in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol 7, No.2, 1999, 149-152.

Magdalene Laundries, prisons and mental asylums where the State can exercise the binary of normalized behavior or permanent isolation. The Foucauldian perception of formation regards schools, prisons, and (mental) hospitals as the very sites of the power-hungry, authoritarian State, under which individuals are subject to either isolation or conformity. To dominate Francie's anarchic non-identarianism, the normalizing society confines him to institutions such as an industrial school, a mental hospital, and finally prison, places that, according to Foucault, not only are founded on the State's politics of confinement, but they also contribute to the development of the State.<sup>34</sup> To maintain control, the State resorts to institutionalized normalization, where the most genuinely oppositional principles and individuals are formed as a result of the same level of oppression:

Goodbye sergeant I said, right says Fabian and the bullnecks then they were gone off down the avenue in the patrol car an that was the last I seen of my old friends sergeant Sausage. They took my cloths the pair of fuckers nearly tore them off me come on come on they says. Then they gave me this white thing it tied at the back. What's this I says Emergency Ward Ten? One of them gives me a dig in the ribs and says you needn't think you'll get away with that kind of lip here (McCabe 213).

My contention is that through such institutionalized politics of forgetfulness, the Fenian State succeeded in not only controlling and directing society towards a static, conformist structure but also containing societal anomalies that surfaced as a result of nationalists' neo-conservative perspective, namely, poverty, illegitimacy, and infanticide. For instance, in *Angela's Ashes*, Frank McCourt's stark, personal portrayal of Dublin, Cavan, and Limerick, where his father was refused any assistance even though he had 'done his bit', McCourt recalls the State as an inherently oppressive one, in which no one seems to remember neither the days of revolution nor the poignant years after the wars, and those who remember regret that they "were better off under the English" (*Angela's Ashes* 50). McCabe's portrayal of post-independence Ireland, though set decades after McCourt's novel, offers a similar perception of the Irish impossible dilemma: the Irish either have to accept the anomalies, or face further isolation and internal exile.

Francie, a more contemporary variation of Joyce's non-conformist Stephen Dedalus, is introduced accepting neither of the choices offered by the oppressive society; rather, he establishes his uniquely rebellious identity based on his

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<sup>34</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Random House, 1995, 195-228.

understanding of individual formations and social deformations. While for Francie there is a “crack” and an anomaly in their postist social formations, individual formations too in post-independence Ireland are nothing short of a comedy of errors. Such idiosyncratic, though childish, understandings are especially manifested in Francie’s interaction with townspeople, and their normalizing reactions to his indulgence in the unknown:

People of the town ... gawping after us like we’d marched through the street without our trousers. The women whispered there they go the poor orphans. I had a mind to turn round and shout hey fuckface I’m no orphan but then I remembered I was studying hard to get the Francie Brady Not a Bad Bastard And More Diploma at the end of the year so I clammed up and gave her a sad, ashamed look instead (McCabe 74).

His narrative not only provides a carnivalesque portrayal of the post-independence Irish society but it also highlights the corrupt architecture of “dirty bog-trotters” who legitimize such anomalous, equivocal formations (McCabe 75). Unlike other *Bildungshelden*, Francie spends a considerable part of his life defying nationalists’ institutionalized politics of normalization in correctional facilities. His *Bildung*, therefore, is neither about gentlemanly formation nor bureaucratic hegemony; rather, it deals with understanding and mastering the structureless labyrinth of Irish society;<sup>35</sup> deciphering the nationalists’ dubious dialogism in introducing the duality of modernity and agrarian Ireland; and finally in unlearning a parochial meta-discourse used by the Church which empowered the State to render people and parts of the nation invisible.<sup>36</sup> Such narratives, in this respect, transform into a dynamic consciousness that the nativist Irish society flags as a threat, and as Francie understands endeavours to forget and “wash them clean” of their walls (McCabe 95).

As Francie leaves the “house of a hundred windows”, namely, a reform school managed by priests, and says “goodbye and good fucking riddance”, he not only sheds any residue of a sense of belonging to nationalism and the State’s architecture of division but fully embraces his isolation: “Can you hear me? But I didn’t know what it was I wanted them to hear” (McCabe 96, 140). However, it is the self-induced exile in the form of isolation that helps rebels such as Francie to come to terms, albeit

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<sup>35</sup> On Structurelessness see Joreen Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness”, in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 17, 1972-73, 151-165.

<sup>36</sup> This is the same oppressive, meta-discourse used by the Church that decides to relocate, if not completely dismiss, the promiscuous Father Sullivan when his affairs with boys accidentally surfaces. Such sexually anomalous characters, according to this meta-discourse, must be contained, simply to reduce the possibility of socio-cultural dissents.

temporarily and mostly intermittent, with their society, and to continue with their self-referential self-formation. Like McCourt's narrator in *Angela's Ashes*, Francie finds ignorance and isolation the best possible pattern of formation. Not only did he disown Joe, but he also embraced the changes that previously were seen as barriers: "there's to be no more about John Wayne or any of that, that's all over. Everything's changed now its all new things" (McCabe 158). Through self-induced, internal exile, in other words, Francie becomes another example of modern Irish protagonists who embrace the present and disown the nationalist retrospective correctional future, and thus transcend the stereotypical binary of Irish formations. Nostalgia and resentment, nevertheless, remain to be the dominant forces in his narrative of formation. Unlike nationalists, namely, those who have submitted to State's politics of formation, Francie's indulgence in the past has one objective: to emphasize his departure from "all the beautiful things of this world" which are nothing but "lies" (McCabe 198), to gain further independence and "unlock something precious" (McCabe 78).

Under the nativist regime, substantiated by legitimization of centres for institutional normalization such as prisons and mental houses and a growing dominance of parochialism in Irish schools, one question dominates McCabe's critique of post-independence Irish society: who is Francis, or Francie, Brady? Is he a moral outcast, psychologically unstable young Irishman? Is he a radical reflection of the post-independence Irish society dominated and antagonized by the sluggishness of society to embrace what O'Faolain regards as the "new possibilities" (*Are You Somebody?* 91)? Is he part of a large crowd of non-conformist young rebels, whose source of belligerence is to be sought in society's post-revolution stasis, and nationalists' drastic shift of opinion with respect to rebels and revolutionaries? Is he a child, or a broad representation of a young generation of Irish rebels, molested and betrayed by nativists' parochialism and the Church? Is he a phantasmagoric representation of socio-cultural anomalies at the heart of Irish society, or is he a sensibly real character, namely, a friend (of Joe Purcell), a neglected son (of Benny Brady and the unnamed mother, the ex-revolutionaries), an unstable murderer (of Mrs. Nugent), and a sworn enemy (of the Nugents, the "half English" family) who tends to depict and challenge the aforementioned anomalies? (McCabe 27). According to McCabe's narrative, he is all and none of the above. Francie, and not Francis, is a mere memory that the State finds too true and thus too horrific to allow to be remembered. Francie Brady, the individual and the national example of

deformation, emerges as the subject of nationalists' Freudian association and repression: a cathexis of anti-nationalist forces joined by a haunting past; a rebellious libidinal force that needs to be sentenced to an indefinite exile in the nationalist Unconscious. The resulting narrative, therefore, narrativizes an impulsive isolation, imposed by the nationalist State and its politics of containment and forgetfulness that would lead to either a mythologized anonymity, or a gothic rendition of Francie's actions, labelling him insane and thus irrelevant and dangerous.

Francie's narrative is at one and the same time rich with depicting an intrusive anonymity, which however has been masked by the State's 'Eire-Irish' historical arrogance, and his socially anarchic efforts to dismantle such an oppressive historical architecture of division.<sup>37</sup> His identity (and its formation), as an example of individual and national Bildung, transforms into a mythic, Adornian unknown, namely, a contradictory and unexperienced concept, which Gerry Smyth regards as the example of post-colonial counter-literature, formed to enable the modern youths to defy the colonial matrix of control and identarian formation.<sup>38</sup> His non-identarianism manifests itself in the form of a carnivalesque narrative that mocks the nationalist parochial authoritarianism: "I was supposed to say *Et clamor meus ad te veniat*. Et fucky wucky ticky tocky that was what I said instead. It didn't matter as long as you muttered something" (McCabe 76). By mocking the State's religiosity and parochial blindness, not only did Francie reveal the street children's identity, namely, their societal and political non-conformity, but he also stepped up to appreciate his own true self: a rebellious thus un-Irish self that has disowned both his conformist Irish identarianism and family.

In one of the earliest instances of self-recognition and 'id-entity' formation, McCabe has Francie confront the half English Nugent family:<sup>39</sup> a family with roots in both Ireland and Britain, yet bound by their imperial arrogance in perceiving the Irish life. Mrs. Nugent's haphazard, but provocative, comments on Francie's family, calling them pigs, at once sets Francie on his eventual path of self-(referential)

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<sup>37</sup> As I discussed in previous chapters, the State's nationalist efforts were founded on their dualistic politics of unity and division, namely, taking advantage of the power of the proletariat, to lead their telos of nationalistic formation, by at the same time uniting and then disowning such a productive drive.

<sup>38</sup> See Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, 18-30.

<sup>39</sup> By using the word 'id-identity' I mean to highlight a self-referential, rebellious form of identity, most prevalent in the modern Irish novel (of formation). A variation of Dedalus-ism that is more prone to self-reflexivity and self-referential formation than solipsistic totalitarianism.



deformation, and provides the narrative with a sense of direction. Her remarks are not only derogatory but also historically discriminatory,<sup>40</sup> which broadly resonate with what Smyth considers as the English way of seeing Ireland: a barren, unsophisticated wild land.<sup>41</sup>

Francie's damaged self-formation as a result of such a remark can be understood by investigating the labyrinthine, psycho-social resonances of this insult, namely pig, in one's life. In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White explore ambivalent nuances of the word pig in the European literature and culture. The contradiction, note Stallybrass and White, lies not just in the depreciatory tone of the word but also in the degrading visual reference and the animal's near human skin tone and participation in human life's ecosystem. According to Stallybrass and White,

Not only did the pink pigmentation and apparent nakedness of the pig disturbingly resemble the flesh of European babies (thereby transgressing the man-animal opposition) but pigs were usually kept in peculiarly close proximity to the house and were fed from the household's leftovers. In other words, pigs were almost, but not quite, members of the household ... Its mode of life was not different from, but alarmingly imbricated with the forms of life which betokened civility (*The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* 47).

Mrs. Nugent's remark, in this respect, should not be seen as a thoughtless, personal attack on Francie's individual character; rather, the contextual reference is far more expansive, as it refers to Ireland's geopolitical position, a financially dependent, unsophisticated barren land that neighbours Britain and thus unconsciously provokes proximity of the pig's habitat to human's. It also satirizes Francie's Irish agrarianism in being an out-dated copy of Victorian street children, imported to the island as a result of 800 years of colonial exploitation. Francie's reaction to Mrs. Nugent's remark is puerile and excessive, yet emblematic of the depth of his pain and need for an identity regardless of the consequences: he sets out to collect "the Pig Tax Toll" from the Nugents (McCabe 11). By intimidating the Nugents and collecting 'the pig tax toll', Francie prioritizes psychological Bildung over proper psycho-social formation,<sup>42</sup> even though negative and de-formative, and sets out to become anything

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<sup>40</sup> On State's socio-historical division see George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 334-379.

<sup>41</sup> See Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and The Nation*, London: Pluto Press, 1997, 44-45.

<sup>42</sup> While psychosocial and psychological Bildung have been regarded as interchangeable definitions of formation, each follows a certain teleological pattern. Psychological Bildung leads to a mature self-centric understanding of one's sexual identity and their relation to society, whereas psychosocial

but the stereotypical Irish ‘bogman,’ or simply that which allowed Mrs. Nugent to make those degrading remarks. In other words, his radical reaction is nothing but an internal non-conformist response to an air of conformist identarianism that had dominated the nation as an aftermath of the 1920s chaos: a period of complete stasis and denial, unappreciative of what a revolutionary form of Bildung might grant the Irish. Francie’s ‘pig tax toll,’ in this respect, is one of the earliest instances of non-conformity and rebellion against the nationalist consciousness of silence and forgetfulness by allowing the young Irish to experiment with the concept that is neither Irish nor anti-colonial. The pig tax toll, in fact, translates as a counter-response to Mrs. Nugent’s English perception of Irishness, a comical reversal whereby the porcine and human change their habitual roles; that now it was the time for “Mrs Nooge” to pay the pig and trust in Francie’s mercy (McCabe 12).

Francie’s symbolic pig tax toll, moreover, resonates with what Ramnath finds as the counter-power streams in the decolonizing nonconformist movements in previously colonized nations. By establishing his new tax system, Francie forms structural obstacles for the State and their architecture of formations. To maintain his fully dependent and yet isolated counter-power force, Francie further tries to distance himself and his ideals from any form of social subjectivism that has traces of not just imperial British identity but also Irish identarianism: “I told him I wanted to hear nothing about football either. You don’t think it’s a great thing the town won the cut?... No, I says. I said it was a pity they didn’t lose” (McCabe 13). Football, a bourgeois perception of education, classic music, art (visual), significance of family and many more together with an intrinsic resentment regarding the controlling State suddenly transform into a mine field set up by Francie’s traumatized psyche enabling him to distinguish himself from the agrarian bogmen pigs.<sup>43</sup> Francie’s defiance and denial (of anything Irish and English) awards him recognition and (self-) identity, yet what he finally gains is anything but a proper Bildung. His ritualistic process of formation, in this respect, is a modern Irish version of a progressive anti-Bildung, which according to Gregory Castle is instrumentalized in the negative dialectical discourse of novels such as *Jude the Obscure*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young*

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Bildung, in spite of its sexual foundation, is centered on individual’s social development and mobility. See Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 35-58.

<sup>43</sup> Despite its Greek and Roman ancient history, historians regard the 9<sup>th</sup> century England as the birthplace of modern football. See *Historia Brittonum*: <http://goo.gl/tOAIH>.

*Man*, namely, narratives whose protagonists appropriate nonconformity and choose obscurity and the unknown over social subjectivism and bourgeois identarianism.<sup>44</sup>

Like Hardy's Jude, Francie finds himself unable to transform, to fully break away from such a suppressive nationalist mentality; however unlike Jude, by indulging in the oddity of his actions especially his pig tax toll he finds a way to manipulate and caricature the widely politicized and thus polarized post-independence Irish society.<sup>45</sup> The result, though redundant and significantly personal, is rekindling a silenced Irish revolutionary consciousness in the marginalized Francie: a traumatized young boy, neglected by his parents, forgotten by his society, and betrayed by the Church. Francie's narrative, in this respect, becomes a counter-nativist response to narratives of normalization. Not only did nationalists impose their politics of chastity and forgetfulness on the post-independence Irish society and the concomitant literature, but they also engaged in producing a neoconservative, spellbound national literature, which could support their politics of paralysis.<sup>46</sup> Francie's chaotic narrative emerges as a fantastic means that would allow anti-nationalists to debunk nationalists' oppressive realism, contributing to an already present binary of nationalist and anti-nationalist. As Rosemary Jackson explains, fantastic narratives of rebellion and non-conformity such as Francie's, are not only pivotal in reflecting the formation of national and individual independent identity, but they also reveal the underlying socio-cultural and political corruptions and repressiveness of postist regimes. It is the fantasy-oriented dimension of (libertarian) literature, Jackson notes, that enables a rebellious protagonist such as Francie to highlight the obscure and untouched corners of the isolationist State; it is fantastic literature, in other words, that,

points or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality, on to that which lies outside the value system. The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture, that which

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<sup>44</sup> See Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, Tallahassee, University Press of Florida, 2006, 77-100.

<sup>45</sup> In *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, Castle finds Jude Fawley's efforts "to transform aesthetic consciousness" into a non-identarian variation of Bildung a failed attempt, which eventually leads to this belief that "he can transform neither himself nor the world around him" (100).

<sup>46</sup> A critique (or a manifestation) of such narratives can be found in the works of Kate O'Brien (*Pray For the Wanderer* [1938]; O'Brien's frank critique of neo-Parnellism practiced by de Valera); Jim Phelan (*Jail Journals*); Edward McCourt (*Home is the Stranger* [1950], especially his depiction of Irish families in transition, namely, moving from total stasis of the 50s Ireland to a 'brave new world' full of changes and odd new things in Canada, and The States); and Frank O'Connor (especially My Oedipus Complex in his *The Stories of Frank O'Connor* [1952; republished as *My Oedipus Complex and Other Short Stories* in 2005 by Penguin Classics], where he recounts the binary of dynamic Irish formations under the stasis of de Valeran supremacy).

has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent' (*Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion 2*).

Francie's narrative of negativity and deformation emerges as a phantasmagoric reflection of a normalized Irish society, paralyzed by nativists' historical provincialism and emphatic parochialism. Francie becomes a mad rebel, an Othered counter-conformist, who narrates the bizarreness of the nationalist State,<sup>47</sup> unveils their concerns and trepidations of facing another revolution, this time a counter-nationalist one, highlights a paralysis that has dominated Irish formations, and highlights the dichotomy of Irish modernity and nationalist agrarian vision, by trying to be anything but a rural bogman.

### Francie as The Madman: Madness and Bildung

Madness in Francie's non-conventional Bildung resonates with what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari regard as the very impetus behind an independent, non-conformist individual identity. For Deleuze and Guattari, psychosis is the cure for an Oedipal State and its politics of conformity, namely, a State founded on internalization and dominance of subjects by way of physical force or societal norms.<sup>48</sup> Madness in such a hegemonic society emerges as a radical pattern that leads the individual towards proper self-fashioning and Bildung by alienating that individual from accepting the State's Othering politics of normalization; madness becomes a self-contradictory, unstable concept that not only challenges the State and its politics of formation but critiques conventional formation by introducing introspection or inward self-criticism as the only route towards proper Bildung. To defy the Oedipal, neocolonial State, one must appropriate the mechanics of self-alienation and disconnection, namely, becoming a psychotic, incontrollable and dichotomous individual. In light of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of self-formation, Francie's indulgence in the unknown and

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<sup>47</sup> Reference to Pete Townshend's song "Pinball Wizard" 1969 seeks to highlight Francie's chaotic, though significant, role as a narratorial mouthpiece in revealing the truth by acting as a nonchalant, insane voice whose actions directly target nationalists' politics of confinement and forgetfulness. By indulging in insanity, in fact, Francie provides himself with an impregnable cover against nationalists' identitarian societal norms.

<sup>48</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 29-53.

the non-identity, therefore, is a “radical break from power in the form of a disconnection” from society’s norms and processes of internalization (*Anti-Oedipus* xxiii). According to Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of anti-colonial dissident movements, the anarchic potential embedded in neurosis emerges as the very element that challenges the State’s politics of control and “territorialization” (*Anti-Oedipus* 156). For Deleuze and Guattari, in other words, societal disconnection and self-alienation are the answers to the State’s politics of conformity, a concept that alienates the individual from accepting the State’s norms. Francie as the resulting individual, emerges as a social dissident whose formation not only critiques the conformist stability of society but also challenges individuals’ sense of belonging by way of inward self-criticism.

Placelessness, in this respect, becomes a major theme in the formation of young, non-conformist rebels such as Francie, who find the State’s retrograde understanding of Irishness as not just an oppressive political agenda but a developing concept that challenges the revolutionary spirit of the men of 1916 and 1920. Revolutionaries like Francie fall under Deleuze and Guattari’s rubric of mad rebels, who seek self-formation in societal disconnection and dissidence. According to the nativist State, Ireland can best be described as “a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children” (*Speeches and Statements of de Valéra* 334). However, to people such as Collins, Pearse, Griffith, de Valéra and many other once revolutionaries, independence was nothing but an escape from the very same imperial culture of socio-cultural subordination and political subjugation; independence for them became an escape route that, much to revolutionaries’ surprise, transformed into a path of nationalist formation and internal othering, manifested, for example, in de Valéra’s snobbishness in drafting the 1937 constitution.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Much has been written on de Valéra’s thorough snobbish lordliness despite his pleas for Irish republicanism; his efforts in drafting the 1937 Constitution sets a new standard of haughtiness by continuing to count women as second class citizens; and seeking papal approval for Constitution (despite the very elements that breathed life into the 1916 Proclamation of Independence, promising a non-religious, unbiased Ireland). See Seamus O’Tuama, “Revisiting the Irish Constitution and de Valéra’s Grand Vision” in *Irish Journal of Law Studies*, Vol 2, 54-87. On the de Valeran Constitution betraying Irish women, see Peter Beresford Ellis, “de Valéra’s Betrayal of the Women 1916”, in *Irish Democrat*, July 5, 2006: <http://goo.gl/wdaSC>.

In *The Butcher Boy*, McCabe depicts such a blatant Janus-faced polarity through a stark characterization of sexually promiscuous Father Sullivan, Father Bubbles, Father Dom, and the policemen, Sausage. In producing these characters, McCabe highlights a concealed contradictoriness that reveals the hidden side of their nature, often masked as being part of their duty. Father Sullivan, also known as Tiddly, for instance, an authoritarian priest known for his puritanical holiness, is introduced as being a child molester. It is the never-ending duality that not only marred Francie's perception of formation as an independent individual but transformed into a nightmarish oppressive national principle, penetrating industrial schools and thus changing them into reformatory prisons with a distinct understanding of Bildung. Self-formation, therefore, not only deviates from its universal definition, transforming into a conviction which needs to be confessed by children on a daily basis, but also loses its significance as a psychosocial development and changes to a resentful part of parochial everydayness in 'prison schools', or in Francie's terms, "the incredible School for Pigs" (McCabe 68).<sup>50</sup>

*The Butcher Boy* originally introduces education as a Foucauldian concept subsumed by the State's politics of control. Francie, like the street children in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*, finds education at once ineffectual and ambivalent, an unwelcome element that intensified the gap between Joe and himself. However, I argue that there is another dimension to McCabe's engagement with the concept of education in Francie's narrative. Although education had lost its significance and transformed into an instrument used by the State, it is because of education and the social stature it grants the damaged and the deprived that such rebellious figures such as Francie become the very face of Irish literature, providing a stark critique of the State's politics of formation. Protagonists in these narratives reflect individuals whose existence was meant to be censored under the State's politics: "adopters, single mothers, illegitimate children, and former residents" of industrial schools for pigs (Smith 5). However, albeit education, though intermittent, partial and religiously repressive, unrecognized characters such as Francie can learn to "think in contradiction," understand the deeper layers of State's architecture of containment (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 145); and by indulging in the authority of their fantastic

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<sup>50</sup> By 'prison schools' I meant to further emphasize the nationalist politics of forgetfulness that had ravaged not just the political aspect of Irishness but the very concept of Irish individualism by dominating schools and turning them into virtual ideological prisons.

voices invoke suppressed memories which, according to Ricoeur, are nothing but “a critique of power” (“Imagination, Testimony and Trust” 16). For by ‘thinking in contradiction’, Adorno argues, against the nationalist reality, rebels may be able to deconstruct the State’s definition of reality from within, or in Adorno’s terms, “a contradiction in reality, it is a contradiction against reality” (*Negative Dialectics* 145).

Through education and by appreciating its dialogical discourse, members of a socio-cultural minority such as Francie and his family find the courage to rise from the excluded and face the politics that regarded them as a threat to the liberation of the Irish. While in Francie’s case education lasted for only a short time and was channelled through a parochial depravity, it is through education that the uncredited, underprivileged part of society provides a radical critique that further renounces the State’s deformation and welcomes the plurality of the 1980s. After his return from the School of Pigs, for instance, Francie exhibits obvious changes in his social mannerism and integrity, although superficial and in accordance with his ‘plans and schemes’ to dominate the world of without: “it was nice talking to them there beside the cornflakes shelf” (McCabe 102). What Francie seeks in return for such a change, resonates with the State’s politics of forgetfulness, namely, to be erased from the public’s memory “will you ever forget them old pig days I says. Oh now Francie, says Mrs. Connolly, don’t be talking!” (McCabe 102). However, he seeks forgetfulness and erasure only to prepare the very selective memory for a much greater re-appearance, which he ‘planned and schemed’ while being on exile in the School for Pigs. Ironically enough, after killing Mrs. Nugent his narrative shifts into using a much gentler expressive discourse, as though a lesson has been learned: “you never thought you’d see the day the Mother of God would be coming to this town, eh? he says and looked at me as much as to say it was me arranged the whole thing” (McCabe 196). Francie’s narrative, which initially sounded marginalized and alien, emerges to include a distant yet more in control voice, namely, a voice that sounds to be aware of consequences that are about to happen.

According to Ricoeur, in his discussion of modern Irish novel as a vehicle for national anti-colonial emotions, creating a proper Eire-Irish form of Irish identity required the regime to invest their political drive in producing an obedient literature,

namely, a means of expression that is socially selective, and historically biased.<sup>51</sup> This, according to Smyth, is a variation of nationalist literary resistance, namely, an anticipated implosion that helps deconstruct the colonial boundaries and identity.<sup>52</sup> However, what Smyth and Ricoeur have failed to notice is how such anti-colonial, nationalist efforts are manipulated to reproduce a microcosmic matrix of colonial sub-narratives governed by the State, which emerges as a neocolonial discourse that subordinates and rejects the values it originally used to advocate. The de Valeran, nationalist narrative of *Sinn Féin* (We Ourselves), for instance, was formed to reflect the formation of Celtic, progressively anti-colonial individuals, whose nationalist legitimacy, and trust in the State, was regarded as an unwavering merit. This replicate narrative of national formation, however, contradicts the narratives of Un-Irish rebels such as Ivan in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*, or Francie in McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*. As Francie's narrative, for instance, not only defied a State-sponsored definition of formation but also questioned the authenticity of nationalist memory. According to the nationalist principle of forgetfulness, therefore, narratives like Francie's are vagaries of a "false memory", as Linda Williams claims, lost in their phantasmagoric depiction of an anti-nationalist sub-reality ("Mirrors Without Memories" 12).<sup>53</sup>

Francie's narrative establishes its own adaptation of 'We Ourselves' based on its antiauthoritarian interpretation of the word. By indulging in his self-referential, multifaceted narratorial voice, Francie transforms his non-identarianism into a resistant narrative that defies the nationalist boundaries of literature. By "telling them differently and by providing a space for the confrontation between opposing testimonies", namely, what the nationalist, nativist regime wants to show and what really needs to be seen, Francie transforms his representational narrative of social intolerance and psychological incongruity into an inclusive, self-conscious vehicle of expression which revisits the suppressed memories of traumatized children in industrial schools (Ricoeur, "Narrative Imagination" 17).<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, "Imagination, Testimony and Trust" in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Continental Philosophy*, eds. Mark Dooley and Richard Kearney, London: Routledge, 1998, 12-17.

<sup>52</sup> See Gerry Smyth, "The Novel as Resistance" in *The Novel and the Nation*, 21-25.

<sup>53</sup> See Linda Williams, "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary" in *Film Quarterly*, 46:3, 1993, 9-12.

<sup>54</sup> McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* appears as an apolitical narrative that narrativizes a psychologically troubled Irish boy, with clichéd socio-cultural background (of familial and social difficulties). A representational narrative, *The Butcher Boy* emerges, on the contrary, as a politically motivated narrative aware of the ongoing changes imposed by the State. In an interview at EFACIS 2013, NUI



Francie's non-formulaic *Bildung* during his (internal) exile contributes to the definition of meta-nationalist Irishness particularly in the 1950s and 60s by transforming into an antiauthoritarian voice which personifies a marginalized generation of young rebels, betrayed and silenced by nationalists' architecture of forgetfulness and a patronizing binary of patriotism and rebellion. Protagonists such as Francie, therefore, emerge as voices who belong to a generation whose narrative of deformation is an active reversal of the de Valeran politics of suppression and discrimination; they become a resistant generation who survived the harsh realism of colonial subjugation, Irish wars and the hegemonic, retrograde politics of nationalist patriarchy. Moreover, Francie belongs to a generation of Irish non-conformist rebels who shared a staunch understanding of anti-imperialism with revivalists; fervour for independence with revolutionaries; their conviction as being the descendant of the legendary Brian Boru with nationalists; and a growing hatred for an internal, neocolonialist variation of socio-cultural subjugation with counter-revolutionaries.

In one of his quests for non-identarian self formation, Francie's radical narratorial voice assaults the reader by presenting a harrowing narrative of mal-formation combined with psychological vendetta and revenge: he enters Nugents' house and without any hesitation defecates on the carpet of the bedroom: "it really was a big one, shaped like a submarine, tapered at the end so your hole won't close with a bang, studded with currant with a little question mark of steam curling upwards" (McCabe 62). To Francie's anti -English / -Nugent mind, what he did was a "credit", worthy of praise and recognition (McCabe 62), a motive that should earn him recognition and help him find his self lost between his familial disintegration and social decline. Soiling in Nugents' bedroom, in other words, is a recalcitrant subliminal response to the harsh post-independence reality; to Britain's efforts to keep the island divided; and to the State's politics of subordination.

Francie's aggression emerges as a fictive reflection of IRA's fatal post-independence insurgencies, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s, known as the "insurgency phase", which as Peter Taylor explains, reflects a heavy militarization of rebels (*Behind the Mask The IRA and Sinn Féin* 32).<sup>55</sup> Francie's anarchic vendetta,

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Galway, Neil Jordan also confirmed how McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* "reflects [his] childhood the way it really happened".

<sup>55</sup> Until late 1950s, the IRA was a poorly armed rebel, paramilitary force, disowned by its creators, which was expecting an inevitable division that happened in 1969. See Peter Taylor, *Behind the Mask: The IRA and Sinn Féin*, 35-43.

though only symbolically, resonates with IRA bombings in England during the 1970s. It was a hectic time when rebels joined forces to rekindle a united Ireland by taking “the heat off Belfast and Derry” and shifting it towards the English (Taylor 45). Bombings in Yorkshire (1973), pubs in Guildford and Woolwich (1974), as well as a bombing, though informed, in London targeting the House of Parliament (1974) were some of the antiauthoritarian counter-responses to 800 hundred years of British colonial presence in Ireland. Assaults which reflect at once the revolutionaries’ discontentment with their postist regime in handling socio-historical issues such as the infamous partition, neo-capitalist economic dependency (especially on British market), as well as a vague state of internal affairs, especially the State’s politics of containment.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Francie’s response not only corroborates his antiauthoritarian identity but it also illustrates his childish innocence that has been changed into a monstrous horror under the State’s politics of containment. The State’s reaction neither implied behavioural correction nor social improvement; rather, rebels and nonconformist were confined to correctional institutions, and reformatories infested with deprived, power-hungry Christian Brothers or the Irish Sisters of Charity, the former molested rebel orphans such as Francie, as the latter followed the State’s order to silence those who inquired about places such as Cavan orphanage.

The motives that led Francie towards a series of deconstructive actions, ending in his psychosocial demise, I argue, were not just historical, namely, a historical and national feeling of antipathy towards anything British, but political as well. My contention is that the roots of Francie’s social antagonism and national antiauthoritarianism can be found in the institutionalization of containment sponsored by the State in the form of child-care institutions. Defying Mrs. Nugent and her British authoritarianism, albeit partially fantastic, justifies Francie’s distressful narratorial tone in the first pages of his narrative, where he unravels his radical account of how he disparaged the State, namely his rural society, by forming a personal “hide” after he debunked the State’s norms of containment (McCabe 1).

One of the courses through which the state introduced and enacted its politics of containment was the constitution, especially the Articles on family and the child’s

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<sup>56</sup> To these angry rebels, the elected government neither strived to unite the poor and the rich, nor did they strategize to gain financial independence from the discriminatory ecosystem of the Empire. To them, the socio-economic failure of the twentieth-century nationalist government resembled the doomed strategy of the government in 1846 that ended in the notorious great famine with 1 million dead. See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 123-153.

psychosocial formation. On the significance of family vis-à-vis how it has to provide for the safety and psychological fitness of children, the Constitution regards family as the prime source of protection and solace, however considering priorities which the State can override. The state therefore emerges as the medium that may intervene and contain families' inefficiencies, when they fail to provide for their children due to poverty, sexual deviance, and war-related disabilities.<sup>57</sup> In this respect, the State transforms into an inclusive impetus that can contain anomalous familial conditions, which may damage the State's socio-cultural authority. Francie's narrative, however, begins as a counter-conformist response to such an authoritarian diplomatic supremacy as it introduces Francie's "dark, archway" hideout where "no one could see you" even the State; it is a place where has provided shelter and solace to a young, socially rejected rebel with an incensed town after him (McCabe 1).

It would be fundamentally flawed to regard Francie's *hide* as a symbolic reference to a child's hiding place. As for Francie, his hideout represents a concept, namely, the ability to choose their future and life as a liberated, non-political nation, rather than a location. As the narrative unfolds, Francie is introduced as a rebel haunted by his anti-social non-conformism, imprisoned for his anomalous anti-bourgeois radicalism in the State's correctional facilities;<sup>58</sup> and his hide emerges as his personal interpretation of the binary of freedom and imprisonment. It is the place where he can choose to imprison himself and hide from the State's normalized freedom, inundated with corrupt "bogmen cops" and depraved priests (McCabe 201). Such a dichotomous opposition between the State's politics of confinement and Francie's deliberate self-imprisonment is what makes the crux of McCabe's engagement with the influence of industrial schools and reformatories in the 1960s on a young generation of Irish dissidents, which manifests itself in the form of "houses of a hundred windows", madhouses and industrial Schools for Pigs. While his hide symbolizes a childish idyllic lifestyle, safety combined with the inconvenience of agrarian stasis and self-imposed incarceration and inwardness, the correctional houses pose as the State's Foucauldian dichotomous embodiment of the binary of freedom

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<sup>57</sup> "In exceptional cases, where the parents for physical or moral reasons fail in their duty towards their children, the State as guardian of the common good, by appropriate means shall endeavor to provide the place of the parents, but always with due regard for the natural and imprescriptible rights of the child". See *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (The Constitution of Ireland), Article 42 (5).

<sup>58</sup> My understanding and use of correctional facilities is influenced by Foucault's definition of State sponsored suppression in asylums, schools, hospitals and prisons. See Michel Foucault, "The Birth of the Asylum" in Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, Random House, 1984.

and confinement. To Francie's rebellious pattern of formation, such institutions of physical confinement and psychological incarceration pose no threat, and are "only a joke" retold by the State's bogmen to maintain further control (McCabe 214).

According to Francie's Foucauldian perception of *Bildung*, in other words, these houses of hundred windows only ensure "an ethical continuity between the world of madness and the world of reason by practicing a social segregation that would guarantee bourgeois morality the universality of fact and permit it to be imposed as a law upon all forms of insanity" (Foucault, "The Birth of the Asylum" 150).<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, for Francie being confined to his hideout in the name of freedom is as ludicrous and fallacious as learning that he will not be hanged for the crime he had satisfactorily committed: "I said to Sausage: will they hang me? I hope they hang me. He looked at me and says: I'm sorry Francie but there's no more hanging. No more hanging? I says. For fuck's safe! What's this country coming to!" (McCabe 213).

The reformatory Ireland under the State's politics of formation was as socio-politically questionable as Francie's false perception of freedom, combining freedom with ideological and socio-political confinement. For rebels such as Francie, being hanged is a punishment far more pleasant than accepting internal exile or surrendering to the State's consciousness of conformity. In fact, for rebels like him concepts such as freedom and confinement are the inseparable constituents of the binary of identarian and non-identarian Irish identity. While Francie chooses to stay in his hide and live a free life, it is the State that turns the island into a nationwide prison by enforcing its power of dominance through reformatories, mental asylums and hospitals, and gaining further control by deciding whom to send to such institutions.

Recalling his hide with an apparent satisfaction and safety, and with such long intervals of "twenty or thirty or forty years", becomes Francie's sublimation of a state of oppression which was experienced not just by his family but also by his peers throughout the nation (McCabe 1, 214). While Francie's parents had to cope with the hostile zeitgeist of 1916 and the 20s, being constantly repressed by both the British and nationalist regimes, Francie and his generation emerged as byproducts of the same culture of containment and nativist oppression. However, I argue, here lies a subtle difference: although the aggression and vengeful radicalism exhibited by Francie and his generation is unprecedented, their traumatized antiauthoritarianism is

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<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Birth of the Asylum" in Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, Random House, 1984.

nothing but a creation of their war-inflicted immediate predecessors, namely, those who themselves were psychosocial victims of a haunting past. Francie's aggressiveness, in this respect, can be read as an uninvited legacy he has received from his father, who himself was a victim of social prejudice and cultural marginalization, and his mother whose traumatic hospitalization in a "kiphouse" or a "garage", namely, a mental hospital, had contributed to her suicide more than anything else (McCabe 35, 144). In an interview with Wendy Herstein, McCabe clarifies Francie's anarchic restlessness as being a generational echo of a sad, repressed memory: "Francis becomes aware that the reason his father doesn't get along with his brother is not entirely his father's own fault in that he himself had been institutionalized and bereft. So [this sadness] it strikes back through the generations" ("You Lie in Wait" 300).<sup>60</sup>

Re-emergence of trauma and egoist *malformation*, apparent in Francie's anti-social behaviourism,<sup>61</sup> transforms into the steep price the youths would have to pay to provide their nationalist society with a context "to reinvent itself according to de Valéra's ideals" (Holmquist 7).<sup>62</sup> Like their parents, it is the obscure and the anomalous who pay the dear price of living under society's double-faced architecture of containment as they attempt to gain social recognition and respect. The result is repeating what Henry Smart achieved in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*, namely, becoming a victim of nationalists' negativism and social subjectivism, and then being coerced to embody such a negative dialectical discourse. Therefore, Francie's efforts to try to honour and respect his traumatized parents in a judgmental, oppressive nationalist society can be read as an embodiment of such a negative discourse, which eventually end in forming an internal psychology of oppression. As a result of such a formation, Francie not only offended the Connollys, the Nugents and many others but also shifted his suppressive mentality towards his childish visions of formation. His schematic departure towards a major city, Dublin in this case, ends in a doubly chaotic familiarity with alcoholism and heated racial prejudice.<sup>63</sup> As Smith notes in

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<sup>60</sup> See Wendy Herstein, "'You Lie in Wait...': Patrick McCabe Reflects Upon Despair, Idealism, and the Workings of His Muse", in *The World and I* 8:8, 1993, 299-301.

<sup>61</sup> My usage of 'malformation' resonates with Erik Erikson's definition of the same concept. See Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1994.

<sup>62</sup> On survivors' account of industrial schools and traumatized, post-independence Irish society see Kathryn Holmquist "The Obsession with Sexual Morality Led to Rejection of Children", in *The Irish Times*, March 9, 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Francie first robbery, however small, takes place in Dublin at a chip shop, where he goes "behind the counter like a bullet and ... stuff[s] any notes [he] could into [his] pockets" (McCabe 38).

his reading of *The Butcher Boy*, Francie becomes a victim of a society which “chooses to confine rather than provide treatment or support” (“Remembering Ireland” 15). His aggressiveness is a creation of an unforgiving society which through negligence and ignorance increases Francie’s anarchic potentials, and allows him to trivialize the State’s institutionalization of confinement and introduce it as a ‘joke’. It is as a result of such a reversed social Bildung that Francie’s exemplary narrative emerges as a horrific carnivalesque of a society in which people’s symbolic preparation for the end of the world coincides with a realistic rendition of a murderous closure, namely, the execution of Mrs. Nugent, and Francie’s triumphant exit.

Francie’s aggression and society’s oppressiveness make an interdependent binary, as each element contradicts and demands one another simultaneously. According to Eagleton, such a pair can be seen in nonconformist movements, gender based oppositions, and systems of belief: Catholicism and Protestantism; nationalism and anti-nationalism; male and female subordination.<sup>64</sup> However, I argue in the context of post-colonial Irishness and nonconformist decolonizing Irish identity, a binary opposition forms, despite basic commonalities in contending the colonial forces of ‘the without.’ However, in such a dichotomous formation, the latter embraces the logical contradictoriness of the relationship only to suppress the dialectical discourse of the former. The postist regime and the concomitant society, in other words, do not intervene insofar as their authoritativeness and dominance are safe with the normalized subjects. When anomalies such as Francie arise, society will remodel and reintroduce its controlling systems;<sup>65</sup> and law will be a legitimate means of normalization in the hands of untouchable ventriloquists, such as the priests in the School for Pigs. For instance, it is only at the doorstep of the School for Pigs that Francie understands the insignificance of law, gravity of his isolation and disconnectedness from legal counsel, and how law suddenly becomes ineffectual when compared to priest’s legislative power. He is warned (by Sergeant Sausage) that

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<sup>64</sup> In his chapter entitled, “Nationalism: Irony and Commitment”, Eagleton discusses the shared dimensions that can be found in contradictory concepts. According to Eagleton, there are more shared aspects in nationalism and anti-nationalism than in, for instance, nationalism and radicalism or revolution. See Terry Eagleton, “Nationalism: Irony and Commitment”, in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, 23-38.

<sup>65</sup> By controlling systems I refer to the Foucauldian definition of asylum in oppressive, especially postist, regimes; industrial schools, reformatories, prisons, mental hospital are the institutional centers of normalization.

if “priests get their hands on you there won’t be so much guff outa ye” (McCabe 66). Any infamy and sexual promiscuity, during and after Francie’s exile (in the industrial School for Pigs) will be contained not only by the State’s architecture of containment but also by society’s nativist moral schemes. Society, in this respect, as an inseparable face of the State rises only to contain the unwanted efforts of the oppositional groups or individual dissidents such as Francie or Father Sullivan.

The State only intervenes to send Francie to a psychological exile, which further separates him from the rest of society. The State’s intervention, in this respect, had nothing to do with improving Francie’s educational Bildung or his rite of formation, namely, concepts that the Constitution originally meant to address.<sup>66</sup> Rather, by sending him to reformatories and prison schools, the State only helped him embrace the negative dimension of his dialectical formation. The State’s oppressive telos, in this respect, manifests itself as a Hegelian dialectics: by sending Francie and the likeminded young rebels to reformatories and School for Pigs, the State successfully creates a segmental catastrophe to which only itself holds the solution ahead of time, namely oppressing rebels even further and allocating them to various institutions of normalization such as mental hospitals, prisons, and psychological isolation.<sup>67</sup> By so doing, the State not only provides an antithesis, namely, ideological and physical imprisonment, to rebels’ thesis of resistance but also leads them towards an eventual synthesis, though unwelcome and intrusive. The State’s institutions of normalization, I argue, emerge containing a more inclusive criterion of normalization than what Foucault originally noted in his discussion of prisons and hospitals. While the latter appears as the instrumentalization of a disciplinary location for gaining dominance, the former manifests itself as a nationwide doctrine of governance.

Francie’s hide, however, illustrates the State’s inefficiency in safeguarding the nation and policing its own rules; a rebel, who needs to be contained lives in his secret archway without anyone noticing him. This is McCabe’s ironic reference to the eventual prevalence of rebels and socio-political dissidents such as Francie whose non-conformity and bohemian dialectical rebellion forced the nativist State, weakened

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<sup>66</sup> de Valéra’s final draft of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (The Constitution of Ireland), through numerous articles, explicitly highlighted families and their children as well as providing proper form of education for the children as the most notable responsibilities of the Irish Nation-State; concepts that took only a decade to be contained.

<sup>67</sup> In his description of ‘Being’ Hegel introduces ‘Nothing’ as the antithesis, and Becoming as a result of their inevitable interaction. See G.W.F. Hegel, “Volume One: The Objective Logic” in *The Logic*, Marxists.org. Retrieved Thursday Oct 29, 2012: <<http://goo.gl/EZvwb>>.

by the rise of pluralism and republicanism in the 1970s, to offer an official apology. Although wrapped in the Irish tradition of belatedness, the apology expressed by *Taoiseach* Patrick Bartholomew ‘Bertie’ Ahern, was swathed in nationalists’ double standards. While acknowledging the State’s inefficient administration of industrial schools, and thus extending an apologetic hand towards the victims, the statement vindicates the postist State as the only official body responsible for the committed wrongs, and only expresses how the politics of containment should have been enforced by society and thus worked.

On behalf of the State and of all citizens of the State, the Government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims of childhood abuse for our collective failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue (“Speech by An Taoiseach” in *The Irish Times* May 11, 1999).

The statement, albeit apologetic, not only emphasizes the existence and relevance of the nationalist architecture of containment but criticizes the inefficiency of nationalist society in containing such sudden disclosures of unfortunate events. As depicted in Francie’s narrative, it is the very same ‘citizens of the State’ such as Mrs. Connolly, Mrs. Purcell, and Mrs Canning who helped the State to contain Francie’s unfavourable condition, while at the same time contributed to his psychological break down by meddling in his personal, familial life:

[Mrs Connolly] says what can I do for you Francie and I says its just about my father... she says may the Lord have mercy on his soul... so I said no no Have Mercy or any of that Mrs Connolly why did you not mind you own business... Mind my business? What do you mean? I said you know very well what I’m talking about and she tries the Mrs Nugent trick pushing a tear out into the eye. Then she starts sniffing and I says who asked you to clean that’s the trouble with the people in this town they can’t mind their own business can they *they can’t mind their own fucking business!* (McCabe 164).

Francie’s childish argument can be read as a negative retort to Taoiseach Ahern’s apology, as he rebukes the oppressiveness of society in the early 1960s. The citizens of the State, highlighted by McCabe’s shrewd polemic against society’s nationalist identarianism, emerge as a collective consciousness that allows the Irish to neither transform the static nationalist principles nor transcend and re-imagine the boundaries of nationalist Bildung. This blanket consciousness does not regard the Irish as a collective body of individuals with different psychosocial needs, but rather as a political commodity, which needs to be contained and trained in accordance with the



State's definition of Bildung.<sup>68</sup> According to the nationalist consciousness of containment, therefore, not only was it society's responsibility to contain subversive forces such as Francie and other street children, but it also had to erase such negative psychological imprints in a more efficient fashion. As Smith explains, the abused children of the past are the "the State's most treasured commodity" of the present, for their collective formation could either force the State to issue such apologetic statements or continue to support the State's unquestionable legitimacy ("Remembering Ireland" 11). While it is the latter that dominates much of Francie's narrative, which censures his rebellious formation, questions his relevance and finally institutionalizes him, the former emerges as a more tolerant society at the end of his narrative, the one which has abandoned hanging, and only prevents Francie from committing more crime, albeit ironically through internal and external exile.

His return to his small town, only to accomplish a ritualistic sense of Bildung, too appears to be hollow and partially insignificant for himself as well as the townspeople. The only major outcome of his return, however, is a masked sense of bewilderment and insecurity, a fear of non-identarian formation, which for the normalized townspeople is too complicated. Their nativist paralysis didn't stop Francie's riotous musings towards a proper social recognition regardless of the outcome which turned out to be negative for him; nor did it help him keep his "Francis Brady Not A Bad Bastard Any More Diploma" for longer than a few days (McCabe 95). Rather, the State's culture of forgetfulness combined with society's paralysis and ignorance pushed Francie further to the edge of negative identarianism and eventually disillusionment with his society, embracing his self-referentiality, and finally becoming what society feared most.

I told him more then, about the boilerhouse and the fags but he just tapped the leather of his black bag and sucked his teeth saying mm. All the sudden it came into my head what the hell do I care if he believes me or not who the fuck is he, doctor, some doctor, he couldn't even keep ma out of the garage (McCabe 106).

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<sup>68</sup> Under Article 42 (5) of The Irish Constitution, individuals and especially families are regarded as parental commodities of the State, who may be relieved of their parental status should the State finds their performance and social status unfit, and damaging the child's proper formation. The State, under such circumstances, may legally take the child under its protection. Fintan O'Toole finds such commodification of parental rights as the very corrupt source that has introduced criminals such as Brendan O'Donnell, whose life bears a horrifying resemblance to Francie's. See Fintan O'Toole, "State Watched O'Donnell Grow into a Killer", in *The Irish Times*, April 4 1996: <<http://goo.gl/sBCBR>>. In addition, Ann Dunne regards such commodification of families for potential political support to be an indirect obstruction of not only children's right (to belong to a family and thus the feeling of belonging) but also human rights. See "Constitution Does Not Cherish All Children Equally" in *The Irish Times*, May 22 1993: <<http://goo.gl/sBCBR>>.

His failed efforts to return and befriend his society transform into a rush of childish anger, which provokes the return of the repressed, namely, his placelessness and being an insignificant, unwelcome part of a macrocosm. The cathexis of such dialectical negativism becomes the impetus which narrates the latter part of Francie narrative: a riotous, vengeful character, who opposes not only his society and its codes but also the very principles that made Francie what he was.

Francie's antiauthoritarianism, albeit explicit and often excessive, is neither original nor unknown to post-Easter Irish rebels. Defying the authoritarian voice, be it imperial colonialist or postist nationalist, in this respect, emerges to be rooted in the late nineteenth century, and resonates with rebels such as Bernard Shaw and Wilde. Where Francie describes his discontent and disillusionment with the nationalist paradigm of formation, "bogmen cops", depraved priests, and his marginalized parents, as "sparks in the boiler", the anarchic Wilde under the influence of Max Stirner's definition of individualist egoism objects to a widespread capitalism most prevalent in the 1890s in Britain, which then was about to be extended, crippling the Irish economy (McCabe 2012, 73).

"I was as bad as the sparks in the boiler-house stove with all these notions tearing around in my head", notes Francie imprisoned at the School for Pigs (McCabe 73). However, Francie's rage and discontent is not limited to see his childish utopia being destroyed by the nationalist power-oriented greed; rather, what bohemian rebels like him have really been saving their energies for extends beyond the State's prejudiced politics of containment, for they seek self-individuation, rather than social development: "You'd only be half-finished with one idea and the next thing here would come along another one, no I'm a better idea what about me it would say" (McCabe 73). 'What about me' is, in fact, an outcry of a generation whose hopes of liberation and social recognition have been crushed by opportunist autocrats such as de Valéra; it is a generation that can be heard from as far as Henry in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* being set in the 1920s up to McCabe's rebellious Francie in the 1950s and 1970s: "My mother shook her head. She looked up at the ceiling, at her children beyond it. She looked up at her first Henry. What about *me!*", shouts the non-conformist Henry in Doyle's novel (*A Star Called Henry* 31). Such an egoistic commonality can be found in Wilde's anarchic critique of the State, Imperial financial system, as well as a limiting Victorian social mobility. In "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" Wilde emerges as an anachronistic echo of Francie's anarchic inclination

towards a non-identarian, anti-social subjective formation: “the majority of people spoil their lives by an unhealthy and exaggerated altruism -- are forced, indeed, so to spoil them... so, in the present state of things in England, the people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good” (1).<sup>69</sup> According to Wilde self-correction and self-referential formation, rather than “amusing the poor” and invigorating one’s social altruism, is the only way to reconstruct society and make “poverty ... impossible” (“The Soul of the Man Under Socialism” 1).

Francie’s lack of social altruism combined with a growing reluctance to have a positive presence in his society, heightens as he leaves the reformatory and learns that not only his “plans and schemes” to restart his friendship with Joe have failed but now he is also regarded by society including Joe as a *persona non grata* (McCabe 73). ‘Unhomeliness’ and placelessness, in this respect, re-emerge as the principles that are imposed on Francie and those who defy the State and its politics of containment. Their narrative becomes a reflection of the State’s antagonistic ideology of isolationism and society’s acceptance of internal sectarianism. However, there is one more dimension to Francie’s narrative: a labyrinthine antiauthoritarian self-formation, which dismantles the postist, stereotypical definition of novel in being, as Smyth notes, “closely connected with the ideologies of the community” (*The Novel and the Nation* 20).

In Francie’s narrative of formation, although the novel reflects the apathetic ideologies of the nationalist society, it remains loyal to Francie’s antiauthoritarian formation and his efforts to retell a silenced, untold proportion of Irish history. Francie’s non-conformism, albeit childish, led him to be butchered by the State’s structure of containment, losing the freshness required for development. Physical exile, as in being cast out to reformatories and industrial schools, complements his internal and psychological isolation, making him accept, if not believe, Mrs. Nugent’s harsh remarks, labelling him as a “pig all [his] life” in a society dominated by Connollys, Purcells, and Tiddlys, namely the State’s agents of normalization (McCabe 102). The narrative he produces extends to facilitate an instrumentalized fantasy-oriented language, which is unknown and alien to the conformists, which then transforms into a doubly fictitious variation of a postist sub-reality. It is an anti-nationalist, anti-colonialist reality wherein Francie as the only inhabitant is both

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<sup>69</sup> References to Wilde’s essay, “The Soul of the Man Under Socialism”, refers to the title published by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

regarded as the ordinary and the uncanny. He is the small ‘pig’ who did the uncanny and soiled in the Nugent’s bedroom, entered the School for Pigs, attacked one of his instructors,<sup>70</sup> was molested, and returns back to his society as a supposedly corrected ‘pig.’ In *Theorizing the Fantastic*, Lucie Armmitt, regards the “inhabitant of the fantastic [to be] always the stranger”, serving their narrative as the only real mouthpiece from within an unknown, unreal realism (8). Francie, in this respect, resonates with Armmitt’s stranger in being the only real mouthpiece narrativizing not only his narrative of deformation but also the nation’s narrative of oppressive anti-formation, for which he became the subject of oppression and was regarded as being too fictitious, unknown and thus unreliable.

Ah well, I said, that’s all over, you can’t be a pig all your life isn’t that right ladies?  
They said it was.  
I said to Mrs Connolly: isn’t that right Mrs Connolly.  
That’s right Francis she says, that’s very true.  
It is indeed I says.  
Ha ha says Mrs Connolly.  
Ha ha says the other women.  
I didn’t care. They could laugh themselves stupid if they wanted to. They weren’t like smiles at all more like elastic banks pulled tight (McCabe 179).

The blandness, incoherence, and indifference embedded in Francie’s verbal engagement with society reaffirms and further amplifies his role as an unknown stranger. He narrates a non-nationalist form of realism from within a matrix of nationalist consciousness that was meant to function in reverse, namely, to narrativize a nationalist reality and glorify the State. As the novel progresses, however, his status as an unreliable mouthpiece in the beginning of his narrative changes into a reliably radical voice, whose narrative is a carnivalesque engagement with a postist reality. His narrative becomes a decolonizing one which at once deconstructs the layered colonial discourse – still prevalent in the authoritarian logic of Mrs. Nugent, and dismantles the static foundation of a postist regime, which introduces Francie and his narrative as a mentally challenged and unreliable combination, deserved to be mentored by priests and police officers.

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<sup>70</sup> “I wouldn’t like to be you he said again but I was fed up of him by then so I made a go at him with what was left of the statue and off he went as white as ghost nearly skittering himself. Then I threw No-Head in the bid and lay down on the bed” (McCabe 70).

To ridicule the dominant postist discourse and produce an unknown dialectical discourse of his own, Francie's chaotic rebellion results in the formation of an unexperienced fantastic narrative, centred on antiauthoritarian Bildung and self-referentiality, with a discourse that has failed to properly appropriate English as its medium. The result is a narrative which is not only rebellious and harrowingly traumatic but also different from what Francie as the main narrator originally meant to communicate. The narrative, in this respect, further alienates Francie as the main voice, and by focusing on obvious socio-cultural binaries, namely, the Irish and the English language, introduces him as a subordinate, unreliable narrator who is being spoken, rather than the one who speaks. Francie's efforts to transcend such socio-lingual subjugation end in failure and anti-national ludicrousness, and become most obvious as he expresses his discontent vis-à-vis Doctor Roche's practice:

I went by Doctor Roche's house it was all painted up with big blue cardboard letters spread out on the grass: AVE MARIA WELCOME TO OUT TOWN. I was wondering could I mix them up to make THIS IS DOCTOR ROCHE THE BASTARD'S HOUSE, but I counted them and there wasn't enough letters and anyway they were the wrong one (McCabe 194).

It is not letters that are insufficient, but rather Francie's knowledge of English language and its structural mechanism which enacts and enforces its fluidity. To express his discontentment, Francie thinks of "mixing up" and rewording the words written on Doctor Roche's house (McCabe 194). However, what he meant to say was only to express an internal aversion towards not only the rules that bind the words, sentences and phrases together but also the people who brought such an alien, broken language to their nation. Ironically, such spuriously lexical hatred and confusion regarding English language and its origin surfaces as Francie is shown on his way to murder Mrs. Nugent, the person before whom his social integrity, as his friendship with Joe and even Philip Nugent, "was fine": "it was fine until Mrs Nugent started interfering and causing trouble" (McCabe 167). Francie's language skills, internally affected by Mrs Nugent's presence, appear to follow neither the Nugents' English language proficiency nor the Irish taught by Father Sullivan in the School for Pigs. Francie's identity appears to be fractured by a language as alien and subordinate as the Nugents. To hide his failed self-formation, he discards his "plans and schemes" as well as any hope of being socially re-incarnated, and indulges in a traumatic sense of mal-formation. Unsure of his individual originality and social sense of belonging, Francie sets out to accomplish what he has coveted for a long time: to murder "Mrs

Nooge” and undo the “two bad things” she made him do: “you made me turn my back on my ma and you took Joe away from me” (McCabe 12, 195).

Francie’s formation as a result of what the voice finally reveals, namely sublimating familial frustration and social disillusionment into murdering Mrs. Nugent, transforms into a haunting narrative of gothic formation, or in Ellen Scheible’s words “bog gothic” formations, with certain peculiarities and unexperienced formations (“Reanimating the Nation” 4). As Joe and Francie claimed in the beginning of the novel, the “crack” in their town affected not just their perception of agrarian Irish life but their very formation, producing a rebellious but inherently defeatist variation of decolonizing identity, centred on post-independence socio-political divisions. As McCabe concurs, “a split or bifurcated identity can be a cultural and political survival tool rather than an alienating force” (Scheible 1).<sup>71</sup> Francie’s fractured, rebellious formation, in this respect, emerges as a tool that enables him and other street children to survive the harsh temporal realism of a decolonizing Ireland. Although their formation is as unproductive and failed as their ritualistic path of deformation, oscillating between anti-formation and trauma, their identity appears as a desensitized, efficient byproduct, which understands the ‘crack’ and provides self-referential solution to change and develop.

Dehumanization of Bildung, in other words, helps those who were oppressed by the nationalist politics of containment to reimagine formation and reevaluate it as deconstructing the State’s normative principles through establishing their own nonconformist structure of formation. Murdering Mrs. Nugent, as Francie’s final act in his tragicomedy of anti-conformist deformation, appears as the point where chaos and nonconformity internally deconstruct Francie’s self-formation into an absurdist conception of nothingness, and introduce him as a protagonist who finds not only his life but “all the beautiful things of this world [as] lies. They count for nothing in the end” (McCabe 198). “Such a retreat” to nothingness and the threshold of insanity and reformation, notes Scaggs, “is effectively an attempt to refuse the burden of subjectivity, and to remain in isolation from the world” (“Who is Francie Pig?” 52).<sup>72</sup>

My contention is that Francie’s relapse into bohemian non-identarianism and insanity, albeit initially involuntary, is a self-referential response from a young

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<sup>71</sup> Ellen Scheible, “Reanimating the Nation: Patrick McCabe, Neil Jordan, and the Bog Gothic” in *Bridgewater Review*, Vol 31, Issue 1, June 2012, 4-6.

<sup>72</sup> See John Scaggs, “Who is Francie Pig? Self-identity and Narrative Reliability in *The Butcher Boy*” in *Irish University Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Spring-Summer 2000, 51-58.

generation of Irish rebels who found themselves trapped in nationalists' nativist paralysis and at the same time oppressed by the unjustness and deceitfulness of a society which shamelessly advocates retrospection instead of progression, thus presenting a future, as Eagleton understands, which is "desirable but unfeasible, one that fails to found itself in the present in order to bridge us beyond it" ("Nationalism: Irony and Commitment" 25). Not only did rebels like Francie indulge in such solipsistically autonomous identity to guise their real antiauthoritarian identity and resist the oppression of the State, but they also forged a resistant literature that appeared inconceivable and insane to the State. It is a literature that includes elements necessary to form a typical modern Irish novel of formation, such as the conflict between the city and the country, family matters, madness and a rising terror of gothic deformations.<sup>73</sup> What scholars such as Smyth failed to identify while detailing such an epistemic pattern of formation for the modern Irish novel, was to understand how antiauthoritarianism and insane formations provided rebels such as Francie with a pattern to perceive previously hidden concepts such as sexuality, individualism, and self-formation. As I shall discuss in my reading of works by Edna O'Brien and Nuala O'Faolain in the next chapter, such bifurcations, anti-conformity and mere insanity emerge as the only paths to leave the State's politics of stasis and embrace novel concepts such as maturation, sexuality and sexualized modern identity.

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<sup>73</sup> On the elements required for decolonizing modern Irish novel see Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, 48-62.

## Chapter III

### Marginal Formations and the Modern Irish Woman

In the last two chapters I explored a socio-ideological isolationism that engulfed the Irish during and after the 1919 chaos and throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I shall focus on Irish women as a rebellious, widely suppressed part of Irish demography, who not only shared a politicized State-sponsored oppression with their male contemporaries during and after the 1920s but also were systematically persecuted by their oppressed male kinsmen and colleagues, as well as other oppressors such as clerics in the name of, for instance, Constitution, religion and morality. Women, therefore, became an unsettled crowd who were made to find their own body alien and sinful, and whose development and social contribution were limited to either household chores or childrearing; they are the group who had to seek forgiveness for the misdeed they were not part of by, for instance, “letting the soap spatter in [their] eyes as an act of mortification” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 73). As “be[ing] Irish” meant being “Catholic (or, in a very limited sense, also Protestant), settled and white”, Angela Bourke argues, being an Irish woman too was manipulated by the conservative identity politics of the post-independence State, which was influenced by the Catholic church, “equating womanhood as motherhood” (*The Field Day Anthology Vol. 5* 1664).<sup>2</sup> An Irish woman, in this respect, is either an officially married mother, or simply doesn’t fit the definition provided by the 1937 Constitution. As I shall explore in my reading of Edna O’Brien’s *A Pagan Place*, although feminism, as a non-conformist movement officially was established in the 1970s, advocating women’s civil and political rights, women’s radical movements in Ireland date back to the early twentieth century when revivalist tendencies, guided by Yeats and Hyde, were to redefine women’s social role and political relevance as agents reproducing the nation; and as dependent agents who, as the Gaelic tradition of *aisling* has symbolized, need to be assisted (by a male character/protagonist); or as Flann O’Brien points out in his satirical Bildungsroman *The Hard Life* (1961), they

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<sup>1</sup> On Irish wars and social chaos during 1913-1923 see Peter Cottrell, *The War for Ireland, 1913-1923*, Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> As the Irish feminist Mary Kenny once claimed, discussing the parochial dominance of religion on Irish formation: “Home Rule is Rome rule” criticizing the State for their inefficiency and dependency on the Church. See *Irish Times*, March 30, 1971, 13.



are the very people whose basic rights, for instance to have more ‘public toilets’, have been ignored, or must be claimed by men. Resisting such a masculine voice of ‘thou shalt not,’ most prevalent in the revivalist literature, encouraged socio-politically conscious women to rise and defend their identity as liberated Irish women rather than the nation’s source of political metaphors or reproductive vessels;<sup>3</sup> the result was a body of feminist works that were either repressed in the aftermath of Censorship acts and an intolerant conservative society, or could voice concerns retrospectively only after such bans were lifted or eased. The three works I will examine in this chapter, namely, *A Pagan Place* (1970) and *The Country Girls* (1960) by Edna O’Brien and Nuala O’Faolain’s memoir *Are You Somebody?* (1996), all fall under the latter classification, namely, a resistant modern literature that emerged in the 1960s, and critiqued, albeit retrospectively, the frozen, masculine society of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s through the critical discourse of the Bildungsroman, and by so doing subverted the nativists’ dialectics of masculinity. While autobiography and memoir, such as O’Faolain’s *Are You Somebody?*, have been regarded as different genres which lack universality and comprehensiveness of the Bildungsroman, as Sussane Howe argues, they fall under the rubric of authors’ Bildungsroman Proper, namely, a narrative of “all around-formation” which provides the reader with partially fictionalized insights to authors’ personal life, resulting in a form that is at once ‘around formation’ and self-cultivation and socio-historically revealing (*Wilhelm Meister* 225). Edna O’Brien’s *Mother Ireland: A Memoir* (1976), for instance, emerges as one of the most cited sources in the context of Irish feminism, emerging as a form that at once provides original references to author’s blighted personal (sexual) self-cultivation and thus Irish life, and illustrates life in Ireland through the lens of Irish women.<sup>4</sup>

Although Irish modernism defied the traditionalism of the nativist State, and contributed to restructuring the definition of Irishness, it masculinized the modern Irish novel by replacing the symbolic femininity of the classical Irish novel with a

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<sup>3</sup> Founded on Gaelic nativist traditions, the State has always translated women’s significance and relevance as either politicized metaphors or reproductive vessels, the former is used to sublimate nationalism among the Irish into a mother – son/daughter relationship by having feminine representation of the island, a mother to be more specific, who needs its sons and daughters attention; while the latter reduces women’s significance, and introduces them as reproductive organs or the Victorian angels of the house. On a politically metaphoric representation of Irish women in Irish poetry see Colleen Ann Hynes, “*Strangers in the house*”: *Twentieth century revisions of Irish literary and cultural identity*, Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2007. Also see Irene Gilseman Nordin, *The Body and Desire in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, Dublin: Irish Academy Press, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> See Susanne Howe, *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

nationalist masculine figure, symbolizing the island and the State. In aising, that is the Gaelic tradition of poetry (and lyrical storytelling), traditionally the essence of Irishness and the island appears to the male protagonist in form of a young, attractive yet fretful woman, who has the foreknowledge of socio-political reconstruction which will enhance the people's condition. The feminine voice (of Ireland), however, is replaced, if not reversed, by a dominantly masculine voice as nationalists embarked on their path of decolonization, deconstructing the imperial understanding of Ireland as a fragile, fretful female concept, resulting in an authoritarian voice of the State which stood for the Irish and heralded change, and revealed its anti-feminist ethos in the Constitution in 1937.<sup>5</sup> Such a systematic change, envisioned by the nationalist masculine voice, was meant to be at once liberating and sexually oppressive, further dividing the nation into the binary of the oppressive State, and the oppressed people. During the hectic years of revolution, however, the latter was divided by an internal radical binary of the oppressed Irish at large on the one hand, and the oppressive masculine voice of a conservative Society on the other.<sup>6</sup> By surrendering to the State's gendered politics of division and dominance mixed with religious teaching of the Church, the State-supported voice transformed into a product that had gender subordination and marginalization of Irish woman as its primary principles.<sup>7</sup>

In Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*, as a post-Easter Rising narrative, Henry sublimates the mental image of his convicted father, who is later revealed to be a puppet of the State responsible for numerous murders, into a prescient and yet ventriloquial voice who is about to reveal to Henry and his younger brother, Victor, the larger canvas of Irish political formation. His sublimation, though an effect of traumatic formation and anxiety, provides an unconsciously opaque portrayal of her mother and marginalizes her significance as something that has been lost in the

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<sup>5</sup> On aising and the modern Irish novel see Derek Hand, *A History of Irish Novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 19-23.

<sup>6</sup> By Society, written in capital 'S', I refer to Hannah Lynch's description, highlighting the authoritarian, anti-feminist perception of society, "in which the Irish girl is expected to "achieve nothing" ("The Spaniard at Home" 270). See Hannah Lynch, "The Spaniard at Home", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 164, Sep 1898, 265-354.

<sup>7</sup> As Berresford Ellis argues, the 1937 Constitution, drafted in 1935 by the order of de Valera himself, relegated women's significance, sexually and politically, to people responsible for reproduction and taking care of their husband. They, therefore, barred "to enter avocations unsuited to their sex, age or strength." Article 45.4.2, in this respect, not only marginalized and mechanized their formation to human-making factories but also ignored women's historical presence along their male revolutionary counterpart during the Easter Rising, using explosives, machines guns. See Peter Berresford Ellis, "de Valera's Betrayal of the Women of 1916", *Irish Democrat*, July 5 2006, web, retrieved Dec 21, 2012: <goo.gl/6AQFh>.

nostalgic illusions and dreams of her past; someone who has given up not just her formation but also her children's future, whereas his father "talked all the way" and "filled the black emptiness with words. He led us across Dublin, told us all that we couldn't see ... He invented the world above us" (*A Star Called Henry* 57).

Authoritarian voices like Henry's father are not just literary devices but phantasmagoric representation and bleak reflections of how female characters suffered from an internal othering that was growing in the wake of political masculinization of modern Irish literature, wherein female characters were either contained, admitted to mental institutions, sexually exploited, or introduced as subordinate subjects bearing Victorian labels as angels of the house.<sup>8</sup>

There were radical, opposing voices, however, that resisted such general masculinization and sexual misrepresentations of Irish women from both male and female authors, such as Hannah Lynch, Bithia Croker, George Moore, and Katherine Cecil Thurston. The result was the formation of narratives that not only were unknown to the Irish audience in terms of their independent, thus bohemian, depiction of women – who are at once rebellious and socially radical but still function as the centre of their families and guide their children towards a possible bright future – but also advocated sexual non-identarianism and moral resistance. In this chapter I shall explore such uncompromisingly rebellious narratives of formation which introduce radical female protagonists as their main heroine, and subvert the State's gendered politics of formation through a carnivalesque critique of the male dominated modern Irish novel.

Against the Oedipal Politics of Formation in Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place* and *The Country Girls* and Nuala O'Faolain's *Are You Somebody?: "Women do not Count, Neither Shall they be Counted"*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> On marginalization and subordination of women especially during literary revival see R. Todd Felton, *A Journey in to Ireland's Literary Revival*, London: Roaring Forties Press, 2007, 28-35.

<sup>9</sup> "Women do not Count, Neither Shall they be Counted" was the political slogan used the 1911 census suffragette boycott, which reversed anti-feminists calculations and resulted in the formation of radical feminist groups. See D. A. J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation: Gender, Culture and Irish Identity 1890-1914*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.

In her “The Spaniard at Home” published in 1898, Hannah Lynch indirectly introduces what I shall label as the Irish conception of Anti-Oedipal feminist movement that matured in the late 1950s and especially 1960s. As Lynch notes,

When one studies the problem elsewhere, and sees the unmerited misery of the daughters in Ireland, the coldness, inhumanity, and selfishness of the Irish mother to her girls of every class, the monstrous way in which the girls are sacrificed to their brothers, left without education that these may play the gentleman, deprived of the enjoyment and pretty fripperies of girlhood, the money that might have helped to establish them squandered by the most heartless and least sacrificing of parent on the face of the earth, and nothing left the unfortunate girls but penury and struggle and the dull old maidenhood of dull and narrow Irish towns and villages, one is forced by sympathy to greet the excessive devotion of the Spanish mothers and lamentable spoiling of the Spanish daughters with indulgence (Lynch, “The Spaniard at Home” 353-354).

While critics and historians consider the 1970s as the start of the feminist movement in Ireland, the actual origin of the movement can be found in the anti-colonial uprisings the 1890s to the 1920s, when socio-politically influential figures, mostly nationalist suffragettes, such as Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Mary Hayden, Louie Bennett and Margaret Cousins founded the Irish Women’s Franchise League in 1908, and Irish Women Workers’ Union in 1911. This was a period of feminist awareness during which Constance Markievicz along with Maud Gonne and the later wife of de Valéra Sinéad O’Flanagan, revolutionary members of the radical feminist group *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland) engaged in an intellectual warfare with the Empire.<sup>10</sup>

Led by the indirect supports of the Labour Party in Britain, the first wave of Irish feminism emerged as a movement advocating the basic rights of women, defending them against a vastly parochial patriarchy of the 1910s and 1920s. The 1918 election, in other words, led the Labour party to enjoy an unprecedented presence in the House, winning 159 seats under the leadership of Clement Attlee.<sup>11</sup> As a result of their unexpected success, the party provided women throughout Britain with the opportunity to run for parliament. In an already war-trodden Ireland,

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<sup>10</sup> Daughters of Ireland’s resistant activities were mostly categorized as intellectual, as they discouraged studying English Literature, while encouraging Gaelic literature; rallying in support of Irish manufacturer; and defending the street children. See “Maud Gonne MacBride and *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*”, *The 1916 Rising: Personalities and Perspectives*, National Library of Ireland, article 3.2.3, 1901.

<sup>11</sup> On Labour party’s victories and emergence as a politically resistant movement see Andrew. J. Davies, *To Build a New Jerusalem: Labor Movements From the 1980s to 1990s*, New Edition, London: Abacus, 1996.

however, the consequences of such libertarian feminist awakenings were not limited to political transformation; rather, as fictionalized by Roddy Doyle, William Trevor, Seamus Deane, Frank McCourt, and of course Kate O'Brien and Edna O'Brien, to name but a few, the movement allowed for a transnational reconsideration of feminism in Ireland, searching for importable models from other nations such as Austria;<sup>12</sup> and introduced sexual and emotional companionship with non-Irish males in which marriage played no part.<sup>13</sup> Kate O'Brien, for instance, emerges as a radical precursor to Edna O'Brien's sexually conscious depiction of women and their plights of sexual formation. While the former wrote and set her novels in the 1930s, exploring women's struggles with sexuality and formation as female subjects in a predominantly masculinized Irish society, the latter wrote her most controversial trilogy in the 1960s and planned them to narrate the suppressed 40s, the lost 50s and the "sexy sixties" (Bolton 139). Edna O'Brien's main character in her trilogy, Kate Brady, emerges as a blurred reflection of Kate O'Brien, namely, a rebel whose rite of passage is a blurred reflection of how women accomplished their sexual rite of passage in the 1930s opposing the State and societal norms.

One of the first effects of the movement on the conservative Irish society was, for instance, the election of *Sinn Féin* rebel, Constance Markievicz, the first woman to be elected in 1918: a rebellious socio-political woman who not only helped deconstruct the colonial Ireland, leading towards new open horizons even when she was in prison, but also removed the frozen feminist zeitgeist from the Irish memory. Such radical characters have been fictionalized repeatedly in the modern Irish Bildungsroman by, for instance, Doyle as Henry's wife, Miss O'Shea whose feminist radicalism and bohemian sexual relationship with Henry resembles, though only fictionally, that of the late James S. Parnell's wife Katharine O'Shea;<sup>14</sup> or as the

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<sup>12</sup> As Julia Obert argues, such 'translocalization' of feminist movement in Ireland, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, emerged as a counter-response to the State's parochial politics of control and containment, relegating the Irish woman to their Victorian definition. See Julia C Obert, "Mothers and Others in Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls*", *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 20 Issue 3, 2012, 283-297.

<sup>13</sup> As I shall explain in my reading of O'Brien's *The Country Girls*, Cait and Baba seek love beyond the suppressed boundaries of Ireland; the French Mr. Gentleman, the Italian artist, and Cait's husband Eugene, as mere examples, are the non-Irish males who not only seem emotionally sane companions but their sense of formation greatly differs from the stereotypically drunk, irresponsible and absentee Irishman/father/lover.

<sup>14</sup> Parnell and Katharine O'Shea's remarriage emerged as a shocking phenomenon to Irish Catholics and an unforgivable event to the English nonconformist who were neither supporting the Empire nor the Irish radicals. As a result of sexist titles and references from both sides such as 'Kitty' O'Shea, meaning a prostitute at that time, Katharine O'Shea Steward Parnell lived her life in total social isolation and resistance.

mysterious yet rebellious Sandra in Bolger's *The Woman's Daughter*; as the idiosyncratic Lucy in Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault*; as essentially modern characterization of Molly Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses*; and as the radically sexualized characterization of Emma in Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*, and Caitheleen and Bridget and their mothers in *The Country Girls*.

However, there lies a radical history of feminist resistance behind popular figures such as Maud Gonne, Sinéad O'Flanagan and the essentially feminist literature of Edna O'Brien; faces such as Hannah Lynch, Katherin Cecil Thurston and Bithia M. Croker, and works such as Croker's *Lismoye* (1914) and Lynch's *Autobiography of a Child* (1899) and her famous essay "The Spaniard at Home" published in 1898: fictive narratives that echo years of patriarchal oppressive realism, and political parochialism.<sup>15</sup>

While Croker's *Lismoye* questions fundamental Victorian concepts such as social mobility, and the apparent difference in males' and females' perception of socio-economic mobility, Lynch directs the focus of her essay to tackle Victorianism and women's blighted formations at large, covering concepts such as the Victorian "Society – spelt big" as a sexually biased source of deformation, in which the Irish girl is expected to "achieve nothing" (269, 270). As I shall explain shortly, while it is this conservative form of Society which marginalizes O'Brien's *A Pagan Place* and introduces women as mere vessels to reproduce or to surrender to the authoritarian masculine voice, the non-conformist feminist corpus, appropriated by Lynch, Croker and O'Brien, emerges to explore and tackle radical concepts such as broken families, irresponsible parenthood, a masculine discourse of oppression, and unemotional, "cold, inhuman and selfish" Irish mother (Lynch 353).<sup>16</sup> In fact, the confluence of these texts and the ones by other proto-feminists such as Mary Chavelita Dunne, under the pen name of George Egerton (1859-1945), formed a feminist repertoire from which later feminists, especially Kate O'Brien and Edna O'Brien, borrowed generously, tackling not only their neoconservative Irish State but also the static, sexually discriminatory social norms, which Lynch regarded as the "blighted will"

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<sup>15</sup> Lynch's "The Spaniard at Home", for instance, not only introduced the historically oppressed concept of women's social deformation to Irish women but also contributed to the radicalization of feminist movements in Ireland, resulting in the formation of radical movements in the latter part of the twentieth century, such as the Irish Women's Liberation founded in the 1970s.

<sup>16</sup> These were the concepts that were accepted neither in their Irish context and under the Constitution, which regards family and mother as the center of Irish formation, nor in their British one where women were generally envisaged as submissive and neutral.

(“The Spaniard at Home” 354), and Edna O’Brien flagged as “psychological choke” vis-à-vis Irish female (de-) formations (*Mother Ireland: A Memoir* 127).<sup>17</sup>

O’Brien’s works, as I shall discuss in this chapter, stand on a radical dialectical perception of proto-feminism, which negates the patriarchal voice and the parochial society, and produces rebellious characters whose reversed formation and bohemian sexual maturity mirror a negative dialectics of un-Irish, non-conformist formation. Although critics and feminists have challenged O’Brien’s feminist inclinations,<sup>18</sup> accusing her of engaging only with the archetypical issues of, for instance, a male dominated society and women’s dependence on such a structure, the novels I shall examine in this chapter, namely, Edna O’Brien’s *A Pagan Place* and *The Country Girls*, and Nuala O’Faolain’s *Are You Somebody?*, will stand as pivots and witnesses to the rise of Irish feminism in post-independence Ireland. These are modern Irish novels of formation, which not only stand as socio-political critiques of the conservative Irish society but emerge as chronologically relevant feminist texts which deal with concepts that were regarded as un-Irish such as women’s sexuality, feminine sexual initiation and sexual Bildung in the 1930s-40 and early 1950s (*A Pagan Place*), 1950s-60s (*The Country Girls*), and the “sexy sixties” (*Are You Somebody?*) (Bolton 139).

As O’Brien herself puts it, maybe she is “not the darling of the feminists ... [being] too preoccupied with old-fashioned themes like love and longing”, but it was her *The Country Girls* trilogy that broke the social taboo,<sup>19</sup> and boldly introduced female sexuality and valorised sexual formations in the island.<sup>20</sup> Through her other earlier works, such as *The Love Object* and *A Pagan Place*, O’Brien takes the liberty

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<sup>17</sup> Where Croker complains bitterly about the lack of love and sexual adventurousness for the Irish girl in her *Lismoye* published in 1914, and Lynch heralds social fragmentation and a broken matrix of familial relationship in her serialized works and essays, O’Brien explores radical sexual formations and non-conformist female-voiced characters, and as Frances Wilson regards in her review of O’Brien’s *Country Girl: A Memoir*, introduces “sexual intercourse to Ireland” (*Telegraph* 2012). On O’Brien’s memoir see Frances Wilson, “Country Girls: A Memoir by Edna O’Brien”, *The Telegraph*, 8 Oct 2012, retrieved 2 Jan 2013: <<http://goo.gl/6t73T>>.

<sup>18</sup> See Declan Kiberd, “Growing up Absurd: Edna O’Brien and *The Country Girls*”, In *Irish Studies in Brazil*, 2005, 153.

<sup>19</sup> O’Brien’s narratives of sexual maturation and desire rekindled the horror among the generally conservative Irish after similarly radical texts such as Kate O’Brien’s *The Land of Spices* (1941) and Eric Cross’ *The Tailor and Ansty* (1942), narratives that once tasted the State’s conservative guillotine of censorship and were regarded as “in general tendency indecent or obscene” (The Censorship of Publications Act 1929 Part II, Section 6).

<sup>20</sup> On Banned books and how the censorship of publication act 1929 influenced later generations of radical authors such as O’Brien, John McGahern, and Brian Moore see Julia Carlson, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.

to explore the forbidden dimension of formation, namely, sex – hetero as well as homo – in a culture which had demonized sex and sensuality, and tabooed such sexualized representation of women’s body, banning it as a dreadful “black devil” (*A Pagan Place* 135). It was her candid depiction of women’s sexual deformation, and their struggles with a masculine authoritarian social voice, and the State’s gendered politics of abstinence and containment which negated such socio-cultural taboos, and allowed the stories of State-sponsored suppressive institutions such as Magdalene Laundries to be heard.<sup>21</sup>

While it was *The Love Object* (1968) which thrilled the conservative Irish Society with an unflinching depiction of extra marital and homoerotic affairs, and women losing interest in any form of sex, she tackled female sexual Bildung through *The Country Girls* trilogy and *A Pagan Place*. These emerged as un-Irish narratives which claimed that women’s sexual formation proper must be the crux of the national architecture of formation, a claim which allowed women’s sexual maturation to be understood in a non-sexist, nationalistic context. It was claims like these, in addition, that placed her novels at the forefront of feminist psycho-cultural warfare in the island. These are narratives that not only questioned the authenticity of the State-sponsored authoritarian voice, and the flagrant masculinization of Irish identity through the 1937 Constitution, but prepared society to have a more dynamic and vivid grasp of women’s role in their sexual rite of passage, thus transcending what Joyce started with Stephen Dedalus’ non-conformist sexual path of formation.<sup>22</sup> The path O’Brien’s characters choose, I argue, leads to what Helen Cixous regarded as proper “libidinal education” of women fighting an anti-feminist Society,<sup>23</sup> redirecting the Joycean dictum of *non serviam* towards not just the parochial patriarchal State but anyone who tends to deprive them of their *rite of formation* (“Reaching the Point of Wheat” 2).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As Gerry Smyth argues socially suppressive institutions such as Magdalene Laundry were places that isolated stories of “women who got pregnant out of wedlock, or those who were even suspected of being sexually active” (“Irish National Identity After the Celtic Tiger” 134). Socio-sexually radical narratives by feminists such as O’Brien prepared the frozen conservative Irish Society to hear them out.

<sup>22</sup> As James Cahalan justly understands, James Joyce’s oeuvre and especially *A Portrait* has served radical feminist authors such as Edna O’Brien in providing them with the initial leeway to break away and question the State’s politics of containment. See James M. Cahalan, “Female and Male Perspectives on Growing Up Irish in Edna O’Brien, John McGahern and Brian Moore”, *Colby Quarterly* Vol. 31, Issue 1, March 1995, 55-73.

<sup>23</sup> On libidinal education see Helen Cixous, “Reaching the Point of Wheat, or A Portrait of the Artist as a Maturing Woman”, *New Literary History* 19. 1, Autumn 1987, 1-21.

<sup>24</sup> Italicization is intentional.



Although O'Brien's novels were among the first texts that uncovered socially despised concepts such as women's sexual desires, trials and tribulations which Smyth labels as the "odd 'bad egg'", her literary efforts were victimized by the very same unforgiving force of selective masculinity ("Irish National Identity After the Celtic Tiger" 134).<sup>25</sup> As James Cahalan notes in his dated yet substantial study of "Female and Male Perspectives" in the modern Irish novel, "neither Seamus Deane in his *Short History of Irish Literature* (1986) nor Alexander Norman Jeffares in *Anglo-Irish Literature* (1982) mention[ed] [Edna] O'Brien" and her contributions to such national socio-sexual awakenings (55). Even today, Seamus Deane's *The Short History of Irish Literature* stands as one of the most notable critiques of the State and radical writers who contributed to the formation of an independent Irish literature and literary style. However, it seems female writers as various as Kate O'Brien, Hannah Lynch, Katherine Cecil Thurston, Bithia M. Croker, and even Constance Markievicz's (jail) letters to her sister simply were not significant enough to be noted by notable critics such as Deane or Jeffares. Although this absence might have been caused by an uninvited *parapraxis*, the gravity of such isolating categorizations remains the same, reverberating a message that feminists had struggled to subvert throughout the history of the island.

Despite socio-cultural and political changes in Ireland, especially since the "sexy sixties", making sexual formation as an inseparable part of the modern Irish novel of formation, social fragmentation and sexual categorization have remained as the most dominant topics of novels (of formation) that tend to divulge certain peculiarities in the conservative history of Irish formation (Bolton 139). Topical concerns that, through the dialectical discourse of the Bildungsroman, provided a dramatized account of how the State's authoritarian politics of formation have manipulated and led such socio-sexual bifurcations through a masculinized voice called Society in the 1930s until 1960s-70s. This masculine, State-sponsored voice is most notably manifested in the Irish Constitution re-established in 1937, neglecting the Irish women as the largest marginalized crowd who fought for their place in

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<sup>25</sup> Female sexual formation were the 'odd bad egg in the basket' for they remained unnoticed for a long time, and demanded a vast reservoir of socio-cultural energy to be salvaged, requiring the State to restructure its politics of formation, and the male dominated Irish society to transform into a more permissive one; a concept which sounded more impossible than anything else.

history.<sup>26</sup>

O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*, published in 1970, is one of her lesser-known novels that explores decades of sexual oppression and anomalous formation. It is a sexually conscious narrative of Irish formation which enjoyed the socio-cultural and intellectual liberties of the sexy sixties. The novel chronicles women's formation during a period which allowed O'Brien and her contemporaries to freely explore the State's morbid obsession with spiritual decency and abstinence which only conversely resulted in corporeal indecency, and a nation-wide radical understanding of femininity and women's body, which as Jonathan Bolton notes "apotheosizes virginity, revering women's bodies as vessels of procreation while at the same time reviling them as enticement to sin" (*Blighted Beginnings* 126). Novels such as *A Pagan Place* and *The Country Girls*, I argue, narrativize, albeit in retrospect, a sense of resistance that appeared among Irish women, continuing the Joycean heritage of *non serviam*, to question not only the masculinized Constitution but also Society's limited capacity as a substructure influential in women's (de-) formation.

In *A Pagan Place* the struggle between Irish women and the State's gender politics manifests itself in having the female narrator hide her identity behind the ambivalence and obscurity of the second-person voice, which reveals events in a dominantly predetermined and planned fashion, leaving no space for narrator's "free will" or self-determination (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 149). As the novel reveals, this is the voice which permits self-induced sexual pleasure, and regards it as a means to avoid sexual intercourses or courtships that do not end in marriage, and censors the opposite sex: "You put two fingers in. you touched it" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 101). In fact by abnegating the socio-cultural image of women in post-independence Ireland and associating female sex(uality) with sin, psychosomatic diseases, and wretchedness at large, the voice, perhaps unconsciously, advocates autoeroticism and masturbatory pleasures among not only men but also young Irish women. Masturbation, in this respect, is regarded as an "aberrant behavior" and still a sin (Bolton 145), yet for which she can seek forgiveness: "You put two fingers in ... What were you doing? What were you doing? It was a sin"; whereas seeking sexual

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<sup>26</sup> The Constitution drafted in 1922, which reflected the one established in 1916, had put the emphasis on equal rights and opportunities for every Irishman and woman "without the distinctions of sex"; whereas, the one established in 1937 had been changed to include the aforementioned statement only in 5 various places, with no references to equal rights and opportunities. These 5 instances – articles 9, 16, 45 – only reflect membership to the Irish Parliament, Dáil, and national Irish identity. See *Bunreacht Na hÉireann* (Constitution of Ireland): < <http://goo.gl/r8qkxk>>.

companionship with a man is told by the autocratic voice to be punishable by “hell”, the disciplinary fire of which stems from “wom[e]n playing fiddle” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 101, 28).<sup>27</sup>

According to Dennis Schofield’s detailed analysis of the second-person voice in fiction, such a voice is used to either achieve an intense sense of intimacy with the reader, providing them with special moments in the narrative that have been imagined for them to enjoy, or to maintain a strict idiosyncratic dominance and authoritarian distance with not only the reader but also characters, rendering their stream of consciousness useless by depending on its indefinite foreknowledge of anything that is about to happen.<sup>28</sup> ‘Thou shalt not’, therefore, emerges as the very foundation of such an idiosyncratic voice and the concomitant narrative, which dictates events to the narrator’s psyche instead of providing them with a context to be unravelled by the narrator. In the modern Irish novels of formation, the voice of ‘thou shalt not’ is founded on the unquestionable authority of the Constitution, an authoritative source for the State which however was revised by the order of de Valéra in 1937 seeking more assertion and presence by indulging in the essentially patriarchal power of the Church.<sup>29</sup>

The totalitarian ethos of ‘thou shalt (not)’ transforms into a stringent and governing voice which takes the shape of an unnamed young girl in a crowded Irish family of five, which like many other proletarian Irish families has been hit by the post-war financial hardships, and is culturally bound by the island’s politics of containment. While the protagonist is a young Irish girl, the voice unreservedly reveals its restrictive, confessional nature, and thus at times transforms into an interrogator that sifts through the protagonist’s conscious and unconscious psyche, wild and repressed thoughts, scavenging for pieces of un-Irish, urban, “pagan” trends (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 190). For instance, when she wishes to join the young priest and enjoy his sensual presence the voice intervenes and disturbs her train of thought:

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<sup>27</sup> In Edna O’Brien’s extensive modern corpus concepts such autoeroticism, ‘masturbatory formation’, lesbian sexual Bildung, which under the de Valeran rule were labeled as aberrant and un-Irish, have always been given higher priority than betrothal companionships. Where marriage in her novels has been bound to fail or never happen, these modern concepts proved to last longer, and in a less demanding context.

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Schofield, *The Second Person: A Point of View? The Function of the Second Person Pronoun in Narrative Prose Fiction*, Thesis, Deakin University, 1998, retrieved June 20, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> On patriarchal power of the Church in Ireland and its reflection in the modern Irish novel see *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland*, eds Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, University of Massachusetts, 1997. Also see Robert Welch, *Irish Writers and Religion*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1991, 190-205.

“how you would love to go to the Tropics with him and see people who offered mangoes and sweet potatoes”; or forbids her not just from having thoughts about her most intimate parts of her body but also from even trying to understand her body: “your diddies were hardly formed. You got stinging pains in them from time to time. You discussed those pains with no one. You couldn’t touch your diddies, not even with your own fingers” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 190, 171, 139). In this respect, a woman’s body, as the unvoiced narrator reveals, should remain as alien and undisclosed to others as to her own, the only exception, however, would be joining Jesus as becoming his “spouse” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 192).

Sexual pleasures, in addition, are treated by the voice only ambivalently, oscillating between the trio of sin, guilt, repentance or sin, guilt and yearning for more guilt:

“You sang dumb about the biggest sin of all, sitting on the carving chair in the front room and opening your legs a bit and putting the soft velvet paw of a bot doll in there, squeezing with all your might and then when he needles of pleasure came getting furious with him and chastising him and throwing him face down on the floor ... [the] old way” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 41).

The narrator’s concept of acting like the ‘the old way’ reveals more than a pure sense of repetition in just a childish act of self-pleasure; rather, it suggests that not only the narrator is lost in between the double standards of her environment, between the rural and urban, and the Catholic and Protestant dualistic realities of Irish life in the 1930s, but also she become a reflective subject of the internal duality of sexual maturation and parochial formations. She, as an individual and an exemplification of Irish formation under internal and external binaries, appears torn between the “Confession on Saturdays” and “the same set of sins every week” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 41); between developing a sense of hatred towards her older sister, Emma, for her premarital sexual activities and the eventual unwanted pregnancy, and her wild desire for the seductive, young priest.

To the unnamed, initially unvoiced female narrator, social cognition and sexual formation mean nothing but “bad thoughts you didn’t divulge”, or concepts which she was meant to be unaware of (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 41). For it is the voice which defines right and wrong, innocence and deviance, identarian Catholic Irishness and the rebellious non-identarianism of modern Irish women; and generally, what needs to be contained not only from her internalized mental narrative but also

from the audience. The voice, in this respect, appears as an authoritative, self-referential judge, who decides on morality, acceptability and possibility of sex and sexual formations at once in the novel and in the general domain of Irish formations, policing her mind and rejecting whatever plans she might have for her life. In this sense, not only does the voice reduce the girl's significance as the narrator in her personal narrative of formation, relegating her to a selfless marionette, but it also emerges as a register more instrumental in defining the girl's identity than her own perception of reality and her selfhood. The girl, hence, appears as a puppet who finds her weekly programs planned, a repetitive cycle of non-formative religious chores: "On Saturdays ... You went to the curate ... and the sins had to be shouted at him. The same set of sins every week. I cursed, I told lies, I had bad thoughts ... when the priest inquired into the bad thoughts you didn't divulge" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 41). In other words, by oppressing her 'I'ness and voice, the voice of 'thou shalt not' becomes a self-appointed arbitrator that attempts to retract the girl from the generic duality of personal and social formation, refashioning her inasmuch as she fits the voice's particular duality of instrument / marionette.

Surrendering to the parochial authoritarianism of the voice, provides the unnamed female protagonist with the opportunity to establish a defence mechanism, as Kiberd argues, against Society's "internal colonial" efforts, and as a result survive its dogmatic anti-feminism of the 1930s, especially 1937 and beyond (*The Irish Writer* 163).<sup>30</sup> By becoming the physical vessel for the voice (of conservatism), O'Brien's unnamed female protagonist is recognized by the voice as a subjective subset of its objective realm (of containment and control). In other words, the protagonist becomes identifiable inasmuch as the masculine voice of 'thou shalt not' permits, and forms "the thing", as Adorno claims, "against which it is conceived" (*Negative Dialectics* 147).<sup>31</sup> Its relationship with the voice's masculine macrocosm is subordinate and non-reciprocal, forming the non-identarian contradictory puppet that has submitted to the voice's patriarchal dominance in fear of being lost in the oblivion of the without, namely, Society. She, in other words, has surrendered to the voice in

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<sup>30</sup> Declan Kiberd, *The Irish Writer and the World*, Oxford University Press, 2005, 163.

<sup>31</sup> The Adornian 'thing against its origin' is the fundamental concept in Adorno's negative dialectics of formation, in which the radicalism of this 'contradictory thing' becomes its integral feature. In other words, the *non-identarian* 'thing' can be formed by indulging in the features that contradict the very essence of the opposite object, while not surrendering to the dialect of negativity as in the duality of white / black. See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans E. B. Ashton, London: Palgrave, 1981, 140-165.

the subliminal fear of castration, namely isolation from the leading Society, dominated by male figures, such as attractive priests, athletic policemen, and artists because of her association with the sub-society of her female companions and family and following her sisters' shameful sexual activism. Her final decision to become a nun, and "be[ing] the spouse of Jesus" – hence uniting with the ultimate phallic authority, namely, what makes the other side of the polarity of sexual formation – provides her at once with confidence and a clear sense of identity, though objectively religious: "she said in his time only male disciples were allowed to follow him but that too had changed and women could take up the cudgel on his behalf" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 192). Her surrender, in addition, reflects the marginalized women's urge to "wholeness", or as Jeanne Schroeder notes, subject's endeavour to exit marginality: "Because we nostalgically long for this lost sense of wholeness which we locate in the real, we want to reverse this process and collapse the three orders of the psyche" (*The Vestal and the Fasces* 81).

To achieve wholeness and social recognition, the unnamed protagonist not only reverses the order of formation, namely, sexual development, falling in love and experiencing sex through marriage, but also prioritizes her perception of reality, as in Society and other sub-societies, hence classifying her friends and family secondary to Society. Therefore, as the novel progresses, we are only presented with fragmented relationships between parents and children, and broken non-communicative dialogues among children: "he said, how was [Emma] ... Your mother said she was her wilful, capricious and wayward self"; or when "Your mother said another candidate for the lunatic asylum" referencing her daughter; or "they were a blaspheme" when addressing her other daughters; or "he said a fine asset you were to any family or to any serious enterprise, with your scatter head and your scatter brain" as her father talks to the unnamed protagonist (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 158, 108, 154, 136). By detaching herself from her emotional sub-society of family, and embracing the voice and Society as the psychologically dominant colonizing register, the protagonist although a "zero" in the voice's colonial macrocosm, seeks a much larger benefit, namely, to (re-) gain her lost 'I'ness, namely, conscious selfhood (*The Vestal and the Fasces* 81).

According to Schroeder the female protagonist (or voice) in the male-dominated reality, simply is a lost microcosm, a 'zero' which doesn't count, and is just present "because it is signified" (*The Vestal and the Fasces* 81); it is a zero whose

presence “[does] not Count”, when it comes for the State to consider them in the Constitution, and “Neither Shall they be Counted” as anything but angels of the house or faithful wives and mothers (Liddington and Crawford 98).<sup>32</sup> She, in other words, is a non-identarian nothingness that exerts towards a fruitful, non-identarian becoming. To deconstruct the conservative, Oedipal Society from within, and continue to form an independent ‘I’ness, O’Brien’s female protagonist accepts a perfunctory masculinization of her existence and further indulges in its politics of dominance.

Oedipal Society in its Irish context, I argue, emerges as a concept which placed the neoconservative de Valeran State on one side, and their efforts to preserve, hence protect the feminized image of their motherland on the other. A socio-cultural struggle charged by the State’s political drive to preserve and strengthen its relation with its nativist roots, Irish Oedipal Society then transforms into the contradictory dualism of modernity, led by its radical definition of socio-sexual (trans-) formations, and the State’s masculine conservative protectiveness, defending their nativist holy trinity of Church, Family, and what O’Brien called *Mother Ireland*. The State’s emphasis on preserving their socio-cultural heritage and motherland through a retrospective perception of present and future, and denying radical changes – such as freedom in using contraceptives, surrogate motherhood, sexual orientations, and legitimization of abortion – is in fact an Oedipal effort that ends in the binary of power-relation and republicanism. Such normalizing efforts are Oedipal as they reconfirm what Deleuze and Guattari claimed as the suppressive Superego of an Oedipal State, which not only normalizes Society via its codes of morality but maintains its existence as a dominant socio-cultural power. This Superego transforms into an authoritative body which draws a line between those who have sought refuge (and thus been neutralized) in State’s politics of formation, and those who defy such norms and codes and anticipate independence.<sup>33</sup> The former leads to an Orwellian Society, while the latter was devised not only to transcend the Empire’s socio-cultural politics of subordination but to end the State’s draconian ethos of control and identarianism. The colonial feminization of Ireland, in addition – compare it with

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<sup>32</sup> “Women do not Count, Neither Shall they be Counted” was the political slogan used the 1911 census suffragette boycott, which reversed anti-feminists calculations and resulted in the formation of radical feminist groups. See Jill Liddington and Elizabeth Crawford, “Women do not count, neither shall they be counted”: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the 1911 Census”, *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 71, 2011, 98-127. Also see D. A. J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation: Gender, Culture and Irish Identity 1890-1914*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 145-158.

Germany's reference to their native country as the 'fatherland' – which needed the assistance of masculinized movements such as 1916 Rising, revolution and later the State as the very means to salvage the mother Ireland from the colonial enmity of the Empire, at once legitimized State's masculine intentions and further complicated the mother (land) / son (of Éire) relationship between the State and the island<sup>34</sup>. This is the relationship which led the State to describe Ireland as "our sweet, sad mother".<sup>35</sup> The result of such masculine overprotectiveness, as in isolating women from taking part in social and political activities simply because they should not be "forced by the economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their sex [...] or strength", manifested itself in various oppressive Acts and Articles (in the Constitution) (*Constitution of Ireland* 45.4.2). The inherent Othering advocated and imposed by State's normalized politics of formation, in this respect, not only sidelined women, as dissident minorities, but men who have voiced.

According to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, such an internal sense of Othering is an inevitable reaction to external stimuli that tend to defy the State's Oedipal triangle of formation emphasizing what Deleuze and Guattari called the "daddy-mommy-me" conflict, in which The State, Motherland, and the individual each play their role in intensifying an oedipalized sense of unbelonging for the individual (*Anti-Oedipus* 135). The individual, therefore, is always placed at the end of this authoritarian chain of command, being subjugated by the State (the father) exercising his authority over mother, while mother(land) emphasizes its nativist heritage in the form of culture and cultural merits on the Irish. The individual, by submitting to such a static authoritarianism seeks belonging and refuge from the cruelty of external reality. By so doing, the individual joins a Nietzschean herd, loses his resistance and enjoys a static phase of anonymity. The non-conformist Irish, on the contrary, not only defies this matrix of stasis by endeavouring to define their own individual identity but begins to question the State's nominally uniting politics of national formation, by which the Irish were supposed to be united as a nation. The result is what I discussed in my reading of novels by Royle Doyle, Dermot Bolger, Patrick

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<sup>34</sup> On dialogical differences between feminization and masculinization of nations see Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1982, especially his chapter on "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel".

<sup>35</sup> Eamon de Valera, *Speeches and Statements 1917-1973*, Maurice Moynihan (ed.), Dublin, Gill & MacMillan, 1980, p. 131.



McCabe and Edna O'Brien, namely, an anti-authoritarian individual who seeks formation in deconstructing the State's Oedipal triangle of formation.

As Bolton notes, the Irish "social life, [was] oriented around the male groups, which led to a kind of immature attitude toward women reinforced by male dominance in the home" (*Blighted Beginnings* 140). To break such a rigid social structure, the female narrator possessed by the masculinized voice of the State engages in exercising a series of deconstructive activities, such as seeking sexual companionships with male and female characters, critiquing the Constitution and highlighting their lost basic right under the State's rule. *A Pagan Place* emerges as the embodiment of a radical, albeit immature, feminine voice obscured by the masculine voice of 'thou shalt not'; and her unvoiced, second-person narrative becomes a subjective language of "Signification - that is, the symbolic order of language", as Schroeber argues, which brings her narrative of resistance and formation to recognize the lost feminine "zero ... as one" (*The Vestal and the Fasces* 81).

The protagonist's prioritization of Society over her family as a form of sub-society, endows her with not only the confidence to rebel against the parochial Society and her patriarchal family, - "you raged against captivity" - but also an independent identity to finally express herself through the first person voice in the very last page of her narrative: "I will go now, was what you said" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 185, 202). The confidence, I argue, is rooted in the masculine voice that had initially taken control of her formation, yet finally deconstructs the sexual boundaries of the voice and manifests itself through her feminine rebelliousness. As Articles 41.1 and 41.2 in Constitution have enabled the State to have a purely subjective recognition of family and women, especially regarding women as politically beneficial commodities, and at the same time allowed the State to freely intervene and contain parental shortcomings, the voice, being a rhetorical representation of the State and Constitution, initially empowers the narrator to detach herself from her family and its microcosmic society and make radical decisions. The result is an eventual sense of selfhood and independence which paves the path for the emergence of a generation of antiauthoritarian feminists, who defy not only religion initially though their path of formation as the first step towards socio-sexual independence but also the structural limits of Society.

By classifying sexuality and sexual formation under the "domain of moral experience" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 24), the Oedipal Society of *A Pagan*

*Place* leads the unnamed feminine narrator to embody the suppressed sexual desires or in O'Brien's terms the "guilt-ridden" desires which will cause "Our Lady" to "blush whenever a woman does such an indecent thing", while the disembodied authoritarian voice symbolizes the source of authority and normalization (*Mother Ireland* 52, 39). The female protagonist representing modern Irish woman, in this respect, is introduced by the voice of 'thou shalt not' as the incarnation of the Foucauldian duality of "justice and the criminal" ("Truth and Subjectivity" 1980). O'Brien's unnamed protagonist, in this respect, embodies the voice – and thus represents authority, and simultaneously represents her developing self which includes her sexual urges. As a result of her dichotomous formation, her desires for a proper sexual Bildung were sidelined by the mesmerizing ventriloquism of the Constitution, Society, her restraining parents, and the corrupt Church. The narrator, in this respect, perceives identity as a dichotomy which holds the State's authoritarian voice on the one hand, and an oppressed form of personal Bildung on the other, resulting in an indefinite binary opposition that underscores her structureless identity. While she yearns for love, "free will" and surrendering to the priest's sexual caress, she simultaneously censures her lack of determination and weak will, and labels love and sex as passing maladies, or "a condition of the heart, a malady" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 149, 157). To the voice, exemplifying the Irish women in the 1930s, the State's parochial conservatism, the male-dominated Society and families are the same, namely, constituents of a socio-cultural binary opposition, that further complicate her dichotomous condition, strengthening her role as both the criminal and the justice, and leading her to believe that "everything you did was the opposite to what you wanted to do" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 197).

Emboldened by her non-identarian feminine potential, the narrator leads her narrative by challenging the conservative Society, introducing sex and sexual formation as inseparable parts of one's Bildung, and demythologizing extra marital relationships as possible anomalies. In addition, Irish manliness is demythologized as the source of socio-cultural anachronism and tardiness in a modern agrarian Ireland of the 1930s, as she depicts her absentee, alcoholic father who wastes family resources on his hobby of betting on horses or in public houses. According to her, it is the parochial conservatism that would "gawk at you, to discern your sex and your features", and "everything meant more than one thing" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 28). Sexual formation as described by O'Brien, in this respect, not only is beyond social

tolerance but also questions the unquestionable “ancient political issues” of formation and the moral boundaries of the neoconservative State (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 21). Through her conscious socio-sexual critique of Society, for the first time in her narrative the narrator finds fault in the voice’s puritanical Society, detaches herself from it, and assaults the authoritarian traditionalism of Irish Society. For her, sexually active religious authorities, emotionally and sexually disintegrated families, and restrictive Society are as reproachable as her sister’s sexual bohemianism. As a result, she emerges as an independent voice who has separated her pattern of formation from what Society requires of her to become, dictates her role to the voice of ‘thou shalt not’, and presents herself as a young Irish girl, interested in sex and sexuality. Her independence is a new role that, often challenged and subverted by the authoritarianism of the masculine voice, has been overshadowed along her identity as a narrator, a member of family and society, and a marionette in her childish sex games with Della by the one that Society had imposed on her.

By finding her independent selfhood in her narrative of formation, the initially unnamed protagonist emerges as an independent individual and narratorial voice, and takes control of her dramatized novel of formation. “You raged against captivity. You declaimed Robert Emmet’s epitaph. You stamped and recited verses in a paddock”, the matured, radical narrator reveals to her audience, and by so doing further highlights maturation of the principles set by the first wave of feminist activism in Ireland, which however was an unregistered movement in the 1930s (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 185). Through her ‘rage’, not only did she rebel against the essentially subordinate perception of Irish women, which was a common misconception among Dubliners such as her sister Emma, intensifying the binary of rural and urban Irish women, but by ‘reciting’ Robert Emmet’s epitaph, the nineteenth-century radical republican legend, she also voices her libertarian concerns with respect to women’s emancipation and de-masculinization of Irish Society.

Such radical awakenings in the 1930s in Ireland can be read as counter-responses to the anti-feminist Constitution of 1937 and in light of what the Stirnerist Nietzschean feminist Federica Montseny regarded as the impetus to discard the conservative, man-centric ethos of formation, which had envisaged women’s formation only minimalistically and found social reformation possible without including women. “Emancipation of women would lead to a quicker realization of the social revolution”, argues Montseny, encouraging women to seek self-formation and

liberation through art and literature (quoted in Kern 327).<sup>36</sup> This self-recognition and socio-cultural realization through art and education, as I noted earlier, is what Cixous regards as the epistemic agent for women's liberation, namely, a concept which places women on their conscious path of formation. However, to find this path, the Irish women first need to break their inflexible cast, legitimized by the Constitution, which limited them only to housewives who have to accept to be shouted at if "the table [was not] laid", or being fired upon for not "serving him another drink" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 101, 23).

As a column in *Irish Independent* summarized Irish women's blighted formation under such masculinization of Constitution and Society: "the death knell of the working woman is sounded in the new Constitution which Mr. de Valéra is shortly to put before the country" (May 7 1937). It was the death knell which, as Paseta notes, through "introducing specific clauses about gender roles" not only became the most notorious legislative measure in limiting women's social participation but also transformed Irish women's narratives of formation into a severely descriptive pattern of apolitical, anti-sexual development ("Women and Civil Society: Feminist Responses to the Irish Constitution of 1937" 215). The result, I argue, is a mechanical development that, for instance, in *A Pagan Place* is manifested as the authoritarian voice of the State and Society, which not only police narrator's most personal thoughts but also warns the audience of the same possible fate should they try to break norms and have babies, like Emma's, who are born out of wedlock, for "it was arranged that ... baby would be handed over to the State a few second it was born" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 133-134). In another instance, to comply with the voice echoing Articles 45.2 and 45.4 of the Constitution, the narrator's mother must do "her best to keep your father in at night"; the agent or the concept which could keep fathers in was not simply the warmth or happiness of their family; rather, mothers can keep them in by "[keeping a roaring fire, prais[ing] the programs on the wireless, rub[ing] his head" in spite of "the smell of his scalp [which] got under her nails, that and the scurf" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 27). Mothers, thus, not only lose their sense of 'I'ness but also transform into mere mechanical agents, or as her husband puts it a parenthetic "Mud, short for mother", who should smile for their husband even though their smile "was getting old" and uninviting (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 27).

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Kern, *Red Years / Black Years: A Political History of Spanish Anarchism, 1911-1937*, Institute for the Study of Human Issues Publication, 1978, 315-327.

As part of her ritualistic Bildung, while the narrator's liberation and escape from such a limiting cast is accompanied by rebellion and reciting Robert Emmet's epitaph and experiencing an odd sexual proximity with the young priest, her mother externalized her frustration with Society and the anti-feminist Constitution by indulging in her frequent, self-pleasing extramarital affairs with the doctor, reserving it as her undeniable right to secrecy and sexual development. She is neither ashamed of her bohemian sexual relationship which under the Constitution should have been shared with her husband, nor has any reservations as she engages in having an affair with the doctor in the kitchen of her house. What the mother deems usual and exercises without any fear or hesitation in her kitchen and later at the doctor's office is nothing but sublimated counter-responses to her husband's authoritarian sexual "inertia" and cruelty, namely, his idiosyncrasy in ending their sexual relationship by separating their bedrooms and "clicking [other] girls" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 40, 11). As the narrator's mother puts it, while "the woods", symbolizing the conservative male-dominated Irish Society of the 1930s, "created inertia", the awakened yonic sea[side] "created vigour", forming a psycho-sexual gap between the conservative Irish Society and the dissident Irish women (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 40). As the voice reveals, this gap has already been in development especially in larger cities such as Dublin, shaping feminists who set out to follow their own education-oriented rite of becoming.

Although the narrator's eventual decision, of giving up sexual pleasure and the exotic life in large cities to join the convent, contradicts the Joycean non-identarian dictum of formation, and favours the conservatism of Society, it still resonates with one of the most notable principles of the first wave of feminism: to enable women, especially in rural areas, to take a more active role in their educational formation by attending schools, colleges, and even convent schools. In other words, the "university question", as Pasetta claims, becomes the most leading impetus behind feminists' perception of female formation ("Women and Civil Society" 215). While Stephen Dedalus rejects priesthood and religious formation, and despite his modern radical inclinations finally emerges as a non-identarian manifestation of Goethean Bildung,<sup>37</sup> the unnamed voice's decision in *A Pagan Place*, despite her plainly identarian façade is intrinsically non-identarian. Her non-identarianism, namely, her intrinsic and

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<sup>37</sup> Here I meant to highlight the aesthetico-educational sense of Goethean Bildung, which initially prioritizes education and artistic mastery over psycho-social perfection.

natural interest in sex and sexuality, in other words, lies in her identarian decision to give up city life and, as she reveals, pursue “*the desire to serve Jesus, ... to be the spouse of Jesus*”, to marry God, and to be closer to him (and his son) (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 192). However, as the narrative unfolds she is neither tempted to “bring pagans the happiness” they may deserve, nor interested to engage in warfare with those who shed Jesus’ blood; rather, she simply joins other nuns out of purely sexual interests, out of a cathexis of her sexual drives towards a subjective union with the masculine voice of authority, be it God or Jesus or a man: “it was a marriage to God, she admitted that most girls wished for a marriage to someone but in that union of God and woman there was something no earthly ceremony could compare with, there was constancy” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 192).

The narrator’s decision, though seemingly apostatic, corresponds with Joyce’s illustration of Stephen’s religious tribulations and dilemmas in *A Portrait*. Arbitrating between a life dedicated to submissive parochial formation or spent pursuing his Goethean Bildung led to what I flagged in the Introduction as the modern form of Irish formation: a hybrid which sets the young Irish to rebel against parochial patriarchy by dismantling the State’s architecture of normalized formation. O’Brien’s protagonist, emerges as a hybrid who has utilized the Joycean *non serviam* and rages against patriarchal captivity and her loss of identity, and pursues a sublimated form of sexual pleasure, and at the same time seeks formation by indulging in the traditionalist sense of formation, namely, joining the convent, and rejecting the magnetic allure of large cities. Her determination to pursue education, in other words, is twofold: to seek socially unattainable pleasures and educational perfection. The result is the eventual emergence of her rebellious feminist selfhood in a narrative dominated by parochial dualities and male-oriented “inertia” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 40).

Education for the non-conformist Irish women in the 1930s was not just a pattern of intellectual formation, or a byproduct of modernity; rather, it was a complex means, with roots in the 1916 Constitution, the contradictoriness of the revolution and feminist rebels, the 1918 Representation of People Act, a nationwide post-revolution stasis and the concomitant second phase of feminist awakening. To put it shortly, it was a concept which enabled women to defend their rite of passage in the 1920s and 1930s, to advocate union among feminist groups, and to overcome the State’s gendered politics of marginalization most prevalent in the Constitution of

1930s.<sup>38</sup> “Educational reform” notes Paseta, finally emerged as the notable achievement of such a politically hegemonic chaos late in the 1920s (“Women and Civil Society” 215). While the early 1920s saw major improvements in women’s educational and personal life, the latter half of the 1920s and 1930s were divided into years of post-revolution stasis dominated by the State’s neo-conservative politics of containment, and the onset of the second phase of feminist awakening which formed the latter part of the 1930s. The educated Irish women were either pushed back to kitchens or were serving their time in institutions such as Magdalene laundry.<sup>39</sup> The State’s politics of isolationism did not affect the Irish woman’s life just in terms of limited social interactions; rather it was threatening their very presence in community. The concept of women’s citizenship, that I call social ‘I’ness was the notion that was attacked by State’s (re) establishment of the Constitution in 1937.

In *A Pagan Place* O’Brien revisits Gertrude Gaffney’s criticism of the new Constitution through her unnamed, female narrator, and accuses Society for changing into a descriptive, largely masculine definition of Irishness, in which women such as her minor female narrator appear as selfless pseudo-citizens, possessed by the idiosyncratic voice of ‘thou shalt not.’ Although the narrator, as I discussed earlier, finally discards the ventriloquist voice and finds her own rebellious ‘I’ness, the concept of women’s marginalized citizenship remains as a radical concept which consumes the narrator’s novelistic rite of passage. It is the concept which legitimized women’s citizenship as only a submissive domestic identity, the sort which also appears when the narrator engages in playing homoerotic games with her friend Dala: “the kiss was the lips and vey passionate. You knew it was passionate because you were Clark Gable and Robert Donat and Dorothy Lamour and all of those characters” (O’Brien, *A Pagan Place* 59). Submissiveness, in this respect, emerges as a feature that has been willingly internalized by the narrator to suit her role, as a selfless doll; it is a role, albeit secondary and static, which will allow her to experience sexual maturity in bohemian fashion, and thus satisfy her non-identarian formation.

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<sup>38</sup> According to Paseta, early in the 1910s to late 1920s, feminists movements in Ireland were victimized by radically political divisions: those who found themselves to be more British than Eire-Irish and those who identified with Home Rule Ireland. The result was a constantly widening gap between the two, with feminist ideals becoming expendable concerns. The emergence of the republicanism even further complicated the relationship.

<sup>39</sup> On State-sponsored institutions of containment such as Magdalene Laundry and industrial schools, built to suppress uninvited voices of unmarried pregnant mothers, children born out of wedlock and other morally aberrant phenomena, see Bruce Arnold, *Irish Gulag*, Dublin: Gill&MacMillan, 2009.

The concept of women's submissive citizenship in *A Pagan Place* also appears in O'Brien's radical treatment of women's rite of passage. Where the clichéd departure towards city and the eventual return have been introduced as the protagonist's first steps towards her socio-sexual quest and formation, in *A Pagan Place* unlike her other novels, O'Brien introduces Dublin as a pagan place, dominated by men as sexual predators whose companionship ends in prenuptial pregnancies, wild sexual affairs, or catastrophic deformation. The never-ending duality of rural and urban Irish identity, in this respect, fosters the other Irish duality of rural womanliness and urban manliness, in which women emerge as expendable commodities, whose formation is twofold: contributing to men's proper formation or transmuting into wayward, deformed individuals who dominate O'Brien's other novels, especially *The Country Girls* trilogy, *The Love Object*, and *Some Irish Loving*. O'Brien's radical treatment of the duality of rural and urban Irish formation in *A Pagan Place* resonates with what Chinua Achebe discussed in *Home and Exile* (2003), in which the concept of home and homeliness at large have been attacked by the foreignness of an alien or (neo-) colonial home; under such circumstances, Achebe, notes exile and departing from one's deformed home in hope of finding and redefining home appears as the closest perception of home.<sup>40</sup> In *A Pagan Place*, the unnamed narrator initially follows the modern pattern of formation and as a result finds her agrarian identity and rural home as a setback, preventing her from experiencing certain unknown experiences, especially sexual initiation and sexual maturation; as her narrative develops, however, disconcerted by the sexually demonizing image of Dublin, where young rural girls such as her sister would get pregnant, she endeavours to redefine homeliness by rejecting city life and seeking her roots in her small county, redefining home and homeliness.

To the young, unnamed narrator, manliness and sexual adventurousness only produces "wilful, capricious and wayward self" or in short what defines her teenage and pregnant sister, Emma (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 158). According to the voice, by going to the city, and growing interest in "modern things", as did Emma, you embrace promiscuity and immoral formation, or as the doctor reveals to the narrator's mother, suddenly becoming "a woman", which "mean[s] a whole series of personal things; being lonesome et cetera, thing you shied away from" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 86).

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<sup>40</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile*, Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2003, 1-36.



In *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture*, Joseph Valente historicizes the concept of manliness in the Irish context of pre-/post- revolution. As Valente argues, manliness in the Irish context means the ability to be aggressive and filled with “thumos, the animal passion” (*The Myth of Manliness* 46); to be able to defend your identity regardless of the means and methods it requires; and to be able to release such psychophysical masculine drives through reversal of sublimation, namely sexual activities or war.<sup>41</sup> Self-control, in this respect, emerges as feminization of the Irish masculine heritage, and “women’s strength is actually a genre serving manly ends”, or contributing to their formation (Valente 154). For O’Brien’s suddenly self-conscious protagonist, avoiding the traditional move towards city and its male dominated, pagan environment, therefore, means accomplishing her Bildung without experiencing common sexual tragedies of city life, and completing a rite of passage that was coveted, never begun, yet led to similar results namely self-realization and socio-sexual awareness.

By criticizing her sister’s modern formation, which ended in promiscuity and a lost child born out of wedlock, and refraining from repeating her path of deformation by not following her to pagan places such as Dublin, the unvoiced narrator at once submits to State’s dichotomous identity politics that had surrounded the Irish women in the 1930s: the one which reflects the Constitution and deems women to be politically marginal, socially submissive and can best develop by not moving to big cities,<sup>42</sup> and caused the formation of early, if not necessarily the first, waves of feminism in the island, which encouraged socio-sexual awareness. By choosing not to pursue her ideal Bildung in big cities, and instead joining the convent, she embodies the parochial patriarchal politics of formation which had taught her that “only men should whistle. The blessed Virgin blushed when women whistled and likewise when women crossed their legs”, and had encouraged women to either join such religious schools and give up sexual Bildung, or to settle down in their husband’s house and get busy with the everydayness of their chores (O’Brien, *A*

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<sup>41</sup> Such manliness and masculine pride were the founding elements in Celtic mythological narratives of Brian Boru in defeating the Danish Vikings, or as Valente notes are manifested in the modern Irish struggles with the British over independence and decolonization. See Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922*, University of Illinois Press, 2011, 7, 15, 43-46.

<sup>42</sup> In his discussion of the Constitution and women’s right in Ireland, Peter Berresford Ellis claims that the de Valeran Constitution of 1937 has officially established chauvinism as the foundation of Irish society and identity. See Peter Berresford Ellis, “De Valera’s Betrayal of the Women of 1916”, *Irish Democrat*, July 5 2006, Web: retrieved Dec 16, 2012: < <http://goo.gl/6AQFh>>.

*Pagan Place* 99). Her decision, namely to reconsider her interests in men, love, and the masculine modern society of Dublin, and instead investing in her independent female identity, allowed her not only to transcend such internal psycho-sexual colonial imperatives, which relegated women to sexualized toys at the dispose of the masculine Society, but to emerge defending her social right by echoing her mother's critique of the de Valeran anti-feminist Constitution of 1937: "She said she had rights too, in law. She mentioned the dowry that her parents had sacrificed to give him" (O'Brien, *A Pagan Place* 61). While her mother's claims over her constitutional rights unwittingly ridicules the State's commodification of women's presence, limiting their presence to their properties and dowry, the narrator dramatizes the traumatic condition of Irish women such as her mother who have done their part in forming the State and yet suffered most under its sexist laws.

By consciously choosing the convent over Dublin, thus reversing the mechanics of the modern Irish Bildungsroman, O'Brien's narrator not only exits the psychological yoke of the State's internal colonialism, finding her independent selfhood at the end of her narrative, but also introduces an unexperienced variety of feminine modern Irish identity. She becomes a rebel who neither serves the patriarchal Irish Society nor the parochial Constitution, and whose radical legacy animated later feminists such as Nuala O'Faolain and Mary Kenny.<sup>43</sup> The narrator, in this respect, emerges as an outcry of dissident women who opposed the State's Orwellian dominance over women's socio-sexual formation in the 1930s; they form a marginalized crowd, such as Women's Social and Political League founded by Dorothy Macardle in November 1937, who reminded the State how they fought along with their male fellow revolutionaries for their liberation. Hence intrinsically gendered statements such as "women ... shall not be forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their sex, ... or strength",<sup>44</sup> received replies such as:

But for the women of Ireland Mr. de Valéra would not be in the position he holds today. He was glad enough to make use of them to transport guns and munitions, to carry secret dispatches, and to harbour himself and his colleagues when it was risking life and liberty to do so. If the women had not stood loyally behind the men we might be to-day no further than we were before 1916. It is harsh treatment this

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<sup>43</sup> Nuala O'Faolain, Mary Kenny, June Levin, Margaret Gaj, Nell McCafferty were the leading Irish feminists who founded the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, IWLM in 1970, and engaged in advocating women's basic rights. See June Levine, *Sisters: The Personal Story of an Irish Feminist*, Cork: Attic Press, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Bunreacht Na hÉireann (The Constitution) Article 45.4.2.

in return for all they have done for their country (Scannell 123).<sup>45</sup>

What critics such as Yvonne Scannell and Gaffney claim connects with the narrator's act of reciting Emmet's libertarian epitaph: referencing national feminist awakening and asking for equal rights and ending the politics of gender oppression.<sup>46</sup> While Emmet's epitaph had called for national liberation through anti-colonial self-realization, the narrator through her non-conformist rage and radical choices adapts a similar anti-colonial path of self-formation which led to deconstruction of the State's architecture of internal colonialism and politics of gender bifurcation.

Edna O'Brien wrote *The Country Girls* in three weeks and published it in 1960, narrating the sexually awakened 1940s and onwards.<sup>47</sup> True to Irish tradition, the novel and her later works, concerned with State's conservatism and women's sexual oppression, were banned as a result. *The Country Girls* as the first novel of the trilogy, introduced open sexual relationships and sexually motivated departures towards cities against a backdrop of sexual normalization administered by the State's politics of containment, principles which were to either normalize or suppress potential deviancies from the national pattern of formation. Before *The Country Girls'* revelatory narrative, illustration of sexual formation as an inseparable part of protagonists' rite of passage, especially women, had to end in the trio of silenced puberty, marriage, childrearing and household chores. According to Bolton, "in the European Bildungsroman tradition, the crucial milestones of maturity are courtship, falling in love or some form of sexual initiation, and marriage" (*Blighted Beginnings* 125); or in Castle's terms, "appropriate marriage [was] essential to sustaining the cultivating of character and morals" (*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* 90).

*The Country Girls*, in addition, was among the first narratives that pleaded to remember and narrativize the nation's dark days of socio-cultural isolationism, sexual

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<sup>45</sup> Yvonne Scannell, "The Constitution and the Role of Women", *De Valéra's Constitution and Ours*, ed. Brian Farrell, Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1988.

<sup>46</sup> Through his libertarian and nationalist rhetoric Robert Emmet besought his fellow Irishmen and women to unite and to question the unknown, and their country being ruled by powers which have marginalized the Irish for centuries:

I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world — it is the charity of its silence! Let no man write my epitaph: for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them. Let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me repose in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times, and other men, can do justice to my character; when my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done.

See Speech from Robert Emmet, Web, retrieved Jan 19 2013: < <http://goo.gl/UuVKv>>.

<sup>47</sup> Frances Wilson, *Country Girls: A Memoir* by Edna O'Brien a review, *The Telegraph*, Oct 08 2012, retrieved in Jan 10 2013: < <http://goo.gl/LyFVd>>.

inwardness, and political conservatism in the wake of independence wars. The result of such an incongruous ideological matrimony was the formation of a certain type of modern Irish feminine identity, which fantasized marriage but escaped from actualization of this bittersweet desire, developing a libidinal desire which according to Deleuze would lead to “deterritorialization” of societal codes (*Anti-Oedipus* 279).<sup>48</sup> The only reason that kept women preoccupied with marriage, however, was its social jurisdiction that could legitimize sexual activity; yet it was squarely despised by the young Irish women for the same social power could lead them to their most dreaded nightmare, namely, repeating the path of submissive deformation their mothers had taken. To suppress and contain such a non-identarian reconstructions of sexual preferences, the State reinforced its politics of formation to drive away the non-Irish, European forms of formation. The Censorship Act in 1929, the Dance Halls Act in 1935, banning contraceptives in 1935 and finally divorce in the same year that the de Valeran Constitution was established, 1937, all emerged as preventive principles enacted by the State. The reason: saving an all Irish, conservative identity which could guarantee the existence of the State and the duality of Cosgrave and de Valéra. These counteractive measures are what George Mosse regards as State’s steps towards “respectability”, and to protect their foundation against threats of the unknown modern alternatives (*Nationalism and Sexuality* 10). According to Jeffrey Weeks, exploring the European perception of sexuality, “the 1920s saw a relaxation of sexual taboos: the new feminists spoke of sexual pleasures, birth control was more openly advocated, progressive intellectuals espoused sex reforms, while homosexuality caused a certain fashionable frisson” (*Sex, Politics, and Society* 199).<sup>49</sup> In other words, while the Irish Constitution was to normalize Society by suppressing sexual anomalies and deformation, other European nations were examining formation beyond contraceptives and feminism.

The post-independence Irish State finds its conservative legitimacy threatened not by rebels or revolutionaries from within, for they have already been contained, but by concepts from without that have already mesmerized the younger generation. To control and contain such dramatization of sexual maturation and formation, the

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<sup>48</sup> According to Deleuze and Guattari, such non-conformist formation, which leads to deterritorialized societies, are products of modern civilization. This is the same Deleuzian radical impetus that emerges especially in nativist societies, or as Terry Eagleton notes, in traditionalist substratum. See Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 74-75, 160-163, 229-245.

<sup>49</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, London: Longman, 1981.

State's politics of formation introduces an obsessive valorisation of decency and virginity, and leaving only the male dimension of this conflict with considerable space to develop and form. Hence, anyone who pursued the unknown sexual maturity would fall under the State's Deleuzian rubric of Othered dissidents. As Deleuze and Guattari claim in *Anti-Oedipus*, the Oedipal conservative States lead nations to either follow their politics of formation, in which the State's socio-political 'respectability' is always emphasized, or face internal exile to marginalia and isolation. The oedipalized Irish State, founded on its trio of The State, Motherland, the Church (and then only marginally the individual), in this respect, emerges providing the nation with a predetermined pattern of formation in which sexual maturity and formation is secondary to their politics of decency and spiritual formation. While such internal Otherings fulfilled their telos of female marginalization in the 1930s, they only expedited the deconstruction of the State's gendered politics of sexuality, which manifested in the 1960s and especially in the works of feminists such as Sorcha Ní Ghuairim (her songs and column in *The Irish Press* between 1924 and 1945), Jennifer Johnston (especially her novels *Two Moons* and *A Shadow on Our Skin* which narrativized the 1970s, dealing with the blighted female beginnings), Marian Keyes (especially *Watermelon* published in 1995, chronicling the life of women being betrayed by their chauvinistic husband), and of course O'Brien. *The Country Girls*, in other words, becomes a pioneer in providing a stark and candid portrayal of upbringings at the hands of dispassionate mothers, absentee and drunk fathers, and emotionally different siblings in a politically shifting rural environment.

O'Brien's obsession with childhood and women's sexual deformations forms the crux of *The Country Girls*, following the lives of its protagonists, Caitheleen Brady, later known as Kate, and Bridget Brennan, also known as Baba or later Baubra, as they embark on their Stephen Dedalus –esque, libidinal path of formation. Kate and Baba emerge to possess what I call *the libidinal différance*: an interlocking paradoxical interrelationship between the absence and presence of sexuality and sexual formation proper ("Reaching the Point of Wheat" 1, 2); it is a sexualized oppositional drive that contradicts the State's chauvinistic politics of formation, and in itself forms the binary of parochial sexual abstinence and libidinal sexual exploration; the former rekindled sexual awareness among Irish women, while the latter led to resistant feminist formation in Ireland.

In *Margins of Philosophy* Jacques Derrida discusses the irreducibility of

“Différance” and introduces it as the dualistic essence of ontological perception, which can be found in other psycho-philosophical approaches to an understanding of individualism, realism, and existence at large (6). Such a potentially irreducible dualism can be found in the subjective definition of man’s individuality provided by society. Influenced by social norms, this binary extends to social norms and the essence of formation, and to certain concepts such as realism and spirituality. According to Derrida such a comprehensive dichotomy eventually will become so inclusive that it changes into an irreducible, ubiquitous concept, being part of the theological-ontotheological “systems and history” (*Margins* 14). As Derrida claims, “Différance is not only irreducible to any ontological or theological--ontotheological--reappropriation, but as the very opening of the space in which ontotheology--philosophy--produces its system and its history, it includes ontotheology, inscribing it and exceeding it without return” (6).<sup>50</sup> By libidinal différance, I mean to emphasize the irreducibility and dualistic nature of sexual formation in post-independence Irish formation. It, I argue, is a dichotomous form that emerged catalysing the State’s politics of formation and thus providing the Irish with unexperienced opportunities to experience sexual formation. The Irish woman in particular, benefited the most from this irreducible radical dualism, by incorporating it in their personal understanding of sexuality and sexual formation under a conservative government which at once condemned sexual formation and open sexuality – through the 1937 Constitution, and contained formation to only reflect a desexualized sense of it. Sexuality and sexual formation, in this respect, emerge as interminable binaries that oscillate between the presence of sexual maturation demanded by the protagonist’s physiological and psychological development, and the absence of it under State’s politics of formation.

It is the paradoxical nature of libidinal différance that enabled O’Brien’s unnamed narrator in *A Pagan Place* to criticize her pregnant, unmarried sister for her aberrant sexual bohemianism, while allowing herself to experience autoerotic and homoerotic pleasures, and to be seduced by the attractive young priest, as “... he presented himself and said to touch it. It was grotesque. The flesh all around it pained and raw. He said to touch it. You touched it on the snout”; and to experience “moving

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<sup>50</sup> On Différance see Jacques Derrida, “Différance”, *Margins of Philosophy*, University of Chicago press, 1984, 6, 14-19. Also see Jacques Derrida, *Points...: Interviews, 1976-1994*, Elizabeth Weber (ed.), Elizabeth Weber and Peggy Kamuf (Trans.), Stanford University Press, 1995, 89,100-105. On sexual différance see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, New York, Routledge, 2008, 147-150.

up and down as if on a seesaw and his finger was not an enemy, not then” (177). In other words, her libidinal différance convinces her to surrender and experience the unexperienced, while she finds her sister’s similarly sexual experiences horrible and worthy of punishment. In *The Country Girls*, as another example, while Kate yearns for Mr. Gentleman’s propinquity, an old married rich foreigner, she only unconsciously despises Baba’s promiscuity for arranging a date with two old, married rich men. In another example, where Joyce’s Dedalus is recognized through his artistic determination and sexual formation, Kate and Baba must appear as innocent rural Irish subjects victimized by the State’s obsessive and limiting politics of decency and parochial formations. As their narrative unfolds, their libidinal sexual determination, especially initially Baba’s, emerges to resonate with the Joycean clichéd dictum of defiance, resisting the State’s politics of (decent) sexual formations as they barely consider the moral aspect of their sexual adventure.

It is the same sexual binary (of presence and experience and absence and suppression) which forms Kate’s perception of sexual formation: an unbalanced dichotomy that requires her to choose between the traditionally approved marriage, being bound by the presence of an Irishman on the one hand, and an unexperienced, hence un-Irish, relationship with a man whose ideological foreignness and social incongruity in fact appeals to her understanding on the other. As Julia Obert argues in her “Mothers and Others”, the modern Irish woman is not interested in the socially limiting Irish traditions, nor is she willing to surrender to marriage, for she finds it as a recurring theme which only retells a narrative of male dominance and women’s marginalized formation; of repetitive, unhappy marriages wrapped only in different colours. Rather, she finds courtship as a means of experiencing the unexperienced. “Caithleen notes warily that Baba’s parent ‘sle[ep] in separate beds’” (286), a disturbing piece of information which evokes bitter memories of her mother and father, of their separate rooms, and of how broken their marriage and sexual life was. It is this socio-sexual detachment and emotional isolationism of their traditional past from which she tries to escape; this is a past that can repeat itself by marrying an Irishman, a potentially alcoholic, absentee father-to-be, who will resemble her fragmented family, and the broken, unhappy marriage of her father and mother. As Elizabeth Weston argues, “Caithleen seeks to escape the cycle of fear and self-hatred by replacing her rural past with urban modernity as a path to freedom [... all the same, her] past constrains [her] present and holds her in bondage” (“Constitutive

Trauma” 93).<sup>51</sup> By rejecting Jack Holland’s persistent (marriage) proposals, and disappointing other potential candidates, she indulges in her culminated libidinal différance as she loses her heart to Mr. Gentleman, a person whose presence, paradoxically failed marriage, and mutually promiscuous sexuality strengthen her dichotomous reality of sexual (de-) formation.

According to Cahalan, “Irish fathers’ alcoholism and physical and sexual abuse” emerge as the “central problems” in the modern Irish narrative of formation with sexual deformation at the heart of the novel (“Female and Male Perspectives” 59). Protagonists such as Kate and Baba, threatened by chauvinism of the Church and State, embark on a path of transformation, and change the objectives of their narratives, namely the trio of psycho-sexual maturation, social recognition and marriage, to finding a character who can substitute their parents in their traumatic memories of their childhood. Seeking fatherly and motherly figures, in this respect, emerges as their primary objectives, being psychologically condoned by their anti-Oedipal perception of Society and most notably sexually felt fit in light of their libidinal formation, charged by their sexual différance. What becomes of their narrative, hence, is not a bit in line even with their contemporary narratives of formation centred on a male protagonist.

Critics have regarded John McGahern’s *The Dark* as a novel of formation that resonates with the Joycean concept of individual formation, and at the same time resonates with O’Brien’s sexually rebellious characters as it confirms, and unwittingly condones, sexually aberrant formations by blaming the State’s “politics of chastity” (Bolton 125). However, Kate and Baba’s effort in finding an aged man as their lover, protector and sexual companion, with least concerns over marriage, is the notion that differentiates between the young protagonists in O’Brien and McGahern’s novels. In *The Country Girls*, libidinal différance is manifested in the negative dialectics on which Kate and Baba have decided to set their lives; the duality which gives them the confidence to defy State’s gendered politics of formation and gain peculiar sexual experiences; to reject their backward past and give up the convent school – despite Kate’s scholarship; and to leave their rural birth place behind and live and work in Dublin. Whereas, in McGahern’s *The Dark* (1965), the unnamed sexually subjugated narrator initially follows the conventional path of formation, and indulges in

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<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Weston, “Constitutive Trauma in Edna O’Brien’s *The Country Girls Trilogy*: The Romance of Reenactment”, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 29, No. 1, 2010, 83-105.



education in hope of experiencing sexuality in his college life, a dream which he finally gives up to pursue other experiences, rejecting his sexual and educational formation to acquire a sense of social security which according to Deleuze and Guattari resonates with the Nietzschean herd principle.<sup>52</sup> Unlike McGaharn's traumatize narrator, while Kate and Baba discard the State's norms and standards of sexual formation, they don't completely erase marriage and leave it as an open option, the one which could legitimize their stay in Dublin as a fruitful and permanent option.<sup>53</sup>

O'Brien begins *The Country Girls* in medias res by providing an astute portrayal of how frozen and static the Irish society has been made to look without its masculine protagonists, in this case Kate's father who has left home to pursue his personal hobbies. What O'Brien depicts, therefore, is a neglected stage surrounded by surreal stillness that has been imposed by the parochial patriarchal State. Kate and her disconcertingly thin and concerned mother are depicted to have been confined by the same static patriarchal norms. Despite men's self-indulgent and intoxicated lives, Kate and her mother feel safer to have a man, here Hickey a friendly workman, around simply to help them bear their plights of womanliness in a male-dominated environment, especially when Kate's father returns:

I did not know why my heart was beating faster than usual. Then I remembered. The old reason. He had not come home... . The sun was not yet up ... daisies that were fast asleep... the big outer field were each touched with a delicate, wandering mist. The leaves and the trees were bathed in the mist, ... trees looked unreal, like trees in a dream. It was quiet, it was perfectly still (O'Brien, *The Country Girls* 3).

Despite their knowledge that the father will come home drunk and unable to resist the subsequent hangover or sleep, which "had happened to [them] so many times that it was foolish to expect that [he] might come home sober", they can neither break this suppressive masculine quiet, by taking control of the house and keeping

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<sup>52</sup> According to Deleuze and Guattari, the Nietzschean concept of herd (instinct) in his *AntiChrist* becomes the founding telos of molar formation, namely, the force that reinforces the duality of obedience and thus safety, and castration and Othering. By indulging in the nationalist State's principles of unity and obedience, the individual is automatically entitled to a certain level to anonymity, social safety, and selflessness. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London, The Athlone Press, 1994, 373-375.

<sup>53</sup> In *The Way of the World*, Franco Moretti defines legitimization as a fusion of social mobility and psychological identification, which results in a coherent 'happy' and final product. According to Moretti, "One must internalize [social norms] and fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter. This fusion is what we usually call 'consent' or 'legitimation' (16). Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, New Edition, New York: Verso, 2000.

their “minds” clear of his insignificant return, nor break away from their origins and leave it behind (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 7, 6). Kate’s mother financially depends on her husband, and is emotionally attached to her shoddily decorated house; for her, formation has already been defined by State’s politics of obedience and dutifulness, leaving her role in her formation to be minimal. Kate’s father, however, can enjoy his unrestrained independence and authority by losing “the thirteen acre meadow for the loveliest greyhound”, or ignoring bills and instead spending the money on drinks – for “bills never worried Dada, he just put them behind plates and forgot”, while her mother’s psychosocial development has transformed into a cul-de-sac of deformation as a result of her lost sexual identity, financial dependence, and social isolationism that her duties and femininity had imposed on her (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 7). Her Bildung, in other words, is associated with self-annihilation and has manifested itself as a paralyzing stasis combined with a desexualized co-existence with her drunk husband in their separate rooms, which finally leads her towards her morbid ending, namely, a suspicious drowning and death.

For Kate and Baba, and their mothers, the path towards proper development neither includes sexual formation nor allows for non-conformist aberrant desires;<sup>54</sup> the path, in other words, is paved with either obedience and submissiveness, or the desire to create an alternative in desperation.<sup>55</sup> Although the de Valeran Constitution through Articles 41 and 45 had pronounced family as the birthplace of national unity, and claimed women’s role in their families as the most noble form of individual and national formation, their significance could only be heard through their psychological, social, and sexual martyrdom. The State recognizes,

The family . . . as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State. In particular, the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the

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<sup>54</sup> My understanding and usage of desire reflects what Deleuze and Guattari defined in *Anti-Oedipus*, namely, a libidinal impetus that not only deterritorializes the State’s politics of formation but leads the individuals towards a more conscious understanding of their talent. Desire, in this sense, corresponds with the Foucauldian forces that “counterbalance” the Oedipal trio of The Church, Family, Society and its normalizing Institutions, leading the individual towards rebellious, yet innovative, formations.

<sup>55</sup> The Deleuze / Guattari conception of desire, I argue, stands as a counter-response to oedipalized principles of the State, intensifying the dualistic formation of the subject, where the desire-led subject emerges oscillating between extremes, namely, between the normalizing codes imposed by the fascist state and its masculinized Society and the internal ‘desire’ to deterritorialize such forms, and deconstruct State politics of identity; in other words, between State’s territorialization and Othering, and the desexualized individualism of the modern Irish at the core of their formation.

neglect of their duties in the home (*Bunreacht na hÉireann* 41.1.2-2.1).

To feminists and libertarian activists, such claims appeared as the infamous ‘death knell,’ codes of internal Othering that would marginalize women’s presence tremendously, dividing them to those who remain faithful to their roles as mothers and wives and those who have deviated from such a mechanical path and thus need to be contained. Only by sacrificing their social Bildung, therefore, women’s efforts, as those of Kate’s mother, could be valorised as support for their nation. Women’s efforts appeared as a secondary subgenre which would best serve men’s Bildung in their masculinized Society. “Poor Mama, she was always a warrior”, notes Kate, contemplating the manly stasis that has surrounded not just her mother but almost all women in the island, “I suppose she lay there thinking of him”, “lie awake at night waiting for him to come home” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 6, 4).

O’Brien’s portrayal of femininity under the State’s politics of marginal formation depicts it as a radically reserved, inward dialogical voice. It is a mute, identarian feminine voice which has been overshadowed by the expressively loquacious masculinity. The State’s oppressiveness through Society’s codes of morality that have silenced dissident, Othered women and contained anomalous formations such as Emma in *A Pagan Place*, and fathers threatening or striking mothers (to keep them quiet) all emerge as examples of State’s gender partiality: “Would he stumble up the stone steps at the back door waving a bottle of whiskey? Would he shout, struggle, kill her, or apologize?” as he finally “came over and gave [Kate] a punch under the chin so that [her] two rows of teeth clattered together” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 6, 27). As O’Brien indicates in *Mother Ireland*, the State legitimized such masculinized discourse of suppression through Constitution and an Oedipal Society, and greatly contributed to the duality of “martyred Irish mother and the raving rollicking Irish father [that is] common to families throughout the land” (15). While Kate’s family becomes the embodiment of such an invisible duality of silenced domestic violence against women and the ‘rollicking Irish fathers,’ violence against femininity appears in various sublimated forms in O’Brien’s *The Country Girls*.

Baba’s family, for instance, serves this purpose, as the duality of sexual formation and desexualized marriage becomes the crux of their familial violence. The narrative introduces Baba’s father as an educated, less violent man, whose busyness

had nevertheless rendered him an absentee lover and sexual companion. He is a busy veterinarian who has lost his sexual interests in his wife, Martha, a recurring concept that has been revisited by Kate reflecting on her family. His sexuality, however, in form of libidinal-object cathexis, has been sublimated into a heteroclitic sense of guardianship with respect to all female characters except his promiscuous wife. The result is an anomaly, which serves no purpose: he is neither respected in his house nor fulfils his manly oppressive duties set by the State; he thus becomes a negligible, “aul fella”, a lost signified in Baba’s conversation with her mother: “‘Where’s the aul fella’ Baba asked. ‘I don’t know.’ Martha shook her head” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 30). The oppressed women in Baba’s narrative, indulge in their libidinal difference and relate to their social status before marriage for various reasons, most notably, to exit such a forced marginalia; experience and satisfy their sense of sensual relevance; and to replace his present absence. As the voice reveals, “Martha had been a ballet dancer. But she gave up her career for marriage”; a popular woman who “could have married a hundred men, a hundred men cried at my wedding”, but she gave up her past for a successful future guaranteed through marriage (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 32). However, as the narrative unfolds, not only has she lost her future, but she also has denied herself any form of socio-sexual success by committing to her marriage. Now, she indulges in her once glorious past just to re-experience the unexperienced, namely, to be relevant.

Martha’s decision to relinquish her married life, therefore, is not an untrodden path of formation for the modern Irish woman suppressed by the Oedipal Society, for it is only vaguely suggested later in the narrative that Kate’s mother, who in fact makes the other side of the binary of aberrant socio-sexual formation, has run away with one of her suitors/lovers, Tom O’Brien. In Kate’s male-dominated society of her drunk father, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Gentleman, Jack Holland, Hickey and others, this libidinal reversal of codes of normality is enough to assume her mother dead, despite having no official confirmation. Kate’s mother is contained by the Oedipal Society, whereas Martha is sexually repressed and left alone by her husband to suffer from an epidemic ‘psychological choke,’ nostalgia and irrelevance. For not only have they crossed the boundaries set by the State, namely to remain as Victorian, submissive and as womanly as possible, but they also have given up their support for their

masculine community and family<sup>56</sup>. They, therefore, would have to maintain their social status as victims of an internal colonialism, subjugated by the masculine voice of Society, and “wait for something to happen in the deathly, unhappy silence” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 70).

Such gendered Othering is not limited to Kate, Baba or their mothers, and how they externalized their lack of support for the State. Under the State’s politics of identity formation, women appear as a subsumable minority, a sub-culture who are to direct their full attention towards everyone’s formation but themselves. Not only are they devoid of any desire for sexual formation or independence, but they should also be alien to their own bodies and emotions, as when the voice warns O’Brien’s unnamed female narrator in *A Pagan Place* not to “touch your diddies, not even with your own fingers” (139), or when in *The Country Girls* Sister Margaret’s authoritarian, “penetrating whisper” abjures Kate’s emotional longing for her mother and calls it “sentimental childish conduct” (*The Country Girls* 69). In *The Country Girls*, portraying the 1950s and 1960s, although Society appears to have transformed into a more tolerant one, implementing a more moderate approach to accept and include women’s presence in society, for instance in public houses and dance halls, discussing women’s body and their foundation garments was still beyond acceptable and a shameful practice: ““Will you fit on the brassiere, Miss Brady?’ the shopgirl asked. Pale, First Communion voice; pale, pure, rosary-bead hands held the flimsy, black, sinful garment between her fingers, and fingers were ashamed” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 142). Women’s body, or anything that associates with it, triggers the inevitable return of the repressed, and thus forces the State to sound the death knell once again and oppress the concept altogether.<sup>57</sup> Representation of women’s bodies as far as the Constitution is concerned is allowed only in its nationalistic symbolism, namely, to represent the motherland and evoke nationalist emotions. Only the devotion to re-introduce their body as a non-sexual part of their femininity would convince the State to loosen their rules on representations of women’s bodies;<sup>58</sup> or as

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<sup>56</sup> There are several instances where Baba and her mother, Martha, are shown ignoring their duties, especially Martha who by Constitution is responsible to support her husband. Cooking infrequently and ignoring Mr. Brennan’s requests for making him beans, for instance, can be interpreted as both a feminist awakening and a microcosmic rebellion against State’s principles.

<sup>57</sup> On return of the repressed and processes that deal with repressing an already repressed concept, see Sigmund Freud, *The Unconscious*, London: Penguin Classics, 2005, 44.

<sup>58</sup> In the Freudian model, reality can be perceived through the trilogy of sensory perception; the preconscious, and the ego. See Sigmund Freud, *The Unconscious*, London: Penguin Classics, 2005, 85.

Kelly Maloy remarks as an “archetypal” femininity “wh[ich] nurtures the devoted sons, [and] ultimately sacrificed to preserve her honour” and body that has been ravaged by the masculinized England (“Out of the Shambles” 5).<sup>59</sup>

Sexual representation of female body and sexual initiation, however, emerge as part of Kate and Baba’s sexual Bildung, and manifest in their narrative as they embark on their traditional path of formation, namely leaving their small county home to live in a large city, Dublin. However, there is a major twist in Kate’s narrative which transforms it into a narrative of traumatic formation: her mother’s death. As Kate reveals, her mother’s death has carved an irreparable emptiness not only in her soul but also in her perception of the surrounding; memories of her “last day of childhood”, and a sexually maturing summer that follows, have been marked by a growing sense of diasporic unbelonging, unhomeliness, psychological exile and loss (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 45). Her traumatic condition, as she ponders over her mother’s placeless grave and the news of losing their home that her father brings to her attention, oscillates between unhomeliness and loneliness. Her compulsory exile to Baba’s house after her father gives up their house further reinforces an internalized traumatic diaspora. For their home was not just a place for her to discover her femininity by relating to her mother, but a psychologically significant structure with which now only memories of her mother associate. She decides that she does not “want to go home again”, as she meditates on her broken relationship with her mother: “I knew that Mama would never have a grave for me to put flowers on. Somehow she was more dead than anyone I had ever heard of” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 42, 45). By not going (to think about) home and seeking detachment from the memories of her mother, Kate tries to separate her sexuality from her feminine sentiments, seeking emotional independence and an alternative pattern of sexual maturity, the latter of which is nevertheless internally affected by such drastic changes. In other words, by cutting her psychological umbilical cord which connects her to her mother and her doleful desexualized femininity and seeking emotional replacement, Kate embarks on her true pattern of formation, which nevertheless is traumatic and hostile.

Kate’s sexual Bildung, marred by an increasing inward exile and loss, transforms into a pattern of psychological recuperation and transference, resulting in

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<sup>59</sup> Kelly E. Maloy, ‘*Out of the Shambles of Our History*’: *Irish Women and (Post)Colonial Identity*, Thesis, Morgantown: West Virginia University, 1998.

the formation of the binary of libidinal extremes,<sup>60</sup> namely establishing emotional connections and indulging in her desires: “I suppose it was then we began that phase of our lives as the giddy country girls brazening the big city” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 121). While the former was permitted by Society and pardoned as an excuse that would lead to marriage, the latter, as in sexual indulgence, was proscribed by the State and discouraged as an un-Irish concept, influenced by “the Continental laxity”, that would tarnish the pure national identity (Keogh 28).<sup>61</sup> It is the same social context, which as I discussed in my reading of Bolger’s novel, that critiques bohemian sexuality, isolates unmarried pregnant mothers, and contains such open relationships. To be able to conceal desires and relationships from the conformist Society, one needs to confide their secrets to a reliable person, such as their parents, people who could cover your faults and encourage your formation. To forget her traumatic past, and to defy the Oedipal Society, Kate’s transference changes into an unconscious libidinal formation by pursuing male candidates who fill her emotional emptiness, restore her sense of belonging, and satisfy her sensual needs.

In his preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which is a genealogical exploration of capitalism and its socio-cultural effects on the masses, Foucault defines Oedipal Society as being a product of normalizing rules set by an authoritarian tower society, namely, to be “on familiar terms with” rules that forms the State. To be able to understand this normalized, authority-oriented hegemony in order to defy its foundation, Foucault notes, you are required to obtain certain skills: language<sup>62</sup>, be part of either “the anti-repressive politics” or a libidinal surge “modulated by the class struggle” (xiii); or to relate to the pillars of power in that given society. To resist the dominant authority, Foucault points out, “a war [should be] fought on two fronts: against social exploitation and

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<sup>60</sup> According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire, which is to be regarded as libidinal and thus uncontrollable, enables the individual to indulge in the dichotomy of extremes and unlimited possibilities. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 113-121.

<sup>61</sup> On the formation of the puritanical Irish identity led by the Free State against the Continental laxity see Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican: The Politics and Diplomacy of Church-State Relations, 1922-1960*, Cork University Press, 1995.

<sup>62</sup> According to Foucault, “one had to be on familiar terms with Marx, not let one’s dreams stray too far from Freud. And one had to treat sign-systems -- the signifier -- with the greatest respect. These were the three requirements that made the strange occupation of writing and speaking a measure of truth about oneself and one’s time acceptable” (*Anti-Oedipus* xiii). This partially connects with that Schiller regarded as the aesthetico-spiritual skills, later remodel as modern bureaucratic competence in the nineteenth century Europe, that would allow individuals to expand their social mobility and sustain their social significance. See Michel Foucault, Preface, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, London, Continuum, 2004, pp. xiii-xv.

psychic repression” (*Anti-Oedipus* xiii). To deconstruct the former, the latter must be traced and eliminated. Psychological repression, libidinal radicalism, and social marginalization, claim Deleuze and Guattari, have roots in the modern nuclear family, where father’s authoritarian presence normalizes, if not suppresses, children’s sense of formation<sup>63</sup>. According to Deleuze and Guattari, family’s hierarchal mechanism of formation, namely, “daddy, mommy, and me” introduces the duality of submissiveness and the (child’s) desire to defy and overcome such an authoritarian voice as one of its systematic principles (*Anti-Oedipus* 111); and generally fathers emerge as the force that monitors children not to cross their path of formation.

Kate’s sexual adventures with Mr. Gentleman in ‘the big city,’ although greatly different from Baba’s meetings with different and new people each time, resonate with the Foucauldian perception of resistance: to deconstruct Society’s mechanism of sexual deformation, and to build her own identity, she needs to connect with the pillar of power, namely a rich, married male foreigner. By being rich, Mr. Gentleman can provide her not only with financial security but also a wider perspective towards her prospective plans and life, while his previous marriage would secure Kate’s special place as an unachievable item, notions that are regarded as anomalous by her traditional upbringing, but will nevertheless make her modern formation achievable. By having Mr. Gentleman by her side as a male companion, in addition, not only will she be able to experience the unknown, namely, sensual relationship, but she can also internalize her plans to deconstruct the social duality of masculine power and marginal femininity.

One of other instances of women’s critique of State’s gendered politics of division is manifested in Kate’s refusing to dance in the city dance hall, a microcosmic representation of male-dominated Ireland in the 1950s when women’s submissiveness was still regarded as an attractive feature. “The dances invoke traditional courtship rituals”, notes Bolton, “a metaphor for the inevitable pairing off in marriage. Upon receiving an invitation to dance, the girl *must* accept. Refusal is punished by expulsion from the *ceili*” (*Blighted Beginnings* 151).<sup>64</sup> In their visit to a local dance hall, her narrative reveals that Kate’s dancing was nothing short of failure,

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<sup>63</sup> Although Irish families do not necessarily fall under the rubric of nuclear family, patriarchal authoritarianism and children’s collective muteness resemble such a formation. Deleuze and Guattari, *Social Repression and Psychic Repression*, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Section 2: *Psychoanalysis and Familialism: The Holy Family*, pp. 123-132.

<sup>64</sup> Italicization is intentional and not present in the original text.



a personal inadequacy that under State's traditionalist principles might endanger her chance of successful courtship: "I drank three minerals because ... I fell dancing a barn dance. I must have tripped over my partner's shoes; anyhow, I fell, and my flared skirt blew up around me, so that people saw my garters and things" (O'Brien, *The Country Girls* 136). Kate gives up the floor and goes up to "the balcony" and drinks minerals and "trie[s] to look casual as hell, to show that [she] wasn't interested in dancing" (O'Brien, *The Country Girls* 136). By refusing to dance, or at least showing indifference, Kate refuses "to submit to male authority" and the microcosmic masculinized society of the dance hall, for as Bolton notes, "the dance reaffirms the primacy of the male as the initiators of courtship, whereas girls are unable to pursue the boy to which they are most attracted" (*Blighted Beginnings* 151). Through refusal, Kate emphasizes her status as being the essential element in the polarity of dancing, an unalterable status that the conservative Irish Society prefers to deface by inserting its normalizing principles of courtship. Female submissiveness, in this respect, is replaced by her radical feminine voice, which demands not just equality in choosing her (dance/sexual) partner but unbiased recognition as a crucial component of national formation. While Article 41 recognized women only through their familial duties, by refusing the very traditions of *céilí*, namely, submitting to her *céle* (meaning companion), the modern Irish woman pursues her development, moving from marginalia to the main context of social formation by opposing the oppressiveness of the Article in question.<sup>65</sup>

In the male-dominated Irish Society such a drastic change could not be achieved without the help of a catalyst voice, namely, a socio-culturally more flexible male companion. As she rejects the masculine Society of the city dance hall, Kate "wished" that she could have the alternative to such traditional sense of courtship, "that Mr. Gentleman would suddenly appear out of nowhere and steer me through the strange, long, sweet night, and say things in my ear and keep his arms around me" (O'Brien, *The Country Girls* 136). Kate's relationship with Mr. Gentleman is not just about sensual companionship and her socio-sexual formation, for they each seek a much deeper psychological benefit in their aberrant, un-Irish, hence Othered, companion. While what Mr. Gentleman seeks in his relationship with Kate, a much younger companion, is to reverse the failed dynamics of his dull marriage and re-

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<sup>65</sup> On marginalia as women's traditional sense of belonging see Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, New ed., 2006, 139-160.

experience emotional trials and tribulations of falling in love, Kate categorizes her sexual relationships, including the one with Mr. Gentleman, as indulging in her libidinal différance, namely, experiencing both sides of the binary opposition of “young men, Romance, ... love an things” and social recognition by deconstructing the State’s architect of female marginalization (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 145).

Kate, symbolizing the modern Irish women of her time, yearns for a “shadow” of social legitimization in a Society that has oppressed the image of sexual formation (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 171). Mr. Gentleman embodies this shadow in Kate’s narrative of sexual Bildung: a “detached” character who is at once obsessive and aloof, and whose contributions towards her legitimization are divided into passionate psychological support, sexual experiments, and finding her sense of selfhood in Society (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 168). However, her individualism and independence from her past comes at a price; it costs Kate her roots and her sense of belonging to her rural formation: “I was foolish and disloyal, ... to all the real people in my life. Mr. Gentleman was but a shadow, and yet it was this shadow I craved” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 171).

Kate’s dualistic modern formation (of sexual independence and unbelonging), however, is part of a larger context, namely, the conflict between modern female formations and the traditional feminine Irish identity; between “not [being] sorry to be leaving the old village” which to Kate “was dead and tired and old and crumbling and falling down”, and the modern sexually independent city life where she “knew ... that this was the place [she] wanted to be”, away from “the sad noises, the lonely rain pelting on the galvanized roof of the chicken house” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 120, 132). Her climactic relationship with Mr. Gentleman, as she understands, fits the same dualistic formation that oscillates between old and new; modern formations and traditionalist upbringings; desires to mature and experience the unknown and the socio-cultural politics of chastity. To Kate, in other words, her relationship with Mr. Gentleman, who competes against the younger generation of Irishmen, is a socio-sexual contest between the old and the new; the liberal and the conservative. Their relationship as her narrative reveals emerges as an experimental opportunity for Kate to break away from her haunting past, namely, her desexualized parents and a dysfunctional family, and the politics of containment that had dominated her small-town life.

Kate’s liberation from the orthodox Irish conservatism and social politics of

containment, manifested in her quest for sexual initiation fails the moment she sets to fantasize her relation with Mr. Gentleman's fatherly presence as a fruitful emotional and sexual contract between them. In other words, her misinterpretation separates her from her modern sexual Bildung in which sentimentalism and especially marriage had no place. Her failed relationship with Mr. Gentleman, revealed at the end of the first book in the *Trilogy*, is a product of troubled sublimation and oppressed memories, where a reversed Oedipal complex connects with a subdued Electra complex; in other words, her sublimated transference crosses his libidinal association. Sexual initiation and maturation, in this respect, fluctuate between sacrificing their ritualistic pattern of formation to gain emotional serenity, which both were willing to make, and a sexualized game of transference, which would enable Kate to emotionally replace her parents who have traumatized her formation with her aged, non-Irish, caring companion; and by so doing, she breaks the Deleuzean circle of family – daddy, mommy and me – and as a result completes her quest for independent identity. The relationship between Kate and Mr. Gentleman, in this respect, loses its sexual significance and sublimates into partial memories of Kate's traumatic childhood, in which "love and romance are relegated to a dim and distant past"; these are grief-stricken memories that only relate to Kate's vague perception of her past and present (Bolton 140-141).

To escape the cyclical nature of this past, and the "doleful" resemblance to her mother's deformation that "frightened" her (*The Country Girls* 77), which O'Brien too herself regarded as Irish women's 'psychological choke' in a politically masculinized Ireland,<sup>66</sup> Kate also seeks solace in language, namely, finding her own independent selfhood as both a narrator and an individual in her narrative of formation through her "lyrical" narratorial voice (Stade 358).<sup>67</sup> Such a drastic transformation, according to Foucault, demonstrates the "effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire", which in Kate's case is sexual and thus suppressed (*The Foucault Reader* 306). Language, or to be more specific Kate's dialogical discourse, emerges as the very vehicle of expression, through which she finds ways to externalize her sexual struggles and frustrations in a non-sexual pattern, be it confessional, which she finally misses to attend the Mass

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<sup>66</sup> O'Brien, *Mother Ireland: A Memoir* 127.

<sup>67</sup> George Stade and Karen Karbiener, *Encyclopedia of British Writers, 1800 to the Present*, Volume 2.

after her passionate time with Mr. Gentleman,<sup>68</sup> telling jokes mostly about the opposite sex, which is mostly done by Baba, or gossips which she only shares with her young colleague at the grocery store.

“Talk, that was what I must do. Talk. Talk. Talk. And all would be well”, notes Kate, when she finds herself in the awkward situation of being on a date with a man she barely approves or finds interesting (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 154). By ‘talking’ she indulges in the dialogical continuity of language, which for her will result in safety and non-sexual proximity, and at the same time enables her to find her independence in accepting or rejecting the relationship. While traditionally Irish women were to submit to the masculinized Society, she pursues her lost sexual identity by indulging in the dialogical and descriptive boundaries of language, and hence demands recognition from her male partner. Language, according to Julia Kristeva, emerges as the intermediary register that enables individuals to recognize their unique individual identity through various phases such as self-inspection, deconstructing the source of meaning, and defining what the individual lacks. In other words, language and literature establish their definitional patterns (of giving form to individuals and themselves) on the lost desires of completion and psycho-social accomplishment. “On close inspection,” according to Kristeva, “all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its sociohistorical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject” (*Powers of Horror* 207).<sup>69</sup> Kate’s innocent and, in Kristeva’s terms, “poetic” voice reflects her “baby”-like anticipation of finding her independent ‘I’ness in the still chauvinistic Irish Society of the 1950s by appropriating language as a means of self-inspection and self-recognition (Kolocotroni 158).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “He slipped away, just when things were perfect, as if he couldn’t endure perfection... That was the first Sunday I missed Mass” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 158).

<sup>69</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, 12-13. Also see Maureen O’Connor, *The Femal and the Species: The Animal in Irish Women’s Writing*, Bern: Peter Lang, International Academic Publishers, 2010, 1-29.

<sup>70</sup> In an interview with Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Kristeva explains her perception of ‘poetic language’ to be founded on “the sense used by Jakobson, that is, of a poetic language that consists of poetry but also of prose, to the extent that it is a reordering of everyday communication. I tried to enlarge the Jakobsonian notion by understanding poetic language as the inclusion of the semiotic within the symbolic. In other words, I call semiotic the rhythms, the alliterations, the primary processes that, according to Freud, are represented in the oneiric scene—the psychic function closer to the unconscious. Charged by drives, of life and of death, this scene can pass over, can be codified within

According to Kristeva ‘poetic’ language reflects “certain features which are also found in the echolalias of children that is the rhythm, the music” (*Wall to Wall* 1992).<sup>71</sup> This rhythmic / poetic feature of language, Kristeva notes, signifies two separate things: the child’s developing sense of self-recognition and narcissism, namely, the pre-Oedipal stage in Freud’s developmental model, and their dependence on their mother. The lyrical or poetic aspect of language, Kristeva claims, signifies one important aspect, that “if poetic language displays pre-linguistic musicality, it’s because it also bears witness to our fragile narcissism and to mother-child relationship” (Kristeva 1992). Unlike Baba, Henry, or Reginald, Kate exerts her sexual identity through what Kristeva regards as “the pre-oedipal, maternal dependency” (“Talking Liberties” 1992), namely, through “Talk[ing]. Talk[ing]. Talk[ing]” (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 154). Being an “artistic” person, Kate defies not only the conventional boundaries of sexual formation but also its traditionalist varieties, which partly were set by the State and partly by her non-conformist self, and thus courts through language (O’Brien, *The Country Girls* 154). Kate’s efforts to reinforce sexual formation through discourse, I argue, must be considered as part of her psycho-social requirements to keep her identity while understanding, if not physically experiencing, sexuality as an unknown drive in a Society which limits such undefined formations. As I shall discuss shortly in my reading of Nuala O’Faolain’s Bildungsroman, Kate’s unexperienced pattern of sexual formation emerged as non-identarian societal codes in the 1950s that according to Foucault “counterbalance[d]” the State’s politics of formation (*The History of Sexuality* 25); this is a pattern that encouraged feminists to voice their concerns regarding a still masculinized perception of femininity in the 1970s by establishing second-wave feminist groups such as Irish Women’s Liberation Movement, chaired by Mary Kenny and organized by feminists such as Nuala O’Faolain and June Levine.

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the language of communication, the language of signs constructed in grammar and logic. Once this passage is effected, once the semiotic enters the symbolic, we reach a moment of distortion, a moment of rhetorical figures, rhythms and alliterations, what is in fact poetic language in all its particularities. This is for me an instance of both a subjective crisis and an amplification of the register of expression, since repression is overcome and the individual is exposed to his/her passions, while, at the same time, being able to formulate them and communicate with others. This is what I call ‘text’. It resembles the ‘poetic’ in the Jakobsonian sense, but my formulation includes the psychoanalytical aspect of the phenomenon, that is, the unconscious and the drives.” (“Julia Kristeva Interviewed” 158). See Julia Kristeva, “Julia Kristeva Interviewed by Vassiliki Kolocotroni”, *Textual Practice*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 1991, 157-170.

<sup>71</sup> Julia Kristeva, “Talking Liberties”, *Wall to Wall* by Jonathan Rée, London: BBC4, 1992, Video: <http://goo.gl/bDCDo>.

Nuala O’Faolain’s *Are You Somebody?* was published in 1996 as part of her two-volume autobiography, the second one being *Almost There* published in 2003. *Are You Somebody?* emerges as the author’s Bildungsroman Proper, narrativizing social, cultural and political struggles of Irish formation, especially women, between the 1940s and late 1970s. The narrative continues the critical legacy of O’Faolain’s literary mentor, Edna O’Brien, by providing a candid account of static Irish Society and how it has affected Irish women’s formation.<sup>72</sup> While O’Brien’s second and third novels in *The Country Girls* trilogy criticized the Oedipal State and the conservative Irish Society for their socio-sexually biased pattern of formation as well as their dualistic politics of obedience or marginalization, O’Faolain’s novel provided a different approach to the concept of marginalization through its non-fictional voice which oscillated between fiction and reality, providing a reality that was fictionalized and denied by the State, forming a resistant critical subculture.<sup>73</sup> *Are You Somebody?*, in this respect, emerges as a narrative that continues to narrate the on-going clash between the State-approved conservative Irish identity and the modern feminist one, or the one that Kate and Baba embodied, wherein the latter tends to deconstruct and subvert the former. While the former, according to Jim MacPherson, was limited by the national identity to include “home-based textile industries”, reminding their children the significance of proper (English) language, and “offering prizes for best costume and best-kept cottage”, the latter was manifested, for instance, in O’Brien’s characterization of her protagonists in the *Trilogy*. The former, in other words, illustrated the Irish woman to “either ... make no demands, and be liked, or be much larger than life, and feared”, while the latter depicted the 1940s Ireland as “a living tomb for women” (O’Faolain 6).

In his introductory chapter on *Women and the Irish Nation*, Jim MacPherson provides a rather contradictory image of Irish women being warmly accepted by the

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<sup>72</sup> While the nation was enjoying its neutrality and especially independence from Britain during the Second World War, it internally was suffering from foreseeable consequences of the neoconservative State and the Constitution established in 1937. An angry feminist mob; raised concerns over the north of the island being bombarded by the Nazi Germany; and the critical times of the new health policy, known as the Mother and Child scheme, all emerged as tasks that kept the State perturbed and away from reconsidering women’s role and significance in the new Irish identity.

<sup>73</sup> As I explained in previous chapters, fictionalization of reality provides the voice with a desirable level of anonymity to explore the impossible and to illustrate concepts that have been kept as unknown by the State. Sexuality, internal Othering, politics of containment, Cavan orphanages, Magdalene Laundries, Father Tiddlys, Francis Braddys, Ivans and many other fictionalized phenomena, social cruelties, and individuals in fact emerge as what Ricoeur regards as eyes that enable us to see through historical reality and weep. On fantastic reality see Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, York: Methuen, 1981.

pre-Easter Society; a social openness and acceptability that as he notes extends to nationalist politicians and revolutionaries such as de Valéra, and the rise of Sinn Féin and the Nation-State. This is a claim which tends to overshadow decades of anti-feminist governments, marginalized feminist radicals such as Dorothy Macaddie and Kathleen Lynn and the 1937 Constitution which as Berresford Ellis notes “betray[ed] the women of 1916” and gave rise to an Orwellian State (“De Valéra’s Betrayal” 2006). According to MacPherson, Irish women, regardless of the period and the political zeitgeist, have always been “projected onto a far broader canvas” of social formation and national development, a concept which he later contradicts by describing the ways women were allowed to take part in the State’s socio-cultural canvas of formation, namely “by reinforcing and extending existing notions of acceptable female behaviour” (*Women and The Irish Nation* 1). It was this cast of acceptability encompassing ‘female behaviour’ that, according to O’Faolain, made the 1940s Ireland a living tomb for women, while “for men like [her] father, out and about in Dublin, the opposite was true” (*Are You Somebody?* 6).

O’Faolain begins her narrative by exploring the socio-cultural gap that at once separated and united women in Ireland from two different generations, namely, 1920s and 1940s. Her mother, on the one hand, representing the more conservative generation, suffers from a still male-dominated Irish society in which men’s “life became more exciting” while women’s only “got harder” (*Are You Somebody?* 10); and herself, on the other, embodying a non-conformist, socially conscious younger generation of Irish women, who unlike her mother demanded equality and social recognition. “My mother was on her own, but without hope of independence”, remarks O’Faolain, describing a lost, victimized generation of Irish women whose formation was either disregarded as a secondary concept to male social development and integration, or lost amid her household duties, leading her to self-annihilation through alcoholism, depression and psychological choke (*Are You Somebody?* 6). Her narrative begins in medias res, filled with agonies of a thirty-year-old Irish woman, and compares her emotional despair with her mother’s; this is O’Faolain’s artistic juxtaposition that at once questions MacPherson’s account of women being socially accepted, and illustrates nothing much has changed. It reveals how O’Faolain would “recreate [her] mother’s life” and follow her distorted path of formation through alcoholism, vengeful affairs with men she disliked, and finally a marginalized nothingness, unless she detached herself from such an epidemic marginalization of

women: “and there was I – half her age, not dependent on anyone, not tired or trapped, with an interesting, well-paid job, with freedom and health and occasional good looks. Yet I was loyally recreating her wasteland around myself” (*Are You Somebody?* 2).

Such self-pathologization of her social identity can be better understood by psychoanalyzing the socio-cultural struggles of the modern Irish women. In *Cinderella Complex*, Colette Dowling finds dependency, either socially enforced or voluntary, as the pathological source of women’s marginalization, by which women are permitted to expand their presence inasmuch as they comply with the ‘acceptable’ pattern of formation sanctioned by the State. According to Dowling: “personal, psychological dependency – the deep wish to be taken care of by others – is the chief force holding women down today”; hence “like Cinderella, women today are waiting for something external to transform their lives”, be it marriage, depending on their husband’s economic independency, or even making useful vocational connections (*Cinderella Complex* 21). While for her mother this dependency is manifested as not only her economic but also emotional dependency on her husband and family, for the narrator it is an emotional and sexual association, or in its traditional sense marriage, that appears as a psycho-sexual element, reducing her self-induced emotional burden:

I was in my thirties, ... living in London on my own.... The man who had absorbed me for ten years, and who I had once been going to marry, had finally left. I came home on day to ... a note ... saying ‘Back Tuesday’. I knew he wouldn’t come back, ... I didn’t want him to.... But still, I didn’t know what to do. I used to sit in my chair every night and read and drink a lot of cheap white wine. I’d say ‘hello’ to the fridge when its motor turned itself on (O’Faolain 1).

This fundamental loss of self is the umbilical cord that connects the narrator to her mother, and makes her remember her mother’s oppressed self-deformation, the very concept that led Kate in *The Country Girls* to sublimate Mr. Gentleman’s sexual presence into a fatherly lover and a protective sexual companion. To detach herself from such cyclical psychodramas, the narrator seeks refuge in a self-prescribed bibliotherapy and mild alcoholism, a solution which helps the narrator to at once escape marriage and maintain her independence.



O'Faolain as the subversive narratorial voice, similar to her mentor's characterization of Baba in *The Country Girls*, emerges as a non-conformist young Irish woman, who stands up to such psycho-social marginalization and forced dependencies; someone who externalizes her traumatic experiences instead of internalizing it and treating it as something personal, the latter, notes Cixous, being the "destructive" force that leads women towards break down ("Reaching the Point of Wheat" 12). In other words, O'Faolain's resistant narrative of formation, similar to O'Brien's sexually conscious oeuvre, stands as a candid account of State's politics of marginalization crystallized in the Constitution of 1937, legitimizing "disciplinary regulation of female bodies", the "ban on the importation and sale of contraceptives" in 1935,<sup>74</sup> and of course the Employment Act in 1936, which officially isolated women's social presence in various jobs (Obert 290). To secure a job, in this respect, resistant independent women like O'Faolain, who survived involuntary pregnancies and managed proper education, should do what other Irish women such as O'Brien had done: migrate to London or other large cities.

In O'Faolain's *Are You Somebody?*, unlike O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*, the State's masculine voice of 'thou shalt not' appears only insignificantly and just in the form of irresponsible, absentee fathers, and promiscuous colleagues. By the early 1950s, as O'Faolain's narrator enters her period of physio-sexual maturity and in spite of still conservative Irish Society, sexuality and sexual formation were neither policed nor related to this voice. Such societal leniencies were achieved in the final years of 1950s as feminists and other oppositional movements resurfaced after decades of stasis from the 1930s and early 1940s. The State's gender politics, as Eileen Connolly notes, as a result was amended later in the 1950s, especially in 1957 and 1958, to include a "growing debate on 'gender regime' change" which would inject new meanings to the national perception of women and femininity in Ireland ("Durability and Change in State Gender Systems" 65).<sup>75</sup> Developing concepts such as women's education and "new employment opportunities", which were originally introduced by first wave feminists, emerged as the two main salient features of State's new gender politics. To O'Faolain, unlike Kate and Baba who gave up the Convent school to

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<sup>74</sup> In 1935 the Irish also saw other politically anti-feminist occasions such as the formation of a team of politicians, who were assigned by de Valera to refine the Constitution, which to many feminists was the beginning of a nationwide marginalization.

<sup>75</sup> Eileen Connolly, "Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 10-1, 2003, 65-86.

work in Dublin and experience sexuality, education means the only path that could guarantee her salvation by subverting a traditional dialectics of becoming, and not repeating her mother's pattern of marginalization and self-annihilation:

One of the exercises we were given was to make a list of the ten most important events of our lives.... Number one was: 'I was born,'... number: 'I learned to read.'... I must have picked it up already from my mother – that reading is defence. That 'they' can't get at you when you have a book" (O'Faolain 22-23).

While such a classical sense of formation, namely, prioritizing education over sexual and individual formation, contradicts the fundamentals of the modern Bildungsroman, the protagonist's perception of education as her only means of escaping the typical fate of Irish women reflects an oppositional uniqueness in her classical formation. In other words, to isolate State's internal colonization and politics of gender Othering, and to render the authoritarian voice of 'thou shalt not' as just a fantastic echo of a historically flawed gender politics in the island, the voice in O'Faolain's narrative indulges in books and seizes her scholarship to pursue her degree. Her Joycean dictum of resistance manifests itself in her defying the State's clichés of women's roles, as housewives or reproductive factories; in her determination to enter and finish college; and in her unflinching wish for independence, financially and psychologically. Her determination resonates at once with Stephen Dedalus's, in giving up anything but his passion for aethetico-educational Bildung, and with Kate's and Baba's, in always regarding sexual formation as an inseparable part of her Bildung.

In addition to education, the narrative divulges a shocking historical reality behind Irish women's formation under the conservative State-Nation rule. The State's stipulated *change* in its perception of women's social significance,<sup>76</sup> can best be described by Foucault's definition of "moral codes" as contradictory sets of,

Values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies...[and] sometimes ... set forth in a coherent doctrine and an explicit teaching...[and] ... are transmitted in a diffuse manner, so that, far from constituting a systematic ensemble, they form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another, and cancel each other out on certain points, thus providing for compromises or loopholes (*The History of Sexuality* 25).

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<sup>76</sup> Italicization is intentional.

While the late 1950s marks the beginning of such a drastic change in perceiving women and appreciating their roles beyond the plateau of conservatism, it also counts as a period of political contradictoriness and socio-cultural ‘counterbalances.’ It was the period that made the Irish women doubt not only their very existence but anyone with whom they had any connection. Individuality and personal uniqueness, in this respect, were mythologized as features only achievable through submission, and continuing with the Christian-confessional pattern of formation, in which sexuality and sexual formation were regarded as side projects of marriage, foregrounding procreation and childrearing as the main objectives:

I was typical. A nobody, who came of an unrecorded like of nobodies. In a conservative Catholic country which feared sexuality and forbade me even information about my body, I could expect difficulty in getting through my life as a girl and a woman (O’Faolain ix).

Despite the on-going socio-cultural changes and political leniencies, albeit mostly theoretical, as the voice reveals, she still appears as a young girl whose puberty only further complicates her status in the conservative Irish Society; for she was neither a child, free from societal moral codes, nor an aged woman. In fact, as her narrative illustrates, as she “arrives on [her] fourteenth birthday” her physiological knowledge of her own body seems to be unchanged, and is equal in breadth to what she has learned in her childhood, namely, a demonized account of sin and suffering centred on women’s body: “puberty got me into so much trouble... all I knew was that something had run over me like a train, and simplified everything. I was stunned by the demands of the body I had barely noticed” (O’Faolain 30).

Such social complexities in psycho-sexual formations were shattered in the 1960s as new radical feminist movements began to surface, extending principles of their predecessors in the 1920s. However, it was because of such conservative social complacencies in the early 1950s that concepts such as women’s sexuality, and sexual maturation and *Bildung* remained as obscure, if not forbidden, notions for women to experience. O’Faolain’s narrative exemplifies this socially dichotomous perception, illustrating a Society which shows social tolerance and accepting modern women’s new socio-sexual desires, and simultaneously interrogates the people’s ideological direction through its moral codes. On the one hand, it encourages sexual *Bildung* and introduces its ritualistic pattern, involving “sexual initiation and a subsequent emotional distress”, notes Bolton, which “enables one to purge both shame (cultural

and religious impositions of guilt) and emotional dependency ... thereby opening up the potential for a liberated and unexploited sexuality” (*Blighted Beginnings* 139), while on the other rebukes sexual education, “forbade ... information about [women’s] body”, and criticizes sexuality and un-Irish courtship, namely, that which does not end in marriage (O’Faolain ix).

When signs of sexual maturity appear, she needs to be sent away lest she brings shame on her family, Society and herself:

I was the second eldest. My parents still had the energy to do something about my *crisis*. My mother, on the telephone from the Red Bank bar, got me into St Louise’ Convent, far away in Monaghan. My father sold his car. I was bought a trousseau in Gorevan’s: napkin rings, three pairs of shoes, a dressing gown, a hairbrush – things no one in the family ever had (O’Faolain 31-32).

For the conservative Irish family, sexual maturity meant either marriage or promiscuous formation; hence, to prevent the latter, they decided for marriage to be their young daughter’s “destiny” as “their lives depended on the ... man they got” (O’Faolain 32). Educational development and moving to big cities, as what Kate and Baba did, however, emerged as the Foucauldian elements that counterbalanced, if not corrected, such strict neoconservative binaries of Irish Society. A young Irish woman who rebelled against not only her conservative family but also Society leaves her family’s suburban life behind and sets off to experience the independent life of sexual maturity, and understanding modern concepts that would allow her to critically differentiate between the old and new, as in “the idea that young people are different from older people in every way was starting, with Elvis and James Dean” (O’Faolain 32-33). As her narrative continues, these modern concepts build in her a social consciousness that help her recognize the growing gap that has separated those who “like [herself] knew something about sensuality,” but presumably “suppressed the knowledge”, from those who enjoyed being “the disembodied spirits for all the attention that was paid to [their] bodies” (O’Faolain 32-33).

Education, as the narrative reveals, enabled the modern Irish woman to transcend not only the static traditionalism of the 1940s and early 1950s but also the traditional preoccupation which associated sexuality with sin and guilt and sublimated sexual maturity into contempt for women’s/men’s body; hence, she would have a better understanding of the liberated 1960s, when “an old Ireland was ending”, and instead “new possibilities” were arising (O’Faolain 91).

As the nation began the 1960s, sexual Bildung also entered a new phase, filling the gap between the conservative binary of a fulfilling marriage and aberrant auto or homo eroticism.<sup>77</sup> Sexual Bildung for the modern Irish woman, I argue, transformed into a self-abnegating social dualism that oscillated between the retrograde social conservatism, commitment, and entrapment on the one hand, and the liberation of personal formation on the other; or in other words, between the forbidding societal codes of morality and the individual's desires to experience the unexperienced, namely, the socio-emotional independence. While the dominant question for the young Irish women still was to understand "how love [was] found?", and "sex" happened to be "in everyone' mind, often obsessively" but in different forms such as marriage, the concept of sexuality and sexual formation was as aberrant as it was in the 1940s, as "no one believed it was a healthy thing" (O'Faolain 29, 90). Marriage, as I noted, appears as the closet, if not the most engaging, concept to modern women's sexual liberty; however, as the voice attests there lies a significant difference in the way the Irish woman expresses her interest in courtship: "what *kind* of man was ... the most important question for a woman" (O'Faolain 91). As Bolton understands "sexual experience ... becomes a test that measures the nature of the exchange, whether it be a prelude to marriage or an unconditional release of sexual energy" (*Blighted Beginnings* 140). In O'Faolain's Bildungsroman *Proper*, however, it is the latter which emerges as the dominant aspect of courtship as the country passed the latter part of the 1960s. Marriage, in this respect appropriates its modern definition, and becomes "perilous" to the modern Irish women, as a result of which she not only has defied her national traditions but also her own Catholic upbringing in a conservative family (*Are You Somebody?* 87).

As Richard Finnegan writes in *Ireland: Historical Echoes, Contemporary Politics*, while previous forms of sexual relationships, as in the romanticized form of courtship, has led the nation to establish "social life ... around male groups", resulting in "immature attitude towards women", the 1960s dramatically changed such a male-dominated social equation (272). Courtship and other romanticized varieties of sexual relationship departed from bearing a singular outcome, namely marriage or emotional attachment, towards instrumentalization of sexuality. This third form, the first and second being emotional attachment and marriage, respectively, emerged as the final

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<sup>77</sup> On sexual revolution in Ireland see Thomas M. Wilson and Hasting Donnan, *The Anthropology of Ireland*, Dublin: Bloomsbury Academic, 35-40.

blow to the State's politics of containment, as it deconstructed the very foundation of parochial conservatism. "You could best have a career", remarks the narrator, "by either not having sex at all, or having it but somehow not getting pregnant" (O'Faolain 94). Instrumentalization of sex, figuratively enough, functioned as a double-sided blade: on the one hand it provided Irish women with a better grasp of their body as being something far more precious than what the Church had taught through its codes of morality, and subverted the male-dominated social codes of marginalization and masculine formation; and on the other, such instrumentalization also affected emotionally delicate concepts such as motherhood and childrearing, leaving the concept of sex and sexual relationship with an exhausted and mechanical definition. As the protagonist notes, "childrearing, along with bad education, relationships that managed to be simultaneously all-absorbing and unrewarding and financial dependence, were the enemies of promise" (O'Faolain 94). Although it was in light of this mechanical definition that Irish women found their feet in a patriarchal Society and experienced independence, they had to sacrifice romance and romantic sexual fulfilment for their social recognition and vocational security.

Instrumentalization of sexuality not only suppressed the masculine notion of women's submissiveness but also disrupted the natural connection between women and motherhood as its voluntary outcome, illustrating motherhood as a demonized yet coveted concept.<sup>78</sup> This is the obvious dichotomy that further estranged modern Irish women from having at once a passionate sexual formation and protecting their rights of becoming a mother. In other words, the modern Irish woman had to choose between motherhood and sexual desires and formation, or as Bolton puts it, "releas[ing] of sexual energy" and fulfilling their pattern of sexual formation (*Blighted Beginnings* 140). Women, in this respect, had to "face into the future looking backwards", as they had to give up their desires to secure some other forms of desire, forming a paradoxical oblivion in which concepts such as childhood, maturity, formation and development all fade into mere memories, which the narrator finds impossible to erase or relive, crystalized in a poem she receives from a reader:

...The family coil... so twisted, tight and loose  
anyone trying to leave  
has to strafe the field  
burn the premises down

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<sup>78</sup> On separating motherhood from female identity see, Mardy S. Ireland, *Reconceiving Women: Separating Motherhood from Female Identity*, London: Guilford Press, 1993, 114-118.

The home houses  
Mirages      memory fogs the kitchen panes  
the rush-hour traffic outside  
has the same old ebb and flow  
Out on the darkening block  
Somebody calls you home  
night after night      then never again  
Useless for you to know  
They tried to do what they could  
Before they left for good... (O'Faolain 231).

As I shall explore in my next chapter on Francis Stuart's *Black List, Section H*, this socio-cultural oblivion was not limited to Irish women, although they were most affected by it. As the Irish lived through the chaotic 1940s, 1950s and 1960, and witnessed new opportunities, new socio-cultural hardships arose as well, which tested not only the boundaries of modern Irishness but also those of the modern Irish Bildungsroman as a socio-political vehicle of expression and cultural critique.

## Chapter IV

### Individualism, Modernism and Beyond: Towards a Modern Irish Dialectics of Formation in Francis Stuarts's *Black List, Section H*

According to Fredric Jameson, the 1960s were the “transitional period, a period in which the new international order (neo-colonialism, the Green Revolution, [...]) is at one and the same time set in place and is swept and shaken by its own internal contradictions and by external resistance” (*The Cultural Turn* 3). Ireland was not an exception, as the 1960s mark the beginning of socio-cultural revolutions whereby the Irish re-discovered their rooted individualism,<sup>1</sup> crystallized into historically aware Bildungsromane set to narrate the nation's plights of individual formation overshadowed by national independence. Through the critical discourse of the novel of formation, these narratives function as socio-politically objective memories that enable the nation to “transcontextualize” their historical memory, namely, to revisit the past and restructure their perception of critical concepts such as a national identity and formation, racial and ideological intolerance, and a marginalized understanding of individual formation (Hutcheon 103).

As Kiberd argues, while the 1920s and the 1930s were about introspection, and the 1940s and the 1950s about socio-cultural introversion, the 1960s, and especially 1965 onwards, witnessed a revolution in the nation's perception of individual and national identity.<sup>2</sup> Rebellious voices channelled through the critical discourse of novel of formation, and critiqued a State-sponsored voice of internal othering and narratives of decolonization;<sup>3</sup> in the former rebellion and non-conformity were under-represented while in the latter such voices could only join to repeat the

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<sup>1</sup> By rooted individualism I refer to an independent appreciation of Irish identity. See Mary E. Daly, *Industrial Development and Irish National Identity, 1922-1939*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> According to Kiberd, the 1920s-30s provided the revolutionaries with the time to contemplate the ways that led their revolution go astray, resulting in a totalitarian State whose conservative oppressiveness, as Louis MacNeice notes, seemed “opportunist[ic]” (*Collected Poems* 1966). The 1940s and 1950s, however, Kiberd notes, was the time of national introversion, ignoring international connections and unorthodox patterns of formation, especially anything that had to do with individuals' sexual formation and development. See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 471-480.

<sup>3</sup> On Irish nationalism as a voice of internal othering see Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*, Dublin: Penguin, New Edition, 2000, 650-655.



history.<sup>4</sup> As Smyth notes, “the Irish subject”, split between such conservative extremes, therefore, “functioned as an effect of this or that narrative, placed here or there depending on where the commentator started, the direction he took, and his imagined destination” (“Irish Studies, Postcolonial Theory” 212).

To maintain its currency as a medium of criticism, the critical discourse of the modern Irish Bildungsroman must first challenge and subvert yet another socio-political obstacle, namely, the oppressive society normalized by the State. According to Kevin Kiely, narratives that tend to replace the State’s politics of formation with a personalized account of individual formation generally shared a similar fate, namely, receiving “negative [and] disheartening” responses from not only various political parties, publishers, and numerous Censorship Acts but also readers as the very components of society (*Francis Stuart* 243). Socio-culturally non-conformist modern Irish authors such as Francis Stuart, Brendan Behan and Flann O’Brien, to name but a few, in this respect, were further divided by society’s dualistic preference into “monarch[s] of Irish letters” and absurdist “outsider[s]” (Kiely 242).

In this chapter, by examining Stuart’s *Black List, Section H* (1971), Flann O’Brien’s *The Hard Life* (1961), and John McGahern’s *The Dark* (1965), I will firstly identify these modern voices that challenged and subverted the socio-political, and educational boundaries that were established by the State and legitimized by the Constitution; boundaries which either led the Irish towards compliance or banished them into a psycho-social exile. Secondly, I shall explore the dividing line that appeared between such non-conformist voices, splitting them into rebels who sought a liberated definition of Irishness rooted in the revolutionary principles of the men of 1916, and those who distanced their principles of formation from, for instance, the State only to gain recognition and commercial success. It is the latter group, as I shall examine shortly that instead of enhancing the Kiberdian concept of life in Ireland became a threat to its very foundation, embodied by extremists and opportunists such as Ivan in Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* or as separatist rebels in Stuart’s *Black List, Section H*.<sup>5</sup>

While Kiely categorizes “commentators and critics” of this rebellious voice prevalent in the works of Francis Stuart as “those who revile [it] and those who

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<sup>4</sup> On the emergence of resistant Irish subject see Gerry Smyth, “Irish Studies, Postcolonial Theory and The ‘New’ Essentialism”, *Irish Studies Review*, 7:2, 211-220.

<sup>5</sup> On the concept of Life in Ireland, see Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 10-15.

support” it, I argue that in the 1960s such a dualistic preference split into including those who supported the State’s normalized definition of formation, whose systematic formation oscillates between obedience and thus presence, and contention and containment (*Francis Stuart* 325); and those, who like Stuart followed their self-referential pattern of formation, which eventually led to the pluralist Ireland of the late 1970s and the 1980s.<sup>6</sup> It is the latter group, I argue, who embody what I called in Chapter I as the *unconventional Dedalusism*, becoming those who seek Irishness in an un-Irish radical definition, and pursue rootedness by indulging in what Edward Said regarded as the key to having a detached yet reliable perception of social formation by being “an outsider, living in self-imposed exile, and on the margins of society” (“Representations of the Intellectual” 1993).<sup>7</sup> Francis Stuart, in this respect, emerges as a manifestation of such a detached, rebellious and socio-culturally conscious voice that appeared in the 1960s and critiqued the nativist definition of Irishness. He emerged as a rebel, albeit controversial, who claimed that “national literature is [...] a meaningless term”, as for him “literature can’t be national. Literature is individual” (“Novelists on the Novel” 408). Such a radical personalization of literature, according to Kiberd, tends to replace national historiography with personal biographical history of life in Ireland and life of Ireland:

In such a self-charged context, nation-building can be achieved by the simple expedient of writing one’s autobiography: and autobiography in Ireland becomes, in effect, the autobiography of Ireland. To read the autobiographies of Yeats, George Moore or Frank O’Connor is an experience [...] to constantly impressed and unnerved by the casual ease with which they substitute themselves as a shorthand for their country, writing an implicit and covert constitution for their republics in images of their very creation. (*Inventing Ireland* 119)

Stuart wrote *Black List, Section H* in 1966 after his return from Germany in 1958, a return that brought him at once controversy and recognition, becoming a “towering” literary figure, as Kiely notes (*Francis Stuart* 242);<sup>8</sup> it is a return which paradoxically helped him accomplish his rite of passage, albeit in a formulaic sense of harsh life in

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<sup>6</sup> Bildung for the former group is systematic and mechanical as they emerge following the pattern that has been arranged by the State, hence showing no particular sense of individualism and psychosocial uniqueness. This is the group I called as those who submit to the normalizing principles simply to secure their statically fixed place in society.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Said, “Representations of the Intellectual”, The Reith Lectures, 1993, BBC Radio 4, Web, retrieved March 10: <http://goo.gl/JpPbm>.

<sup>8</sup> The controversy had to do with his political propaganda that was broadcast from the Nazi Germany during the Second World War, which linked him to anti-semitism.

post-independence Ireland. *Black List, Section H*, his most notable work, chronicling the protagonist's "journey of inner formation" from 1918 to the late 1940s (Molloy 43), initially was titled as "The Legend of H", which, in its Kiberdian sense,<sup>9</sup> explored the Irish life and simultaneously the life of Ireland under the influence of a politically conservative State and an oppressive society. True to its neoconservative nature, the seemingly tolerant Irish society made the process of publication even more dreadful for Stuart, marginalizing *Black List, Section H* and disregarding it for its unexperienced "subversive" methodology in engaging with Ireland's conservative sub-culture of provincialism, stasis and containment (Kiely 243).

As critics agree, not only was Stuart's *Black List, Section H* unique in its rebellion against the State's provincialism, distancing itself from the Joycean teleological dictum of 'non-serviam', but it emerged as a worthwhile replacement for the resistant literature produced by modern non-conformists such as Brendan Behan, Joyce and Flann O'Brien. In other words, in spite of stylistic and contextual similarities between Stuart's *Black List* and, for instance, Behan's *Borstal Boy* (1958) and O'Brien's *The Hard Life* (1961), each critiquing political totalitarianism of the State, *Black List* emerges as an exemplar of the Adornian unexperienced in an Irish socio-political context, leading the Irish perception of Bildung towards a deconstructionist reading of the State's fallacy of provincialism.<sup>10</sup> For instance, during his first meeting with Iseult, his wife-to-be, and overshadowed by Yeats's nativist intellectualism, Stuart's non-conformist protagonist, H also known as Henry Ruark, externalizes his perception of modern Irish Bildung, sublimating, and later defending, his concerns over bourgeois stereotypes and clichés into an inclusive radical negative dialectic:

A poet must be a countercurrent to the flow around him. That's what poetry is: the other way of feeling and looking at the world [...] if society honours the poet, he's tempted to say what those in authority expect from him. They wouldn't have honoured him otherwise, would they? But the poet will only come out with the sort of truth that it's his task to express when he lacks all honour and acclaim. Oh no, no honours, no prizes, or he's lost! (Stuart, *Black List* 17)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the differences between 'the Irish life' and 'life in Ireland', and on modern Irish novels as personalized narratives of national formation see Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 118-122.

<sup>10</sup> On the fallacy of provincialism as a form of nativist bigotry see Godfrey Tongwa, *Democracy and Meritocracy: Philosophical Essays and Talks from African Perspective*, Berlin: Galda Wilch Verlag, 1996, 37-40.

<sup>11</sup> Citations in this study refer to the first edition of Stuart's *Black List, Section H* published by Southern Illinois University Press in 1971.

*Black List, Section H*, I argue, emerges as a dialectical outcry of the modern youths who utilized literature as a medium which helped them firstly with their historical memory, namely, to reconstruct the events of their blighted beginnings, and secondly narrativized their efforts that ended in breaking away from the State's dichotomous treatment of Irish life, subverting the binary of submission or marginalia. Stuart's radical discourse most prevalent in *Black List, Section H*, therefore, transforms into a resistant dialogism which by depicting a State-sponsored post-independence stasis, division and provincialism deconstructed an illusory perception of postist reality in Ireland, or as Stuart puts it in *A Hole in the Head* (1977) deconstructed a "dream-within-dream, what plain dream, what drug-induced hallucination, and what [was] the reality at the heart of imagination?" (13).

In discussing Stuart's "towering" literary significance in the 1960s, Kevin Kiely, Stuart's confidant and biographer, recounts how Stuart's candid narration of events developed into an authoritative style that inspired authors such as John McGahern and led them to depict Ireland that was rising up.<sup>12</sup> *The Coloured Dome* (1932), Stuart's third novel, for instance, not only functioned as a source of insight to McGahern's revelatory novels such as *Amongst Women* (1990) and *The Dark* (1965), by centring on a protagonist who intends to sacrifice his (family) life for the *Cause*, but as Yeats identified pioneered a contextual consciousness that would "make you understand the strange Ireland that is rising up here" (*Letter of W. B. Yeats 799-800*).<sup>13</sup>

*Black List, Section H*, moreover, can be read as a subversive narrative of deformation that chronicles the hero's non-identarian quest for rootedness while rejecting the Joycean modern aesthetico-spiritual perception of formation – childhood, adolescence, and becoming a student – and at the same time defies the classical definition of *Bildung* by marginalizing the undisputable status of art in one's pattern of formation. *Black List*, I suggest, transforms into an unabashed reflection of the modern youths' non-conformist *Bildung* through the characterization of H, Stuart's fictional surrogate for himself, narrativizing his psychosocial development from a young student and fervent poet into a soldier, farmer, gambler, married man, literary

<sup>12</sup> See Kevin Kiely, *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast*, 243-249.

<sup>13</sup> On Stuart's literary influences on his contemporaries, especially John McGahern, see Kevin Kiely, *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast*, Dublin: Liffey Press, 2007. Also see Thomas McGonigle, "The Story of his Life", in *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 2006; and see Brian Huges, "Remembered Light: Constance in the Fiction of John McGahern", in *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 5, 1992, 93-105.

figure, prisoner, lover, drunkard, war veteran, and yet again a notable but silent, literary scholar after his return from Germany.

H's non-formulaic formation, which nevertheless favours self-alienation, deformation or deconstructed formation, defies not only the Joycean but the Goethean specificity of Bildung by at once rejecting an egoistic definition of Irish formation and discarding the concept of promising endings. While Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), as a precursor to Stuart's *Black List*, allows for Stephen Dedalus to indulge in his detached, egoist fabrication of a modern (Irish) identity that suits his psycho-philosophical reading of Irishness, centring on its protagonist's artistic and non-temporal understanding of realism, *Black List* emerges deconstructing such glamorous and pseudo-bourgeois perceptions of modern Irishness and Irish life by chronicling the plights of and obstacles in the life of an emotionally impoverished boy, whose formation was overshadowed by his mean stepfather, critical and "evas[ive]" mother, vicious teacher, and non-existent friends.<sup>14</sup>

Stuart's *Black List, Section H* chronicles ambitions of a generation of modern Irish bildungshelden, who neither follow the State's politics of formation nor their Celtic history. Rather, they seek recognition, by expressing their blighted formations through literature. H's first aesthetic attempt at producing poems, however, was dismissed by his Trinity College-educated tutor as an amalgamation of words which "showed neither talent nor the promise of any to come": a devastating judgment, for H's developing aesthetic Bildung, which radicalized H's perception of formation and aesthetico-spiritual Bildung (Stuart, *Black List* 7). Not only did tutor's harsh remark damage H's perception of his educational formation, but it led to a reactionary indeterminacy vis-à-vis his social status as a young artist. Finding that he will not be able to achieve his goals, H indulges in a form of formation that corresponds with what Fredric Jameson regards as the "dynamic[s] of depersonalization": shedding the (modern) man of his past exigencies of formation and actualization (*Singular Modernity* 138).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> On Joyce's treatment of reality and fabricating modern Irish identity see Maria Pramaggiore, "Unmastered Subjects: Identity as Fabrication in Joseph Strick's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*" in *James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity*, Michael Patrick Gillespie (ed.), Amsterdam – Atlanta: Rodopi, 2001, 52-70. Also Weldon Thornton, *The Antimodernism of Joyce's 'Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man'*, New York: Syracuse, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> On dynamics of depersonalization see Fredric Jameson, *Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of Present*, London: Verso, 2002, 130-152.

The necessity of an aesthetico-spiritual education loses its significance for H as he harbours frustration, doubt, and an intensified ignorance and detachment towards not just society but his family. Under such circumstances Bildung transforms into a secondary concept that H may or may not achieve, resulting in the radicalization of the very concept of Bildung for H, symbolically representing the youths. H's quest for self-formation and self-recognition, therefore, changes into self-criticism and at once questions the very ethos that has cemented the State and its politics of formation. "[N]ot [...] in his heart", the narrative reveals, had "he any great interest in Irish, or any other kind of nationalism. [...] It was an instinct, far from conscious, to cut himself off from the world of his cousins once for all [...] the impulse came directly from [...] a kind of faith in himself" (Stuart, *Black List 2*). H's belief in himself in fact stems from his inward-looking journey of self-cultivation, an internal rite of passage which takes him away from his Unionist cousins' luxurious, quasi-bourgeois life.<sup>16</sup> For H's rebellious psyche, in fact, Irish nationalism or any other form of it, meant a "weakness" which he "resented", and "was the cause of the lies, rather than the untruth" (Stuart, *Black List 6*); moreover, as a young Irishman and as his narrative reveals he "had to struggle against the same weakness in himself", namely, following the Nietzschean herd instinct which would force him to choose sides and join one radical (political) group over the other (Stuart, *Black List 6*).

For non-conformist characters like Stuart's H, those who defy authority or its utopian manifestations in the form of the State's politics of formation and ideological neocolonialism function as mentors who will lead them through steps of formation and apprenticeship. Throughout his narrative, H seems obsessed with seeking a lost connection with such mentors he never had and will never have, seeking a sense of direction, inclusion and belonging to a collective consciousness that will lead him towards answers for his Beckettian internal questions of "What? How? And Where?"

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<sup>16</sup> In one of the earlier drafts of the novel, Stuart presents the luxurious, bourgeois world of H's cousins as follows:

It would be easy to slip back into their exciting (but safe) little world of summer tennis and boating on the river Bann, of homeward drives squeezing in the snugly curtained back of the car between the girls from parties on winter nights. There'd be once more the evenings after his uncle had looked into the big sitting-room with its glass case of stuffed tropical birds ... to tell them not to stay up too late nor to leave any lights on, when they sat with only the candle burning that would light them up the stairs. (*Black List 91*)

(Stuart, *Black List* 4).<sup>17</sup> For H, this internalized quest for meaning and rootedness can conversely be defined through seclusion and psychosocial isolation, being achieved by either reading or as his narrative unfolds joining radical, non-conformist groups who share his non-identarianism. To satisfy his insatiable desire of identification and association with the unknown, namely, that which is missing from his conservative society and identarian family, he reads anything he could find by people with whom he shares a particular state of mind, namely, a duality centred on psychosocial isolation and unsocial formation:

There was the story of Keats receiving a letter from Fanny at his lodgings in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome in the winter of 1792 and handing it unopened to Severn to place beside him in the coffin. There was Dostoevsky as he waited his turn at the stake in Semyunovksy Square, Petersbough, on a winter morning in 1849; van Gogh sitting in a hired carriage taking him from the asylum at Saint Rémy on a farewell visit to a girl in a brothel at Arles[...]

He read everything about them he could lay his hands on with feverish intensity and a kind of impatience as though looking for a particular message. And in several cases he came on what he'd subconsciously expected, experiencing an almost unbearable excitement, and believing himself on the verge of a vital revelation that he was not yet quite ripe for.

From these he turned to the mystics, of which Iseult had a wide range. Soon he was absorbed by states of mind that appealed to him first because they ran counter to the familiar ones. He began to put his whole heart into trying to share this kind of consciousness [...]. (Stuart, *Black List* 130-131)

What H finds in his readings is the contradictory binary of dependence and detachment, where the former reflects his deliberate dependence on authors' particular socio-cultural unconventionality, as the latter reflects his engagement with the unknown and the unexperienced which will provide him with the opportunity to experience unrootedness, and detachment from the identarian Irishness and thus exemption from all that has limited him during his childhood. The result is a resistant characterization established on self-alienation and inward self-cultivation; H, therefore, emerges as a particular sense of Irish formation that distances itself from the State's conventional values and 'lies' of formation, criticizes a dominant pseudo-bourgeois social identarianism, and simultaneously identifies with principles of the men of 1916. It is the ideological difference which, for instance, manifests itself as a

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<sup>17</sup> On the essence of questions that critics find as the foundation of Beckettian oeuvre see Maurice Blanchot, "Where now? Who now?", in S.E. Gontarski (ed.), *On Beckett: Essays and Criticism*, New York: Grove Press, 1986.

gap between H's and Iseult's perception of Irishness: "he didn't like her easy assumption of the absolute rightness and moral purity of the nationalist cause. His own feelings were confused. He honoured the 1916 men" (Stuart, *Black List* 20).

The sufferings, fears (of execution), tribulations and trials of embarking on an untrodden path all emerge as concepts which Stuart's curious modern Irish protagonist, symbolizing the modern youths in the socio-culturally revolutionary 1960s, would have to undergo as the government finally moves towards a more inclusive implementation of modernity. The move, as H recounts at the end of his narrative, however, inevitably widened the divide that had appeared between the nativist, agrarian State and the Irish who have already experienced modernity in small towns and counties before its materialization in the 'big cities.' These were rebels who have found independent formation in non-identarianism, and in challenging authority, and thus were in danger of containment or deletion from the national memory. As H's narrative reveals, not only does the tension between the modern youths and the oppressive State further split the nation into various pro- and anti-groups, but it also provides the youths with a vague and biased definition of modernism, modernization, and modern Irishness. The result is a political double standard which on the one hand glorifies the past by commemorating the revolution, independence and international recognition, and, on the other, treats not just modernity but revolutionaries as at once inseparable and redundant parts of the nation's present:

Although he was still far from coming to understand the necessity for what had happened to them, he did begin to see the silence that he had entered as the deep divide between the past and what was still to come. Whatever it was that was at the other end there was no way of telling. It might be a howl of final despair or the profound silence might be broken by certain words that he didn't yet know how to listen for. (Stuart, *Black List* 425)

To be able to advance his dualistic Bildung, H needs to satisfy his desire for isolation from society's identarian politics of identity formation, and reintegration with a non-identarian society. H' radical understanding of Bildung concurs with a Deleuzian dualistic understanding of desire, which regards individual's ambitions as the very deterritorialising force that leads the individual from a territorialized and thus normalized definition of individuality towards an individually productive, independent understanding of the oppressive norms within society. Such a radical drive internalized by revolutionaries such as H further alienated them as individuals



who desired the forbidden, namely, a self detached from the social identitarianism of postist Irish identity.<sup>18</sup>

H, a blurred reflection of Stuart's own radical, inward self-formation, as Francis Molloy argues, emerges as "the artist in rebellion", and an unsparing critic of his society who is "in savage opposition to the mass values around him", depicting "the conflict between the artist and the conventional values", demanding that which is forbidden by indulging in the dialectical discourse of his narrative (*A Life Reshaped* 38).<sup>19</sup> H defines his quest for the unknown by identifying with rebels and those who defy the State-imposed norms such as the IRA, who he introspectively once considered as the enclave of republican opposition group. With respect to H's dichotomous perception of formation, non-conformity, rebellion and challenging the complacent authority equate with maturation. "[H]e delighted in hearing of riots, no matter where, in civil disturbances, even in bank robberies", remarks the narratorial voice, revealing a Foucauldian dissident in H who finds pleasure in deconstructing the State's structure of territorialization and discipline, even through "assassinations and anything that diminished or threw doubt on authority [...] as long as the result was like that of a stone dropped into a mill pond. He imagined the ripples of unease that must disturb the complacency, which was what he distrusted most" (Stuart, *Black List* 20).<sup>20</sup>

The novel recounts the 1916 Rising, the revolution, and the 1920s and depicts H considering the similarities he shares with the opposition group, namely, those who in H's eyes lay the foundation of liberated formations and individualism in Ireland. Not only do these values denounce the State's authoritarian presence as being irrelevant and limiting, but they also function as the Deleuzean concept of individualistic instinct and question the relevance of other normalizing institutions and principles such as religion, marriage and family, and society.<sup>21</sup> For H, for instance, marriage, the centre of classical Bildung, causes nothing but "unease and distaste" for as he understands, there is "nothing in the ceremony" itself that has a

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<sup>18</sup> On Deleuze's and Guattari's perception of desire as a dichotomous, radical psychosocial force see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 56-68, 113-118, 122-130.

<sup>19</sup> See Francis C. Molloy, "A Life Reshaped: Francis Stuart's "Black List, Section H"", in *The Canadian Journal of Irish studies*, Vol., 14, No., 2, Jan 1989, 37-47.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London: Penguin, New Edition, 1991, 25-45, 120-140.

<sup>21</sup> On Deleuze definition of instinct and individualistic formation see Gilles Deleuze, *The Desert Islands*, 18-20.

“bearing on the situation” between men and women (Stuart, *Black List* 29). In other words, the ceremony “seemed put on for the sake of the relatives who would now recognize the relationship, whether they privately approved or not, as legitimized and one of those things which were to be accepted because established by custom and common consent” (Stuart, *Black List* 29). To put it bluntly, for the modern Irish bildungsheld marriage only makes them comply with a culture of identarianism, and sympathize, if not agree, with a society which normalizes sexuality through tradition. In another example, H dismisses the nationalist Irishness as a “lofty idealism” in which one’s being and sense of belonging would equal “clinging to a concept of an Ireland in which the Church and the Gaelic League would be [the] dominant” irrevocable impulses (Stuart, *Black List* 80). For H and the like-minded radicals, such a static provincial territorialization resonates with a traditional society-induced “mass enthusiasm” that has led the Irish towards failure and stasis for the past centuries, a colonial paralysis caused by socio-political “complacency”, lack of skeptical dialectics, and critical discourse to help the nation critique their national status (Stuart, *Black List* 20).

Understanding Bildung under such a negative dialectical discourse and perception of Irish life, crystalized in H’s critical Bildung, results in the formation of a culture of “scepticism” which enables the Irish to question and deconstruct the “easy assumption” of the masses, namely those who have submitted to the State’s architecture of formation, and who believe in the “absolute rightness and moral purity of the nationalist causes” (Stuart, *Black List* 20). As such subtle shades of individualist, non-conformist tendencies transform into an essential mode of thinking for revolutionaries such as H, they interpret Bildung and individualism as a contradictory binary in their Irish formation, and thus interpolate radical concepts such as separatism and inevitably social disorder into the fundamentals of the concept of Bildung.<sup>22</sup> The protagonist in such narratives, therefore, identifies with characters whose individualism oscillates between the Deleuzian binary of presence and absence; and who are torn between the contradictory triumvirate of traditionalism, nationalism and the Irish Church on the one hand, and the dissolving radicalness of modernity and modern thought in the form of young Irish rebels on the other. Such a

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<sup>22</sup> This is the same separatist divide, for instance, that took place in the 1920s, 30s and 40s and deconstructed the originally conservative, nationalist *Sinn Féin*, dismantling it into the binary of Pro-treaty and Anti-treaty conservative groups, and finally reconstructed it as a leftist political party in the 1960s.

divide, for instance, is manifested in H's private conversations with his wife, Iseult, wherein H embodies such radical dialectical discourse while Iseult represents the nativist static conservatism:

H was not an apt pupil, especially for the sort of teaching that treated religion as a cut-and-dried subject, with hard-and-fast rules to be meekly memorized [...] she screwed up her eyes and told him that it was presumptuous to talk like that [...] her introduction of the mystics silenced him. All the same he wasn't satisfied. (Stuart, *Black List* 28)

To express their dissatisfaction and concern, the modern Irish bildungshelden embrace chaos and "riots, no matter where, in civil disturbances [...] and anything that diminishe[s] or throw[s] doubt" on representations of authority (Stuart, *Black List* 20). The concept that joins H and the socio-political rebels is the idea of constructing an ahistorical, anti-traditionalist dialectical structure in which "familiar habits and conventions [could be] swept away... and nothing was disallowed to the daring ...", as "whatever could be imagined could be made come true" (Stuart, *Black List* 85).

It is this embedded 'contradictory thought' shared between H and the rebels that widens the gap between H's narrative as a modern narrative of formation and other modern narratives of (de-) formation. While in the modernist conception of 'formation' failure, defiance, chaos and riots form the pivots of the modern Bildung, as H recounts his involvement with rebels' weapon trades and attacks, there are dissimilarities that stand out between rebels' ethos of formation and those of true Irish revolutionaries such as H. This is one of the earliest instances where H's pattern of formation, through isolation and reintegration, clashes with the structurelessness of the postist Irish regime, and simultaneously with the State's territorialized pattern of development and integration in the 1920s and 1930s, resulting in H finding himself "appalled by the a conflict within himself between an apparently profound but inexpressible pain and a total indifference" (Stuart, *Black List* 39).

As H understands, by embracing isolation and detaching himself from the dominant culture of submission "his world [would] expand all the time, growing richer"; however, he is depicted to be conscious about the fact that by joining the rebels and becoming one he might risk his social significance as a rebellious intellectual altogether, for "there was this half-conscious fear that [his life] was also being impoverished" and deprived of proper social and intellectual integrity (Stuart, *Black List* 39). H's interpretation of Bildung, I suggest, is founded on transforming into a detached, individualistic entity who strives towards achieving certain self-set

objectives, which then collectively contribute to his formation; whereas rebels' principles, as H gathers, were centred on one collective objective that would lead to neither formation nor deformation, but to an anarchic hegemony. For H, rebels' ethos of formation will "coarsen the texture of sensibility and lower the imaginative level", just as nationalists' politics of stasis and conservatism would deprive the artist from achieving proper *Bildung* (Stuart, *Black List* 73). As H understands, reintegrating into "restricted, tight-knit communities where influences from without are the more easily rejected as unpatriotic, irreligious, or, a condemnation that gains popular approval in such situations, treasonable" is only "welcomed by mediocre minds" (Stuart, *Black List* 73). For H's rebellious psyche, however, isolation and then formation through war and ideological division are at once spiritually destructive yet beneficial to artist's psychological *Bildung*, for as H claims, "war creat[es] doubt and confusion, and thus a climate in which the poet could breathe more easily" (Stuart, *Black List* 73).

Through non-conformity, conflict and division, therefore, H as a modern Irish artist finds himself capable of deterritorialising the "traditional values and judgments", and then discovering, developing and advocating his own artistic matrix of formation (Stuart, *Black List* 74). However, such socio-cultural subdivisions, or in H's terms "small enclaves of [...] true revolutionaries" also pose a threat to H's intellectual and artistic utopia, heralding the fall of Irish society and deconstruction to various detached sub-societies and self-referential sub-cultures as in catholic and protestant; urban and rural; revolutionary and counter-revolutionary; republican and unionist and so on. In other words, while doubting nativists' passivism was what H and rebels truly embraced, challenging Irishness or denouncing their rootedness was also at once unacceptable to the both sides of the conflict. As H reflects, most of the IRA rebels whom he "met at his mother-in-law's" house had mistaken apolitical, liberating non-conformism for unruly and chaos (Stuart, *Black List* 74). For H, the egoist anarchism embedded in *non serviam* was directed towards the nativist stasis and retrograde formation, while for rebels anarchic formation erroneously meant following "a one-track, political approach to something that [...] had other more complex aspect[s]" (Stuart, *Black List* 74). It was because of such an instrumentalized perception of revolution that H decides to distance his liberating non-conformism from IRA's blind political rebellion, especially when he "realized how little politics could ever concern him with their large-scale, impersonal values"; and when "lack of

idealism”, while defying authority, transvalued into becoming a distinct value (Stuart, *Black List* 74).

Rebels’ fundamental principles, as H narrates, resonate with those which laid the foundation of the ‘minor’ resistant literature, namely, extremism and non-objective revolution. According to David Lloyd’s Deleuzian reading of minor formations,<sup>23</sup> the notable features that *minor literatures* have lacked since their formation is “produc[ing] narratives of ethical identity, [which] is generally refused in minor writing...” and yet at “the same time ... is the very retention of a project aimed at securing [an] identity that ... creates a disjunction between the desires of the characters and the effect of the text” (*Nationalism and Minor Literature* 22).<sup>24</sup> While in both cases the resistance appears inherently anarchic and anti-political, it is H’s individualism, charged by his desires for the forbidden,<sup>25</sup> that redefines such objectively dull anarchism of rebels by nurturing his perception of Bildung in a dialectical context of Irish formation; and by developing a critical discourse to understand and analyse society and societal norms, resulting in a critical, aesthetic matrix in which (inner) self-cultivation becomes the only objective that enables the author or artist to critique the territorialized society.

For individuals such as Stuart and H, war, Irish nationalism and even Irish revivalism concur with Max Stirner’s perception of religions, humanity and God. Stirner regards these concepts as “egoist” and arrogant *causes* that only prioritize and advocate their objectives and development; and so does H when he reflects on the significance of Irish wars and their relevance to his appreciation of Bildung (*The Ego and His own* 4). In other words, Stuart’s Irish modernism, a non-identarian interpretation of modern thought, transforms into the very *cause* that provides him with a leeway to distance himself from an instrumentalized pseudo-non-identarian Irishness that rebels and opposition groups utilized only to further their own *cause*:

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<sup>23</sup> On the onset and the origin of minor literature see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*, University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> On the relevance of desire as a radical libidinal force see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London: Athlone Press, 1994, 56-68, 106-113, 240-262.

<sup>25</sup> H’s desire for recognition and eminence is Hegelian as it finally stops him from pursuing his radical, anarchic ambitions of detachment. Instead, the desire, through submission – the other element in the binary of Hegelian formation, helps H to transform into what he expected of himself throughout his childhood, namely, to publish papers in local newspapers, and by so doing defying the static nativism. On Hegelian desire (for recognition and submission) see Georg W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary*, John O’Neil (ed.), New York: State University of New York, 1996, 210-215.

He had seen enough of the civil war to grasp the fact that it hadn't much to do with him after all. Under either De Valera or Griffith, art, religion, and politics would still be run by those who at best used them to give them power, prestige, and a good living, and at worst, for this to H was more dangerous, as a means toward sterile, high-toned conformism. (Stuart, *Black List* 90)

The 'lofty' and politically instrumentalized revolution, for non-conformists such as H, therefore, equates with "clinging to a concept of an Ireland in which the Church and the Gaelic League would be dominant", namely, a society which evoked such radical responses from the masses in 1916, 1919 and 1921 (Stuart, *Black List* 80). For H, in other words, this appears as a territorialized society of normalization in which individualism and mental independence were either regarded as sacrilege and thus banned or blacklisted under the rubric of being "one of the Irregulars," when "found with" anything that could jeopardize the State's conservative architecture of containment, even "with contraceptives in [their] possession" (Stuart, *Black List* 81). During and after the wars of independence (1919-1921), the nation once again suffered from yet another ideological divide, which split the nation into those who supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty, i.e. Pro-Treatyites, and the Irregulars or Anti-Treatyites, who found the treaty supported by Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Eimar O'Duffy, as anomalous and abominable. As O'Duffy recounts in *The Wasted Island* (1920), the divide was more than a simple armed clash between the Irish and the Irish, leaving the nation with the duality of *us* and *them*.

As H experiences the State's postcolonial politics of division, and at once recognizes rebels' lack of idealism and critical ineptitude he embarks on a new and final path of formation, namely, "a private war which he hoped might cause a few cracks in the walls erected by generations of pious and patriotic Irishmen around the national consciousness" (Stuart, *Black List* 82). Not only does he plan to question the extremes at both sides of the duality of Irish formation through his sceptic dialectical discourse at the heart of his narrative of formation, but he also recognizes "imaginative and undogmatic mood [...] as the prerequisite of true revolution" (Stuart, *Black List* 82). H's perception of Bildung, in other words, relies on a variety of Joycean perception of aesthetico-spiritual education, namely, the sort which is confined by neither theoretical-political nor H's personal and thus dogmatic boundaries of artistic formation. For as H understands, the former has promoted "generations of pious and patriotic Irishmen", while the latter involved H in the IRA's arms trade (Stuart, *Black List* 82).

In addition for Stuart, such self-referential critiques of education and formation were already utilized by other Irish moderns; for instance, Flann O'Brien and his criticism of static, aesthetico-spiritual education in *The Hard Life* (1961), and McGahern's *The Dark* (1965) emerge as candid examples founded on such a dialectical discourse. While Stuart's *Black List, Section H* provides a heavily self-referential and critical view of the State-sponsored definition of education in the post-independence Ireland, I argue that through his criticism of education marred by the State's conservatism Stuart revisits years of pedagogical stasis normalized by not just the empire, as in Flann O'Brien's *The Hard Life*, but also the State's retrograde perception of formation. In other words, H's non-conformist rejection of a normalized definition of education in the years that led to the Rising echoes a socio-political criticism that was materialized in the works of other critics such as James Plunkett's *The Strumpet City* (1969), chronicling the Lockout of 1913, and Flann O'Brien's *The Hard Life* (1961) that fictionalizes a static pedagogical structure in the turn-of-the-century Ireland confronted by a self-referential conception of education manifested, for instance, in Manus's strange Bildung.

Flann O'Brien's *The Hard Life*, although chronologically different from Stuart's and McGahern's novels, chronicles the formation of two orphan boys in the early twentieth century Ireland, dominated by the aesthetico-spiritual teachings of the Church, and criticizes the non-existence of modern education and Irish identity. O'Brien's *The Hard Life* is set in Dublin in the 1900s, and depicts a family run by an unmarried couple, who only have one child, introducing a bohemian concept which suggests the emergence of a form of familial and individual identity which is neither colonial nor Irish.<sup>26</sup> Rather, such an unregistered familial association can be read as the emergence of a modern and thus un-Irish Irishness, which provides the boys with a radical appreciation of social, religious and familial norms in the island, enabling them to eventually subvert, at least individually, the dominant social norms of Irish Bildung by criticizing concepts such as the "squalor[s]" of "families in Dublin" in the Edwardian colonial Ireland, the dawn of sexual pseudo-employment, alcoholism and of course education (*The Hard Life* 32).

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<sup>26</sup> The concept is bohemian and unknown especially when read against Carles Salazar, *Anthropology and Sexual Morality: A Theoretical Investigation*, Dublin: Berghahn Books, 2006; also see Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Finbarr and Manus, epitomizing a critical and socially conscious generation who precede Doyle's Henry Smart in *A Star Called Henry* and Stuart's H, are sent by their half-uncle to a local Catholic church to be guided through their pattern of Bildung. However, the Catholic education they receive and at once reject is neither about self-cultivation and self-appreciation nor social mobility; rather, it endeavours to instil a sense of selflessness in them, which nevertheless eventually fails. This conception of education corresponds with what Foucault described as "self destruction", a concept which regarded self-cultivation permissible only through the confluence of Christian-Confessional pedagogical principle of "ego non sum, ego" ["breaking away from self"] and social submissiveness, the final product of which promises the triumph of social norms over individuals' inner self cultivation (Foucault, *Technologies of the Self* 55).<sup>27</sup>

Boys' conscious detachment from such a self-abnegating perception of education, "struggling through the wretched homework, cursing Wordsworth and Euclid and Christian Doctrine and similar scourges of youth", and replacing it with their cunning subtlety, makes the crux of O'Brien's critique of the conservative Irish State and its normalized politics of educational Bildung (*The Hard Life* 85). For instance, after rejecting the Westland Row Christian Brothers School's efforts to normalize Manus, Finbarr's brother, he is shown reverting to his own perception of education, subverting a State-sponsored conception of education by stealing from scientific findings and important documents and reprinting them under his own name, a concept which is at odds with the teachings of the Catholic schools. For O'Brien's non-conformist criticism, in addition, Finbarr's unethical antiauthoritarianism stands as a byproduct of such a detestable form of education and indirectly reflects the State's Janus-faced politics of establishment and dominance.<sup>28</sup>

McGahern, one of Stuart's staunch admirers, builds the narrative of *The Dark* around a critique of the (in)significance of education in post-independence Ireland. In contrast to O'Brien's critical engagement with the concept of State-sponsored

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<sup>27</sup> Foucault's concept of 'self-destruction,' namely, denouncing one's inner capacities corresponds with Greenblatt's notion of 'self-cancellation': a concept that opposes technologies of 'self-fashioning' under normative principles at the core of every society. Therefore, in order for the individual to grasp a "sense of 'at-homeness'" in society and conceptualize a societally relevant identity he needs to comply with a set of social 'norms,' which are "a set of control mechanisms - plans, recipes, rules, instructions" (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning and Renaissance* 3-4).

<sup>28</sup> As I discussed earlier, Boyce identifies such politics embedded in the State's power-oriented structure of formation; recruiting young volunteers and the IRA to pursue its goals and only to disown them after it achieves them.



Catholic education and its dialectics of self-cancellation and submission, McGahern's *The Dark* chronicles the solitary journey of its young protagonists towards a socially normalized aesthetic ideal, namely, studying for scholarship and entering university, a journey which promises transformation and final recognition for its socially oppressed young protagonist. McGahern's young protagonist, unlike Stuart's non-conformist H, suffers from society-induced self-criticism and severe marginalization imposed by not just his conservative society but also his socially aggressive, promiscuous father. To escape from his own personal promiscuities, father's sexual harassment, and social insignificance, the protagonist must prioritize between his choices of personal, subjective aesthetic ideals of art and education and socio-historical ideals of his conservative post-independence society.

Although McGahern's protagonist has already subverted the State's obsessive dialectics of physical decency, or in Bolton's terms, "politics of chastity" by territorializing his sexual pleasures and separating them from social norms by indulging in autoerotic pleasures and thus defying the authoritarianism of the Church, his narrative illustrates an unconscious solidarity with the Church's definition of *Bildung* which focuses on shunning the outside world, and to either join the church and become a priest or shut the world out and focus on the scholarship (*Blighted Beginnings* 125). His narrative, in this respect, transforms into a self-contradictory narrative of pedagogical territorialization and sexual deformation, in which education, is either treated as an instrument of submission and security or a means of subversion; the former can be achieved by shunning the unknown outside world and imprisoning one's self within the boundaries of the State, while the latter is realized by contradicting the very ethos of *Bildung*.

Contradictoriness in the protagonist's perception of education and pedagogical *Bildung* heightens when he finds priesthood as a socially preferred educational end for his rite of passage. Such an understanding, however, has less to do with the classical aesthetico-spiritual definition of education, and more with his childish conception of *Bildung*, misguided by the patriarchal voice of the Church, that by becoming a priest he may save her mother, or at least her soul. As the narrative unfolds in fact, such a radical ideological transmutation heightens when the protagonist's "mother ... go[es] away and [leaves him] to this" "vapoury rush of thoughts", after which "nothing seemed to matter any more", as he only wanted to unlearn other ambitions of becoming, and just learn priesthood (McGahern 10).

However, there is another pole to the protagonist's binary of formation, which dismantles his immediate ambition of becoming a priest, namely, his obsession with masturbation, a sexual aberration that does not stop his *Bildung*, but rather redirects his psychological cathexis, leading it towards education. Instead of priesthood and saving his mother's soul, therefore, education as in the form of proper schooling replaces his obsession with priesthood. In other words, for McGahern's faceless protagonist education and priesthood both emerge as reachable instruments sanctioned by the State and society that may save him from himself, his family and a sexually unforgiving society. Through education, namely, by either becoming a priest or winning the scholarship, McGahern's 'Mahoney' effectively utilizes a state-sponsored definition of educational *Bildung* only to save himself from his morbid obsessions, his promiscuous father and priest uncle, and the haunting memory of his dead mother.

While for McGahern's protagonist education is nothing but instrumentalization of pedagogical norms and definitions, which enable him to further his personal objectives, Stuart's H regards education as a means that will help the Irish remove the ideological and political divide that had split the nation. For H, "imaginative and undogmatic mood" are byproducts of an unbiased, non-conservative education, and "the prerequisite[s] of true revolution" (Stuart, *Black List* 82); in other words, un-Irish concepts which would contribute to the deconstruction of the State's bipolar politics of formation, which I shall explain shortly in my examination of H's interpretation of literature. Unlike McGahern's protagonist's personalization of education, H's radical criticism provides a candid portrayal of how the concept of education was revisited by modern Irish protagonists as a means to enhance their critique of society by demythologizing the social bubble around statesmen, notable revivalists, and "generations of pious and patriotic Irishmen" (Stuart, *Black List* 82). In other words, while education was previously regarded as a means to improve one's social mobility and status, for the modern Irish *bildungshelden* such as H education is more a mechanical instrument that would enable them to further deconstruct the colonial, postcolonial, and nativist pattern of formation, and less a personal device to lessen one's psychosocial traumata.

During his numerous and meticulous revisions, Stuart excised almost ninety pages, or five chapters,<sup>29</sup> of the novel that engaged with H's formative years as a socially ignorant child growing up with his Unionist parents' in County Meath. By removing these chapters, referred to as 'Boyhood' in the earlier drafts, Stuart shifts the emphasis from boyhood to H's rebellious formation, introducing H as child at an age known for critical vulnerabilities of dependence, sudden psychological shifts,<sup>30</sup> and immature decisions. Writing a critical Pro-Home Rule letter to an Irish newspaper and critiquing his cousins, for instance, began H's narrative of resistance, becoming the sixth chapter in the draft and the first chapter in the actual published novel. By erasing H's childhood, Stuart challenges the conventional dialectics of the Bildungsroman, replacing the conventional pattern of formation with H's already mature critical discourse, and simultaneously redirects the focus of the narrative from being fixated on a traceable yet unreachable past, embodied by H's 'Boyhood', to the radical currency of life in Ireland, a concept that can be planned, controlled and advised.

Childhood is a critical period during which the child either follows or defies the Deleuzian framework of "daddy-mommy, and me" set by his family, society and the State (*Anti-Oedipus* 111). For instance, it is the latter description of childhood, to defy and subvert the State's architecture of repression, which informs Flann O'Brien's characterization of Tracy in *At Swim Two Birds* (1939), a rebellious character whose creation, I argue, is a long due tribute to the marginalized 'street children' in the Post-Rising Ireland of 1916-1919. While Stuart authoritatively excises H's childhood from his own narrative and presents him as a child with politically mature understanding of Irish identity, O'Brien's Tracy, after suffering from various forms of psychosocial exile, finds a way to circumnavigate the nation's intolerance with respect to childhood and children's Bildung. In other words, while Stuart's H suddenly finds himself set on a pattern of psycho-social maturation and thus endeavours to act accordingly by finding interests in politics and cultural matters, O'Brien's Tracy tries to find a cure for childhood in Ireland by "chang[ing] the monotonous and unimaginative process by which children are born young"; as for Tracy, "many social problems of contemporary interest could be readily resolved if

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<sup>29</sup> On revisions of *Black List, Section H* see Kevin Kiely, *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast*, Dublin: Liffey Press, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> On children's sudden psychological shifts [from absolute 'love' to absolute 'hate'] see Sigmund Freud, *The Unconscious*, London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2005. 28-29.

issue could be born already matured, teathed, reared, educated, and ready to essay those competitive plums which make the Civil Service and the Banks so attractive to the younger bread-winners of to-day” (O’Brien, *At Swim Two Birds* 54).

Tracy’s subjective critique is directed at the State’s intolerant politics of formation whereby children are marginalized as minors incapable of critical understanding, and at the same time at Irish children’s botched rite of passage, widely fictionalized by Irish moderns studied in this thesis, resulting in minor characters whose mature understanding of Irish life counterbalances the conventional dialectics of the Bildungsroman in Ireland. Founded on the negative dialectics as externalized by characters such as Tracy and H, such a critique highlights the failures of the State’s politics of formation which, as Bolton notes, “hinges on the assumption that protagonists were blighted by their environment” (*Blighted Beginnings* 22); and identifies the (neo-) conservatism of the State and the ‘pious’ nationalist statesmen at the core of Oedipal, post-independence Irish Society as the very source that “threatens to devour its young” (Bolton 22).

Such a limiting definition of childhood in its Irish context, therefore, emerges as a concept that resonates with Adorno’s perception of identarian subjectivity imposed by the ruling society on the marginalized youths. In Stuart’s eyes, it stands as a period that appears inauthentic, from which H has to break away if he is to seek independence and Bildung proper.<sup>31</sup> H, a post-Joycean rebellious character, disavows this identarian pattern of formation by writing a letter and thus rejecting “the world of his cousins” once and for all, an action that not only underscores his parents’ and cousins’ Unionist ideology of submissiveness and safety but questions the principles of his fellow rebels (Stuart, *Black List* 2). The more time he spends with rebels as a young rebel-apprentice, the better he appreciates their callous politics of socio-cultural formation, namely, being “conservative[s] who needed the protection of insular traditions for [their] psychic comfort” and ignorant about the Irish civil war, which for H was “a splitting-off of the true revolutionaries from the nationalist elements in the IRA” (Stuart, *Black List* 80).

For H, childhood is the *site* where socio-cultural and political extremes can directly exercise their power, resulting in either psychological revolutions and

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<sup>31</sup> On identarianism, social subjectivity, and the culture of stasis see Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, 145-149.

developments or stasis and conformity.<sup>32</sup> It is where the clash between revolutionary values and the nativist values of stasis and passivism will result in divisions and recruitments in an already branched,<sup>33</sup> uncontrollable IRA,<sup>34</sup> and “splitting-off” of revolutionary values of 1916 from the neoconservatism of the postist regime (Stuart, *Black List* 80). Under such obvious dichotomous forces of social (re-) formation, for rebels such as H childhood becomes a mere illusion, a psychological mirage imposed, developed and exploited by the normalizing societal institutions,<sup>35</sup> namely, the Church, non-functionally retrospective traditions and an instrumentalized sense of nationalism, which prevent them to learn to “think in contradiction” (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 145). It is this dichotomous definition of childhood, as H understands, that leads them to further “immerse in [their] separate dream[s], [and] idle” in their fantastic realm of formation, while demoralizing the possibility of ever “holding to any political, social, or moral belief”; or to engage with a vital understanding of present and future of their nation that is not nativistic, or in other words retrospective and fixated on the nation’s past (Stuart, *Black List* 44, 25).

H’s “private war”, starting with his poem which meant to challenge not just the readers’ but implicitly the State’s conservatism and stasis, displays a unique sense of ahistoricism that disregards the past, the State’s “insular traditions” of submission and “protection”, and aims for a current meaning and value of the present by disowning the nativists’ “lofty” retrospective perspective (Stuart, *Black List* 82, 80). To break the “familiar habits and conventions”, in other words, H’s private war attacked certain sacred aspects of Irish identity and life, such as making “nothing [to

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<sup>32</sup> On the Bildungsroman as a site of socio-cultural criticism see Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*, London: Verso Books, 1987.

<sup>33</sup> As Boyce, Kee, and Dwyer claim in their respective accounts of formation, maturation and division of the IRA, during and after the process of independence, the IRA as a military wing of nationalists underwent radical changes, sided with influential leaders and names, and finally split to form Anti-Treaty, Pro-Treaty, and Neutral Treaty variations, each thrusting the nation towards particular objectives. See Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*, Dublin: Penguin, New Edition, 2000; also see T Rye Dwyer, *Big Fellow, Long Fellow: A Joint Biography of Collins and de Valéra*, Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1998; and George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, London: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>34</sup> As Boyce notes in *Nationalism in Ireland*, the influence of the IRA on the Irish youth was at once positive and destructive, leading them to an ambitious recruitment which promised a financially brighter future, while at once pushed them to their self-criticism and social rejection as those who have betrayed revolutionaries. Moreover, to politicians such as de Valéra, these young volunteers and soldiers were as expendable as their fellow rebels in the 1916 rising, betraying them in exchange for power and political stability. See George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 347-350.

<sup>35</sup> By using societal instead of social I mean to reflect the Eriksonian and Adornian understanding of certain social codes of formation which not only shape the individuals’ perception of identity but alter their pattern preference, socialization and integration, transforming their into subjects only definable by their social title and a limited number of possibilities towards formation.

be] disallowed to the daring, and whatever could be imagined could be made come true” (Stuart, *Black List* 85).

This was the same anarchic mental image that McCabe’s Francie in *The Butcher Boy* pursued as a non-conformist young Irishman, and questioned not only the inflexibility and dogmatism of Irish society represented by Mrs. Nugent but the State’s lack of progressive idealism and “high-toned [non]conformism” (Stuart, *Black List* 90). For H like Francis Brady in McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy*, indulging in the fantastic realm of childhood did not seem to include a sense of accomplishment, for they finally engaged in another rite of passage which included non-conformity, incarceration, and isolation; and it was in the last step, through isolation, that H contemplated his childhood and life in Ireland: “on his next birthday he would be twenty-one and captivity would give him the chance to take a long look at his own position and face the fact that it seemed he’d come to a dead end both in his marriage and as a writer” (Stuart, *Black List* 90). By adopting a negative dialectical discourse, H succeeds in not only criticizing his own perception of Bildung, and thus completing his modern albeit formulaic rite of passage through self-criticism and self-cancellation but also challenging the State’s politics of normalization, and sublimating the question H thinks Mick Collins should have asked much earlier: “Fuck the lot of you, are you fighting for a piece of the old bloody pie, or are we baking a new one?” (Stuart, *Black List* 97).<sup>36</sup>

The authority in Collins’s fictional statement echoes in H’s ambitions, emotional reactions, and the literary works that he produces throughout his narrative as both a child and an adult, chronicling his perception of modern Irish identity. These are fictional and intrinsically resistant poems, short stories and novels the theme of which confirms what Kiberd examines in his article “Inventing Irelands” published in 1984, in which he re-assesses the State’s architecture of containment, separatism and division and introduces them as the main element that led to the down fall conservatism and further division of the Irish.<sup>37</sup> H unlike Francie in McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* avoids indulging in a subjective criticism of the system, becoming the

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<sup>36</sup> In *Technologies of the Self* Foucault introduces self-cancellation and self-criticism as the founding elements that will lead towards formation of a new self. This was Stephen Greenblatt regards as (modern) self-fashioning. See Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, 16-49. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 11-73.

<sup>37</sup> On Kiberd’s 1984 non-revisionist reading of modern Irish identity see Declan Kiberd, “Inventing Irelands”, *The Crane Bag* Vol. 8, No. 1, 1984, The RTE/UCD Lectures, 11-22. Also see Gerry Smyth, “Irish Studies, Postcolonial Theory and the ‘New’ Essentialism”, *Irish Studies Review*, 7:2, 211-220.

critical discourse which led Francie to reject the conservative reality and instead indulge in his 'pig tax toll', secret shelter, and a territorialized understanding of Irish life just to resist the postist Irish society. H, on the contrary, engages in producing an objective, non-conformist discourse and form of literature that illustrates the nation's resistance and disgruntlement with the State's politics of internal Othering and division; it is the discourse that according to H is charged by "the same obscure urge that had made him write the 'nationalist' letter to the paper" (Stuart, *Black List* 14). In H's resistant discourse, "liv[ing] by established categories" is a "horrible" sub-reality which forces non-conformists and rebels like himself to either engage in self-cancellation, censoring their rebellious identity, or "make friends with those from whom [they] hadn't to hide any part of [themselves]" simply to prevent a self-induced exile to marginalia (Stuart, *Black List* 13-14). H's non-conformism, in this respect, emerges as a resistant Deleuzian minor literature which criticizes the totalitarianism of not just the State's politics of provincialism and marginalization but also rebels' anomalous divide;<sup>38</sup> the politics which tend to contain "anyone whose behaviour collides with the popular faith of the time and place" (Stuart, *Black List* 100).

The normalizing principles that dominated the canonical Irish Bildungsroman, namely, nationalism, the Church, and the vaguely constructed social norms, led the modern bildungsheld further towards possessing and developing a sense of negativity and otherness that emerged and contradicted the very foundation of the classical Bildungsroman, which can be seen, for instance, in George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894) or Croker's *Lismoye* (1914). The modern Irish bildungsheld, in this regard, becomes the opposing factor that perceives his *outsider* status as a result of a psychosocial intolerance,<sup>39</sup> and relates his sense of contradictoriness to a politically territorialized society, and eventually sets to defy such a restricted and squarely limiting social matrix. In fact, protagonists such as H, regard the State's instrumentalization of normalizing institutes such as the Church, family and of course national traditions as the source of their *unrootedness*. Their ahistorical consciousness, which denounces the State's historically retrograde nativist principles, hence transforms into an anti-social, idiosyncratic psyche that shapes their self-referential knowledge of selfhood and identity, and forms a priori that submits to no

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<sup>38</sup> On minor voice see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 16-27.

<sup>39</sup> Italicization is intentional.

other epistemological knowledge but to that of their anarchic knowledge. Their narrative, in this respect, not only subverts the canonical Bildungsroman but challenges the foundation of the genre as previously appropriated by the nationalist voice of decolonization.

For H, for instance, war, be it to support independence from the empire or the separatist forces of within, appeals only to “mediocre minds” that can just survive in “restricted” societies, and “tight-knit communities” (Stuart, *Black List* 72). Although it was the “enthusiasm for the Republican cause” that brought H and Iseult closer and defined them as a family, H’s negative dialectical perception of freedom will not allow him to support war and national disintegration (Stuart, *Black List* 73). Despite the State and rebels’ war-oriented definition of independence, unity and rejection of fascism, as H recounts, neither of them were aware of the fact that through ideological and political “subdivisions” they were facing the risk of losing not just the nation’s confidence but also further splitting the Irish over their ideological and political obsessions (Stuart, *Black List* 74). The socio-political division provided non-conformist idealists such as H with “a climate in which [they] could breathe more easily”, and “cast doubt on traditional values and judgments” (Stuart, *Black List* 74). In other words, it was through revolution and political division that revolutionaries like H could distinguish between themselves and their ethos of formation and other anti-colonial opposition groups such as revivalists, conservative Nationalists, and other minor political parties such as communists, socialists and Workers’ Marxists.<sup>40</sup>

The dialectical structure of Bildung requires a carefully planned pattern, which enables the protagonist to fully comprehend the modern concept of experiencing the unexperienced through the symbolic phase of apprenticeship. In such a pattern, experience is thought to be understood and used as an “alterity”, an ‘unknown Other,’ marginalized by the identitarianism of society (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 35). Experiences, in other words, emerges as a radical concept which will enable the protagonist to grasp the concept of independence and self-referential identity by critiquing the conventionality of society and the State’s territorialization of the rite of passage. H’s experience of Bildung in his chaotic life can be explained in light of Adorno’s definition of formation as a contradiction, namely, a critical variety of Bildung, centred on the individual’s self-referential non-conformity, which treats the

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<sup>40</sup> On political parties in Ireland see Michael Gallagher, *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland*, Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd, 1985.



protagonist as the very impetus that may either submit or defy the identarianism of the colonial or anti-colonial state, while at the same time rejects the separatist tendencies of rebellion within the nation. The concept of Bildung for the non-conformist subject, in this respect, oscillates between a self-induced psychological exile and a socio-cultural Othering imposed by the State.

While H identifies with rebels in subverting not just the Empire but also the conservative State, he finds himself trapped in an ideological Othering vis-à-vis rebel's politics of resistance, which seeks existence in chaos. At the same time, however, H's anarchic idealism, manifested in his non-traditionalism and anti-conservative principles of formation, separates him from the nationalist revolutionaries, and much like Roddy Doyle's H(enry) in *A Star Called Henry*, H finds himself already in an ideological exile. For Stuart's modern bildungsheld, such (internal) exiles and Otherings correspond with a Kiberdian definition, namely, becoming "the nursery of nationality" by reversing the subject's perception of belonging to a nation, resulting in the formation of a duality which Kiberd claims as "white-on-black negatives" whereby the subject finds himself at once Othered by his fellow revolutionaries and the Free State; the latter being the cause which meant to lead the subject to achieve his telos of self-formation in the liberated Ireland (*Inventing Ireland* 2, 3).

For non-conformist revolutionaries like H, this dualistic division was "considered a rejection of [their] personal world by those who inhabited better, more imaginatively conceived ones of their own" (Stuart, *Black List* 57). In other words, the political divide between the revolutionaries and the Free Staters not only displaced non-conformists like H, further relocating them to socio-political marginalia, but transvalued revolutionary ideals, which were formed to unite the Irish, into ideological elements that partitioned the Irish from one another, forming parties such as Irregulars, Pro-Treatyites, Unionists, and conservative Nationalist. As H recounts, each side was so "deeply involved in outward areas of existence" and following their ideals that "they had no way of truly assessing [t]his kind of inward-turned attention", namely, saving the nation from an internal divide (Stuart, *Black List* 57-58).

The divide, that is between the national identity and an intra-community Otherness, helps the bildungsheld to think in contradiction and thus create a set of self-generated norms which serve one end, namely, protecting the psychological border between the intruding societal norms and individuals' state of selfhood and

independence. The more supported and psychologically well-reasoned the border, that is by isolating and detaching themselves from becoming a part of society's politics of territorialization, the stronger the chance for the bildungsheld to understand the inner reality behind his society. H's inward rite of passage enables him to see through the inner reality of his society, introducing it as an outwardly isolated, and inwardly repressing matrix in which "influence[s] from without are more easily rejected as unpatriotic, irreligious, ... treasonable" or simply 'non-Irish' and thus undeserving anyone's attention (Stuart, *Black List* 73). While expanding his domain of Bildung, defying the categorical definition of Irishness, namely, submissiveness and security or defiance and exile, H reveals his radical understanding of insular Irish society to his wife, Iseult. What he reveals to Iseult as his personal grasp of Irishness in fact is the sublimation of decades of non-conformist resistance, forming a culture of resistance and revolution that has been narrated by other radical Irish authors:

It's only when I'm with you that I'm not aware of guilty secrets that I'd rather keep to myself. What most people here respect, such as religion, literature, or nationalism, I either despise, or if at first I do seem to share some of their beliefs, like about poetry or the Republican cause in the civil war, it soon turns out that it's for quite different reasons and that we're even further apart than had we disagreed from the start. (Stuart, *Black List* 100)

H's resistant narrative of formation, founded on such a radical perception of free state and Irish formation, is set to embrace a particular form and perception of Irish identity which is a product of neither postist territorialization nor dysfunctional colonial norms. Rather, his narrative emerges as a resistant critical form that utilizes doubt, failure and confusion as agents that enable the protagonist to critique not only society's architecture of normalization but other oligarchical minor forces such as rebels who tend to secure their dominance by subverting one another.

Under such circumstances and forms of individualization, the process of self-formation for the young Irish protagonist becomes an inward, non-reflexive journey.<sup>41</sup> Contrary to the attempts made by notable Irish revivalists such as Hyde, George Russell and Yeats to "strive to cultivate everything that is most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish", Stuart's modern bildungsheld engages in

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<sup>41</sup> The Modern Irish protagonist's formation is non-reflexive for it opposes the boundaries of self-expression and self-referential formation postulated by Anthony Giddens; As Giddens notes, modernism replaced society-centrism with self-centerism and self-reflexivity, affirming the Adornian understanding of modern individualism. See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, 7-11.

producing a counter-nativist literature and a social pattern that deal with creating or supporting new, dialectical perception of postist national norms. It emerges as a subversive dialectics which instead of preserving a normalized definition of society deconstructs the source of normalization, namely, the State's conventional values (*Irish Writing in the 20th Cent* 10). In this regard, while Yeats's dialectical discourse as reflected in his poetics and works tends to re-invent an Eire-Ireland by encouraging the Irish to submit to the State's particular vision of Ireland, Stuart's H, a "sort of writer" representing the Irish discontented with the State's policies, emerges as the one who seeks "isolation from conventional mores", a revolutionary whose self-alienation and self-criticism stands out from the Yeatsian immersion in nativist conventions (Molloy 40).

This sense of re-invention or re-creation initially resonates with a supra-individual diligence which connects the bildungsheld with a radical, albeit progressive, stream of social re-construction and political re-evaluation. This is the phenomenon that realigns the subject's ambitions of non-identarian socialism with an Adornian description of formation, seeking formation in the unknown and the non-descriptive. H's non-identarianism, in other words, emerges as the very perception of Bildung that has been charged by a Deleuzian bipolar, socially deconstructive drive, namely, individual's libidinal desire. The result is an anti-bourgeois binary of extremes, namely, modern self-formation and deconstruction of normalizing traditions.<sup>42</sup> According to Stuart's H, such a radical combination results in a "kind of society, nearer his largely subconscious dream", namely, a conceptual society which abides by no political territorialization while at the same time is governed by individual's principles of unity and rootedness (Stuart, *Black List* 248).

H epitomizes the politically radicalized youths of the 1920s, torn between the complications of the internal wars and socio-political movements on the one hand, and the State's insular politics of localization on the other. They represent a generation who disavowed the dominant socio-cultural logics of formation, and engaged in a self-referential interpretation of the political atmosphere; and a generation who in spite of their non-conformism and rebelling "against what generally [was] passed as the acceptable norm," did not turn into "an unbelievable

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<sup>42</sup> In *Anti-Oedipus*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari introduce their definition of desire as being a non-conformist, radical force that may lead to the production of an ideal society by deterritorializing the fascist norms and the Oedipal State through revolution. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 166-183.

psyche” driven by an innate desire for chaos or destruction (Stuart, *Black List* 257). Rather, what they strived for was “a concept of reality deep enough to lose [themselves] in”, namely, a liberating perception of the Free State in which individuals like H would not be marginalized by the State (Stuart, *Black List* 257).

Such a radical mentality also changed people’s social interaction as the young Irishmen transformed into idiosyncratic demagogues and became an antithetical definition for the concept of Bildung which defied the canonical ethics and introduced contradiction and resistance as the core elements of modern coming-of-age. As I discussed in the last chapter, sex for instance emerged as one of the most notable concepts that provided non-conformists like H with a leverage to further deconstruct the State’s neoconservative structure of formation. While for Edna O’Brien’s characters sex initially was an unexperienced taboo, for socially radical characters like H sex functions as an agent, altered to target the core of State’s politics of formation.

As H reveals, for instance, “for those in a brothel, sex was no doubt something of a bore. Whereas the unexpected recollection of it in the middle of a day busy and preoccupied with the poultry [would] come as a delight” (Stuart, *Black List* 157). In other words, for non-conformists such as H, whose contradictory perception of conventions defines their radical psyche, sex, ideology, religion and social interaction were all but agents enabling them to “pursue [...] an obscure impulse of [their] own” (Stuart, *Black List* 141). Once again, Stuart’s characterization of H resonates with the Foucauldian concept of modern man as both the justice and the crime: a dualistic abstract consciousness which at once finds himself guilty of abiding by his modern non-conformity, denies progress and deprives himself of it, and at the same time indulges in self-referential formation by demanding to be the centre of not just his personal narrative of formation and social development but a nation-wide critical discourse, re-structuring society and national perception of Bildung, for “reality is nothing if not our most intense imaginative concepts of it” (Stuart, *Black List* 255).

According to John W. Foster, the emergence of this radical “self-consciousness”, which encourages anti-traditional tendencies, is regarded as an acute psychosocial “unhealthiness”, rather than a non-conformist socio-political consciousness of the masses; it forms the sort of (anti-) national individualism which traditional Irishness tends to normalize, if not obviate (“Irish Fiction 1965-1990” 939-

40).<sup>43</sup> This is the sort of ethics that changes the foundation of the narrative of canonical Bildungsroman to oppose not only individuality and, in Anthony Giddens's terms, proper "self-reflexivity" and eventually Bildung but also the perception and development of freedom during the process of formation (*Modernity and Self-Identity* 25).<sup>44</sup> The proto-modernist definition of Bildung, that is the Humboldtian definition, conceives freedom as the element integral to the dialectics that critiques the conventional conception of classical Bildung and the concomitant freedom; in addition, as Humboldt postulates, under such a narrow definition freedom is regarded as a context that enables the masses to engage in cultivating their inner culture through demythologization of critical thinking, that is by replacing known, identarian certainties, vis-à-vis, the formation of freedom and identity with the unknown/unexperienced concept.

The dawn of modernism and the negative dialectical psyche enabled Stuart's H as both the social subject and the antithesis to social subjectivism to think against the imposed social tide of Irish nationalism and nativism, or in Adorno's terms, to "think in contradiction" (*Negative Dialectics* 145). By depersonalizing the national definition of self-formation, Stuart's non-conformist protagonist transforms the narrative of social territorialization and passive subjectivity into a radical critique of identarian Bildung, namely, a formation which instead of self-cancellation is rife with self-reflexivity and egoistic self-affirmation. For H's self-referential psyche, for instance, history has been defined as not a retrograde reliance on the nation's glorious past but the one which is closer to his consciousness and can be felt by his, albeit limited, understanding of timeliness:

Reasoning can't distinguish true from false except on fairly extraneous levels. Do you never feel inside you, [...] a series of nerve cells, some sort of fine chain, linking you with reality? [...] each link a little more substantial as it comes closer to consciousness, transforming the vibrations into what can just, at the last link, enter the mind as thought. (Stuart, *Black List* 167)

According to H, the postist, neoconservative Irish society has not much differed from the years that led to the 1916 Rising, when society was still governed by colonial bourgeois norms, dividing the nation into poverty-stricken Dubliners, or in James

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<sup>43</sup> John Wilson Foster, "Irish Fiction 1965-1990", *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* Vol. III, Derry: Field Day Publication 1991.

<sup>44</sup> On self-reflexivity and modern identity formation see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, 25-32.

Plunkett's words "cast-off[s]", and those who mattered more (*Strumpet City* 13).<sup>45</sup> As H understands, in post-independence Ireland only the agents that were "registering the un-Irish details that were part of the new atmosphere" have changed, leading the nation towards yet another divide, only this time it was between the nationalist States and cast-off dissidents (Stuart, *Black List* 187).

H's demythologization of the State's politics of identity formation also manifests itself in his non-conformist thesis of formation. The Bildung H envisions for the youths, in which the subject has the liberty to stand up to State's architecture of repression, is the one which other non-conformist characters such as Henry in Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* and Francie in McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* have also embodied, namely, a *becoming* which "was always [...] considered unpardonable by the circle in which he found himself," "that of most intellectuals with a sprinkling of enlightened politicians" for whom even the most "liberal doctrine held in common tends to produce that sort of assured moral attitude which is fatal to them" (Stuart, *Black List* 248, 281).

To achieve such an ambitious perception of social liberation, H must be able to defend his stance, and he does so by indulging in a radicalized understanding of aesthetico-spiritual education while at the same time distances himself from the conservative, State-sponsored pattern of education, namely, the one offered by industrial schools, Magdalene laundries and Cavan Orphanages. In *Black List, Section H*, the protagonist seeks to instrumentalize the classical definition of education by seemingly submitting to the State's definition of education, so far so that it would enable him to subvert such limiting pedagogical norms, re-introducing the structure of education to connect with subjects' personal and social needs. The result is a binary of nationalist formation and self-referential, non-conformist individualism, manifested in H's efforts to acquire a certain level of social mobility and recognition by associating with prominent revolutionary literary figures such as Douglas Hyde, Liam O'Flaherty, Maud Gonne, and especially Yeats, referred to as Yardley in the earlier drafts of the novel.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> On bourgeois norms that dominated society prior to the Rising see Fintan O'Toole's introduction to James Plunkett's *Strumpet City*, first published in 1969, chronicling the life of Ireland as well as the Irish life in 1913.

<sup>46</sup> On an autobiographical reading of Stuart's early drafts of *Black List, Section H* see Kevin Kiely, *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast*, Dublin: Liffey Press, 2007, 242-250.

By approaching Yeats, H at once aims for social recognition, and defending his deterritorialized perception of Irishness, namely, a non-conformist Irishness that seeks rootedness in the values of men of 1916 while at the same time distances itself from the conventional postist values. While visiting Yeats and his family, H reiterates how his revolutionary ethos of formation would liberate the nation from the divide, a concept which already was testing Yeats's conservative nationalism. His answer to Yeats's question, "would the people you fought for have made better results?", therefore, is nothing but a stark portrayal of the nation colonized by the State's neocolonial principles of oppression and compliance. According to Boyce, Yeats and his fellow nativist revolutionaries failed to fathom such a candid depiction of the nation under the State's conservative politics of formation until the 1930s, and especially after the establishment of Constitution in 1937. "Should H say that he hadn't fought for anybody or anything, but in pursuit of an obscure impulse of his own [...] 'if you mean: would they also have imposed a censorship and forbidden divorce, I'm sure they would'" (Stuart, *Black List* 141-14). H's response, albeit egoistic, tends to rekindle certain revolutionary values in nativists like Yeats; values such as unity, rootedness, religious and civil liberty, and most notably commitment to equality and improving children's perception of Bildung.<sup>47</sup>

While for many, Yeats's efforts in joining forces with Hyde's Gaelic League to revive a nativist perception of Ireland was nothing short of national heroism, to non-conformists like H and Stuart not only this form of heroism but also the literature produced by people such as Yeats, which ignored minorities and oppressed dissidents for a conventional *greater good*, was just another national call for submission and conformity: "I don't know much about [Yeats]", remarks Lane – another non-conformist rebel, "but to me it sounds like a sellout [...] if he wrote the sort of poetry that told the truth he'd be more likely to have the other kind of noose slipped over it. H instinctively accepted what Lane said, yet at the same time he had to defend Yeats as a poet" (Stuart, *Black List* 99). This is the very dichotomous binary which controls H's perception of educational development, and especially how he as a poet and an artist portrays a proper, though rebellious, liberating sense of formation. On the one hand, H finds young Lane's disgruntlement with the Yeatsian conservative heroism acceptable, and thus sympathizes with it later in his narrative when he discusses his

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<sup>47</sup> These became the founding principles of the Proclamation of 1916.

perception of literature and poetry as not just a means but a responsibility for him to visualize the plights of the nation; on the other, however, he feels the need to defend Yeats's messianic role as an artist, despite his conservative blindness. "Literature to H was still somewhat of an abstraction" (Stuart, *Black List* 105), notes the narratorial voice, recounting his "unmitigated and unrepentant plea for radical individualism" and non-conformist perception of what lays the foundation of literature (Kiely 249); "for H, literature was only to be experienced by those who dared pluck it direct from the tree of life" (Stuart, *Black List* 105).

H's negative dialectical perception of literature, in contrast to Yeats' retrospective poetics of Celtic utopia and unity, presents the poet as a "countercurrent" to the identarian "flow around him"; someone who can not only "oppose censorship" but challenge the conservative "safe parochialism" that originally legitimized censorship, and an outcast whose creation would encourage the questioning of tradition as authority (Stuart, *Black List* 17, 183). For dissidents like H, "better the infected sovereign psyche than one that shared in a general righteousness that didn't belong to it" (Stuart, *Black List* 369).

According to Richard Murphy, the utopian state that non-conformist protagonists like H covet is "a realm of unimaginable difference", a world in which the unknown in the form of an uncharted, unexperienced individualism manifests itself as an internal impulse that deconstructs the State-sponsored institutions and their politics of formation ("A Minority of One" 272). In other words, this would be a reality that contradicts the realism of canonical Bildungsroman and its sub-reality of normalization and formulaic identity formation. While the nationalist poetics of formation, crystalized for instance in Yeats's long poem of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen", creates a reality which advocates aesthetic and cultural revisionism and a normalized social mobility wherein failure is an impossibility, for H and other revolutionaries it is through "loss", "isolation, [...] pressure from outside" and "mental doubt and upheaval" that "the core of [their] dream" and "imagination [, as] their truly redeeming element" of building a liberated nation "reaches its peak" (Stuart, *Black List* 50, 281). The result in contrast to nativists' vision of Ireland, which regarded formation only through a retrospective lens, is a narrative which chronicles the formation of a national voice, or as H puts it "a radical and original" voice, a republican mouthpiece which allows for the public to have their say (Stuart, *Black List* 142).



Stuart's modern Bildungsroman not only remains faithful to what Smyth regards as a category with roots in national and "individual subjectivity"<sup>48</sup> but adds yet another function to its categorical existence, becoming a critical form which subverts the tradition of Irish novel by prevailing over the genre (*The Novel and the Nation* 18), a form which according to John W. Foster dismantles the "belief that" the novel either "requires a pre-existent social harmony" or needs to follow a predetermined pattern justified by its social integration (*The Field Day Anthology* 939-940). H's narrative of formation, contrary to the nationalist pattern of socio-historical integrity and compliance, not only distances itself from such limiting principles but reshapes its telos to transform into a form that counterbalances the State's politics of stasis and compliance while at the same time subverts the rebels' structureless hegemony, a prophetic role founded on non-conformists' negative dialectical discourse:

If somebody somewhere writes a book which is so radical and original that would burst the present literary setup wide open, that writer will be treated with a polite contempt by the critical and academic authorities that will discourage further mention of him. He'll raise deeper, more subconscious hostility than sectarian ones and he'll be destroyed far more effectively by enlightened neglect than anything we would do to him here.

'You believe that the artist is bound to be rejected? You equate him with the prophet?'

'A poet may escape persecution because his vision is veiled from the literary arbiters, but the novelist who speaks more plainly is bound to scandalize them. (Stuart, *Black List* 142)

H's answer to Yeats's question reconfirms his non-conformist perception of literature as a personal concept, highlighting the significance of novel as a radical national vehicle for expression, and raising the prophetic role of the author. According to Smyth, the Bildungsroman emerged in Ireland as a vehicle for expressing the nation's concerns, critiquing not just the State but also the nativist values that hampered a timely modernization of the concept of identity formation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> In his study of modern Irish narrative originally Gerry Smyth categorizes the modern Irish novel into four distinct forms: the novel as "imagined communities"; as national allegory; "as resistance"; and "as carnival". The third and the fourth forms emerged as a response to colonialism and the rigidities of the postcolonial nationalist state-nation. See Gerry Smyth *The Novel and The Nation*, 18-30.

<sup>49</sup> See Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and Nation*, 18-21.

While Stuart's *Black List, Section H* remains true to its culture of criticism and development, as H's narrative reaches its ending his critique of socio-cultural banalities and retrograde political development prevails over the genre of individual development and social integration, providing a sophisticated context for the emergence of a radical critique of conventional identity formation.

Dominance of criticism over genre in H's narrative can be understood in light of Julia Kristeva's interpretation of Jakobsonian definition of language, art and text. According to Kristeva, to deconstruct the identarian and conventional relationship between the sign and its social representation, as in Irish identity and its clichéd nativist representation, and the "narrative and metalanguage" of conservatism and submission, the subject needs to develop a non-identarian form of the text ("Julia Kristeva Interviewed" 157).<sup>50</sup> This radical perception of the novel of formation imagined by H, "cannot remain unaware" of the State's politics of submission and formation, as it "must move through them [...] seep into them, its violent rhythm unleashing them by alternating *rejection* and *imposition*" ("Julia Kristeva Interviewed" 157).<sup>51</sup> This oscillation between rejection and imposition is manifested in H's understanding of literature, which is not national but personal, and unlike the static revisionist literature of Hyde and Yeats has been "most conscious of exterior reality penetrating the fragile, deeply imagined one of the embryo fiction" (Stuart, *Black List* 389). Such a text, according to H's perception of *Bildung*, foregrounding concepts such as "pain, guilt, and disaster as offering correctness of escape from self-imprisonment", resonates with Lukács's definition of modern man and his inward literature (Stuart, *Black List* 392).<sup>52</sup> This radical form of *text* not only has provided H a sense of belonging, rootedness and identity by offering him "a chance of becoming the only sort of writer it [was] in his power to be" but also has enabled other like-minded social critics such as O'Brien to go beyond the boundaries of formation sanctioned by the State, and experience the Adornian unknown or in H's terms that which lies "outside the norms of experience", and reject the voice of the state, and develop and impose their self-referential voice and resistant text (Stuart, *Black List* 392).

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<sup>50</sup> Kristeva's interview with Vassiliki Kolocotroni engages, among many, with her definition of text and poetic language as expressed in *Revolution in Poetic Language* translated by Margaret Waller, published by Columbia University Press in 1984.

<sup>51</sup> Italicization is intentional.

<sup>52</sup> On Lukács's reading of modernism and modern literature see Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism", 290-92.

As the narrative progresses, the self-referential voice in H's narrative illustrates the dominance of criticism over genre by deconstructing the infrastructure of Stuart's modern Bildungsroman and interpolating personal criticism in the text by drawing on Ireland's dichotomous social norms, the State's neoconservative tendencies and nativists' retrograde mindset vis-à-vis a national perception of Irish identity. The narrative, centred on a non-conformist omniscient voice, then becomes a heavily personalized account of the State's social shortcomings, critiquing a national conservative paralysis that needs to be dismantled. H's radical perception of *text* does not recognize concepts such as nativist conservative identitarianism, the State's politics of forgetfulness, and a submissive sense of Irishness; for in H's negative dialectical discourse, "the praising of the trivial and mediocre that goes on all the time is even more damaging to the formation of true values than the neglect of books of some originality" (Stuart, *Black List* 334).

Under H's radical perception of formation, which resonates with an individualistic interpretation of *Sinn Féin's* dictum of Irish life, 'We Ourselves', national and individual are two separate concepts, where the latter is consumed by the authoritativeness of the former. The very idea of individual's life-writing, therefore, emerges as only a mechanical vehicle which advocates that which the State dictates. As Richard Murphy argues, "Stuart's refusal to reconcile 'national' and 'individual', the very compromise that characterizes the canonical Bildungsroman [...], offers a polemical challenge to the metonymic degradation that individuality undergoes in Irish life-writing" (*Minor Formations* 220). The negative dialectics embedded in Stuart's perception of individual selfhood makes the very ideological dichotomy that leads H to separate individual formation from collective national selfhood imposed by the State. While the former encourages H to seek his Irish roots and simultaneously defend his detachment from rebels and the State, the latter categorizes the subject as those who submit to social norms and secure their relevance, and those who have defied the State's territorialized rite of passage and thus are not one of them.

Under such a State-sponsored politics of Othering, revolution also emerges as yet another concept which contributes to the State's politics of Othering by dividing the nation into those who remained faithful to the ethics of 1916, and those who embody the conservative political parties. For non-conformists such as H, revolution was neither about political recognition nor a rise to hegemonic dominance; rather, as Kristeva claimed, for them revolution was a return to the fundamentals of

independence and liberal formation. While for Kristeva revolution signifies a “renewed return of ‘materiality’” and a dialectics of negativism in a society dominated by subjectivism, for H revolution represents a return to the forgotten values of the men of 1916 and those who survived the Lockout in 1913; the “cast-offs”, as Plunkett puts it, whose revolutionary radicalism didn’t separate them from their Irish roots, nor did it change them into rebels, trapped in their negativism and internal colonialism (*Strumpet City* 13). Revolution, in this regard, for H and other non-conformists means “a jerk forward of consciousness, especially as expressed in poetry and fiction, which [...] might only take place after a new political or social cataclysm” (Stuart, *Black List* 286).

By incorporating self-abnegation, social criticism, and failure as the founding elements of *Black List, Section H*, Stuart produces a non-identarian critical discourse that critiques the identarian conservatism of the postist Irish society. By negating passive social subjectivism of the State and their neoconservative interpretation of Bildung, H’s narrative transforms into an inward-looking, self-critical form that accommodates a critical discourse, centred on self-referential formation, which critiques and contradicts the State’s architecture of modern Irishness. Jahan Ramazani describes such a self-abnegating critical discourse, which is neither locally rootless nor globally rooted, as a “translocal poetics”, a meta-national dialectics of identity formation which is “neither nationalist nor vacantly globalist”, a systematic “dialogic intersections” which dislocates identity from the binary of nation-space (*A Transnational Poetics* xii-xiii).

As a result of this ‘dialogical dislocation’ present in H’s self-critical, non-conformist critique of post-independence Irish State, I argue, the voice in his narrative transforms into a locally Othered authority which enables him to fight the traditionalist matrix of Irish formation and ideological values. It emerges then as a rebellious voice that makes the crux of modern Irish novel and results in the formation of radical characters such as H in *Black List, Section H*. Stuart’s modern Irish protagonist, in this respect, epitomizes a young generation of anti-traditionalist Irish dissidents, Othered either by the State’s limiting codes of formation or their family’s puritanical obsession with physical and spiritual decency, whose non-conformist ‘translocalism’ and radical perception of formation have led them to defy a nativist description of Irishness. They at once challenge the State’s bipolar politics of formation, namely, submission or exile, and an internalized sense of psychological

exile imposed by the conservatism of Irish society. For such non-conformist protagonists, psycho-social self-cultivation results in an inward rite of passage, which is often socially contradictory and politically resistant. However, such an internal form of Othering or deconstructing it all at once becomes the very motive behind modern Irish protagonists' negative dialectical discourse which inspires them to invalidate tradition, subvert the mechanics of internal colonialism and, as Kiberd notes, deconstruct the State's "censoriousness" (*Inventing Ireland* 472). This transforms into a radical impetus, with tendencies to counterbalance and "den[y] tradition", which generally emerges in nativist regimes (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 55).

Such socially Othered, internal rites of passage emerge as a novel leeway that allows the author to explore and simultaneously expose the limiting boundaries of a State-sponsored variation of Bildung. Inward, radical formation, in this respect, transforms into an inseparable, vital part of modern Irish protagonists' life, enabling them to choose between defying the State's Oedipal perception of Bildung or submitting to it by, for instance, divulging secrets of their mother(land) and family; joining forces with unsound radical military forces and further dividing the nation; disowning their nation and renouncing their nationality, and detaching themselves from the values that originally led them to join revolutionaries; or perhaps denying their own self and enjoying an illusory perception of life. In any case, had they participated in choosing the latter, as Moretti and Bolton claimed, not only they would have lost their significance as advocates of social criticism and individual reformation but the critical heritage of the Bildungsroman as a critical discourse would have been questioned by the rise of such self-oriented critiques of individualism.

This was the concept which I examined in my reading of Stuart, a stark openness in exposing society's limiting norms by inventing a radically dialectical discourse which not only critiqued society for its intolerance but re-examined the fundamental principles of the modern Bildungsroman by re-assessing a personal rather than national perception of Bildung.

Stuart's radical perception of formation relegated national formation to a secondary byproduct of individual formation. This is the concept which Richard Murphy in his study of minor Irish literature regarded as the end of the modern Irish Bildungsroman, and the beginning of post-Joycean self-indulged narratives of egoistic formation. In his reading, he sympathized with Weldon Thornton's hypothesis that the

“Bildungsroman has disappeared from Anglophone literature [...] because ‘the relationship between the individual and culture that brought the genre into being has somehow changed’” (“A Minority of One” 262). However, I argue that the change did not end in such a cataclysmic collapse of the genre with which Murphy, Thornton and Moretti sympathize. Rather, the *change* broadened our perception of the significance and critical capacity of the Bildungsroman, and transformed the direction of the genre to be at once more tolerant and agog in its critique of not only society and the State but also individual’s understanding of his role in such a non-formulaic formation by discarding conventional values and the trio of society, education, and national identity. Be it through its parodic, ironic unmasking of nationally cherished phenomena or its self-centred renouncement of that which had made the pivot of national identity, the modern Irish Bildungsroman has succeeded in transcending the boundaries of archetypal Irish Bildungsroman, transforming into a radically dialectical discourse which replaced conventional values, nativist intolerance, romanticized nationalist identity, and an identarian definition of Bildung with self-scrutiny, non-identarian self-criticism, reconsideration of the significance of sexual Bildung, and doubting history. These are the concepts that allowed the modern Irish protagonist to think in contradiction and understand the Deleuzian notion of desire as the internal impetus that leads towards deterritorialization and re-formation.

## Afterword

In *The Historical Novel* (1974) Georg Lukács defines the historical novel as narratives “written with a sense of how the individuality of character derives from the historical peculiarity of an age and with an awareness of human existence as always historically conditioned” (24). In the Irish context, however, James Cahalan identifies historical novel as “a form that deals with periods of political crisis in modern Ireland prior to the author’s experience, that concerns itself with a public political focus, and that depicts at least one real historical personage” (*Great Hatred, Little Room* xiii). The modern Irish novel of formation, I argue, emerges as a socio-historically conscious narrative that engages with the ways in which political and historical crises have defined, modified, and redefined the Irish subject throughout the history of the nation. For modern Irish bildungshelden, therefore, history doesn’t appear as just a temporal artefact of time-space continuum, but rather a dynamic consciousness with an infinite knowledge of what has transformed the Irish from being a nation repressed by 800 years of colonialism into an independent nation oppressed by the State’s internal and psychological politics of colonialism, and finally into a republican, pluralist nation governed by the Irish.

The modern Irish novels of formation I examined in this thesis, from Roddy Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* to Francis Stuart’s *Black List, Section H*, are historical in their focus of portraying the political and socio-cultural crises that transformed the nation. These are critical narratives that remain loyal to the original values that transformed them into national vehicles for expressing the nation’s plight of national and individual formation. Although some of the examined narratives were written after the historical phenomena they explored, and in fact some even after the rise and fall of the roaring Celtic Tiger, they staunchly preserved their messianic duty of criticism by providing a clear, albeit fictional, portrayal of, for instance, how the rise of the State did not live up to its expectations as itself became yet another obstacle for the nation to circumnavigate. As Kim McMullen too remarks in her reading of modern Irish fiction:

Even in the dynamic of the “new Ireland”, enjoying the unprecedented economic prosperity and rapid social change of the information boom, and hosting thousands of asylum seeking immigrants and recruiting tens of thousands of guest workers mere decades after stanching its own emigrant hemorrhage, residues of past

trauma-emotional and psychological, personal and national surface persistently. (“New Ireland/Hidden Ireland” 127)

As examined in this thesis, it is this ‘residue of past trauma’ that transforms into an introspective impetus that leads the modern Irish protagonists to challenge the conventional values in politics, society, national perception of history and culture and of course literature, and revise and appropriate the dialectical critical discourse of modern novel to fit their needs. The result is a critical narrative that externalizes the national and individual effects of such socio-political anomalies by narrativizing psychosocial developments of an individual under oppressive parochial provincialism and insular governments.

While Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* provides an ironic “mock unmasking” of nationalist historical phenomena during and after the Rising in Ireland, and Stuart’s *H* examined a national tendency to move towards a pluralist Ireland, Sebastian Barry’s *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (1998) also emerges as another variant of historical narratives that set to expose the shortcomings of the nationalist identity formation (“New Ireland/Hidden Ireland” 111). Oscillating between Doyle’s radical and “transcontextualized” discussion of nationalist Irish history in *A Star Called Henry* and William Trevor’s revisionist story of deformation and socio-cultural alienation in *The Story of Lucy Gault*,<sup>330</sup> Barry’s novel chronicles the dark side of the nationalist history by narrativizing an oppressed history behind the IRA’s violence and intolerance in accepting any other form of Irishness but the one they had approved. While Doyle’s Henry and Stuart’s *H* join the IRA to free their nation from 800 years of colonial yoke, and McCabe’s Francis Braddy rekindles such historical flames of anarchic independence in the 1960s, Barry’s Eneas McNulty faces external as well as psychological exile, and eventually flees his country in fear of being marked and murdered by the IRA only because of the bad choices he had made during his salad days, namely joining the British Army a few years before the Rising.

Eneas like Doyle’s Henry becomes a marionette at the hands of immature IRA rebels; however, what Eneas experiences in the wake of the Rising and the wars of independence can be compared to Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* yet only on the surface. While Doyle’s Henry Smart transforms into a rebellious egoist raconteur, “a

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<sup>330</sup> According to Linda Hutcheon, ‘transcontextualization’ is an “ironic recoding of the past”. On “transcontextualization” see Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, University of Illinois Press, 2000, 102-104.



shooting star [that] went scooting across the black sky over Dublin”, narrativizing how rebels like him became the very impetus behind the Rising and the following tumultuous years of war and unrest, Barry’s Eneas joins the train of non-nationalist, marginalized voices that found it impossible to contemplate and reflect on their present as the brutal consequences of their past (choices) spearheaded to deconstruct their perception of present life (*A Star Called Henry* 23).

For such internally Othered characters, reinventing the past, as so did McCabe’s Francie in *The Butcher Boy* and Bolger’s deranged, young female protagonist, Sandra, is only possible by accepting exile and indulging in an inward rite of passage, a concept which is more about reinventing their own identity than subverting any form of nationalist politics of identity formation; for it is far less demanding to recreate your marginalized self, as Bolton notes, than to “reinvent a past that supports an idealized national identity” (*Blighted Beginnings* 224). While Barry’s *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, in this respect, stands as a critique of internal self-formation caused by character’s self-cancellation, the other main theme of the narrative targets the nation’s historically selective consciousness, which has celebrated some and contained others, calling it an intolerant, politicized psyche which only supports an already idealized form of identity.

In this study I examined these socially Othered, internal rites of passage which either are imposed on the protagonist as part of the State’s politics of formation, or the protagonist simply indulges in them to distance themselves from society, and to find solutions for such oppressiveness. This study illustrated how such an internal rite of passage, manifested in the protagonist’s perception of *Bildung*, emerges as an inseparable, vital part of their life. For instance, they either have to indulge in such a restricted form of development or immerse in the State’s politics of submission by, for instance, divulging secrets of their mother(land) and family; joining forces with unsound radical military forces and further divide the nation; disowning their family and nation and renounce their nationality. In any case, if they had participated in choosing the latter over the former, namely, prioritizing self-denial and submission over self-formation, as Moretti and Bolton postulated, not only they would have lost their niche as advocates of social criticism and individual reformation but the critical heritage of the *Bildungsroman* as a critically dialectical genre would have been vitiated by protagonists’ indulgence in egoist individualism. This exposed itself as a self-contradictory concept, for the critical capacity of the *Bildungsroman* did not

simply wane, but rather transformed into a critical discourse which redirected the process of criticism from the very source of formation, namely, the self. This radicalized perception of the Bildungsroman, therefore, emerges as an introspectively self-critical voice that re-examines not only self-formation but also individuals' as well as society's perception of Bildung by indulging in an antiauthoritarian discourse.

While Bolton regards Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* as "the end of the bildungsroman as a socially-realistic mode of critique", I argue that such transcontextualized narratives of social criticism and individual formation in fact became the very force that revived the critical tradition of novel of formation by allowing the form to revisit, and ironically mock the historical event while simultaneously re-structures the reader's biased understanding of such events, providing space for more critical reconsideration, and if not revision, of history (*Blighted Beginnings* 237).

I ended this study with my reading of Francis H. Stuart's radical perception of formation, which relegated national formation to a secondary byproduct of individual formation. This is the concept which Richard Murphy in his study of minor Irish literature regarded as the end of modern Irish Bildungsroman, and the beginning of a post-Joycean self-indulged narratives of egoistic formation. In "A Minority of One", Murphy sympathized with Weldon Thornton's hypothesis that the "Bildungsroman has disappeared from Anglophone literature [...] because 'the relationship between the individual and culture that brought the genre into being has somehow changed'" (262). However, I argue that the change did not result in such a cataclysmic collapse of the genre with which Murphy, Thornton and Moretti sympathize. Rather, the *change* broadened our perception of the significance and critical capacity of the Bildungsroman, and transformed the direction of the genre to be at once more tolerant and agog in its critique of not only society and the State but also individual's psychosocial pattern of formation, and his perception of his role in such a non-formulaic formation by discarding conventional values. Be it through its parodic, ironic unmasking of nationally cherished phenomena or its self-centred renouncement of that which had made the pivot of national identity, the modern (Irish) Bildungsroman has succeeded in transcending the boundaries of archetypal Irish Bildungsroman, transforming into a radically dialectical discourse which replaced conventional values, nativist conservatism, romanticized nationalist identity, and

identarian Bildung with self-scrutiny, non-identarian self-criticism, deterritorialized perception of sexuality, and doubting history.

While at the end of Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* the voice indirectly offered the space to reflect on a radical post-independence revision of Irish history, and by presenting internal Othering and external exile as some of the most conventional byproducts of revolution and socio-political displacement, a concept that was also echoed in H's disillusionment with the dominant dichotomous political air in post-independence Ireland, Barry's *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* contradicts Thornton and Moretti, and challenges Murphy's periodization of Bildungsroman that questions the currency and relevance of the genre. Through Eneas's Virgilian rite of passage, rife with unhomeliness and exile, Barry's novel re-structures the modern Irish Bildungsroman to narrate how the conventional tradition of rite of passage has transformed into a diasporic rite of unrootedness, whereby Eneas is depicted to be neither welcome to stay in Ireland nor to seek rootedness somewhere else, for the IRA will even follow him in his psychological exile.

Barry's depiction of unrootedness and exile is not limited to revolutionaries and rebels such as Doyle's Henry or Stuart's H, rather, as I examined in my reading of Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* and O'Faolain's *Are You Somebody?*, exile and Othering is squarely indifferent to sexes, as it emerges as a plague paralyzing the nation. However, exile and Othering in the context of women's formation is even more convoluted and complex, as in addition to political underpinning it is supported by the subjects who themselves have been marginalized by the same binaries of submission and oppression exercised by the State. Men, in other words, as part of the larger canvas of post-independence Irish society, become the other pivots of such sexual exiles and political marginalization, enforcing, perhaps unawares, the principles that would lead the nation towards further division and discrimination. While Barry's Eneas escapes from the IRA spies and secret fire brigades as he leaves his town, Sligo, and his country, seeking rootedness in the Isle of Dogs, in O'Brien's *The Country Girls*, such unrootedness and ceaseless psychological unhomeliness caused by the young girls' purely natural interest in their sexuality and sexual Bildung is enforced by not just their families but also by their uncompromising society which identifies the source of all evil in women and their feminine, fragile bodies.

The objective O'Brien's *The Country Girls* pursues, in this respect, corresponds with what made Stuart's and Doyle's narrative unique, namely, preparing

the post-independence society to reconsider their view of their nationalist history and nativist values, and as a result allowing for changes to take place. When the change finally did arrive in the late 1960s, it re-structured society by initially deterritorializing the conventional social structure which according to Deleuze and Guattari not only had been counterproductive, and “repuls[ive] and paranoiac” in dealing with sexuality and sexual maturation of both men and women on the one hand (*Anti-Oedipus* 9), and re-establishing an open socio-cultural relationship with other nations on the other, but also lacked the flair to lead the nation to revise their perception of their motherland “as a place eternally the same” (Barry 284).

The change advocated by the novels examined in this study, in fact emerges as the very impetus that at once asked the nation to reconsider their perception of the past and its influence on their present life. It is the binary of stasis and change which Julia O’Faolain successfully examines in her 1980 novel *No Country for Young Men*, which chronicles a traumatic and vengeful recollection of the politically chaotic 1920s, and a narrow consciousness, which like Barry’s depiction of IRA marksmen hunting for Eneas, has rejected change and instead clung to an intolerant nationalist memory of the past. While for Stuart, Edna O’Brien, Flann O’Brien and Doyle, the past must be revisited to expose the untouched dimensions of it through “ironic reconstruction” of events and characters, as Currie notes, for Barry and Julia O’Faolain the past signifies an intolerant consciousness which haunts their characters through internal and external exile, psychological Othering and marginalization, reminding “one”, Bolton notes, how such “political hostility and narrow identity formations of Irish nationalism linger” on the modern or even contemporary protagonist’s perception of reality as in the clichéd trio of the past, present and future (*Blighted Beginnings* 223).

The concept of unchanged memory explored in Julia O’Faolain’s *No Country for Young Men* and *Godded and Codded* (1970), namely, a Deleuzian parochial consciousness that haunts the modern Irish protagonist, becomes the very notion that narratives examined in this thesis have endeavoured to revisit and address. While exile - internal and external, psycho-social marginalia, unhomeliness, and political Otherness make the crux of their discussion, what this thesis did not address due to its focus and limitation, was the perception of the aforementioned concepts in the context of sexually Othered Irish subjects. In other words, while Doyle’s Henry accepts exile after giving up on his motherland, or when Stuart’s H in *Black List, Section H* and

Luke Cassidy in *Victors and Vanquished* (1958), and McCabe's Francie in *The Butcher Boy* indulge in a psychological and social exile, they surely find exile as an ordeal which will eventually end in changing the narrow political atmosphere of post-independence Ireland. Whereas in the context of queer formation and characterization, for instance for Patrick 'Kitten' Braden in McCabe's *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998), and many of Colm Tóibín's characters, especially Declan and Helen in *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999) and *The Empty Family* (2010), exile and internal Othering are introduced bearing the same level of pain and socio-cultural displacement but without any ultimate sense of progress and change. For such sexually territorialized and Othered characters, exile does not promise new and improved socio-cultural norms and a redefined identity; nor does it end in character's rootedness in other geopolitically tolerant nations. Rather, for the sexually Othered protagonist, I argue, exile is a constant clash between individual's desire of belonging and rootedness and society's binaries of formation, resulting in the formation of a particular selfhood which oscillates between socio-cultural self-alienation and self-criticism on the one hand, and joining communities who would accept their identity, and sympathize with their perception of exile on the other.

As I illustrated in my examination of novels by Edna O'Brien and Nuala O'Faolain, it is the sexually marginalized individualism that emerges as one of the most underrepresented aspects of Irish identity; it is a concept that not only has been socially contained but disowned as a notion that contradicts decent Bildung. By finding rootedness in the dialectical discourse of the modern Bildungsroman, the Othered individual will be given the voice to deconstruct the intolerant, hegemonic national perceptions of sexuality and sexual Bildung. The result, in this respect, is a rebellious narrative that chronicles the subject's 'coming out' of such territorialized politics in a still intolerant society by regarding exile as the psychological passage that guides the subject to unlearn the narrowness of society's definition of queer while learning to redefine their unique identity through introspection and psychological Bildung.

Where Bolton suggests "the end of the *bildungsroman* as socially-realistic mode of critique" (*Blighted Beginnings* 225), and Moretti dates the demise of the European Bildungsroman to 1914, when "the [1914-1918] war" made the genre socio-historically irrelevant (*The Way* 229), I suggest a radical change in the genre's perception of and engagement with politics and history re-structured the

Bildungsroman. This is a change that not only sharpened its critical discourse and broadened the perception of socio-political anomalies that dominated the post-independence Irish society in the name of “domain of moral experience” but also trained the individual to be more critical and investigate such norms (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 24).

As I discussed in this thesis, the concept of self-induced exile, external or internal, in the modern Irish Bildungsroman emerges as a precarious variation of Bildung that subverts the conventionality of the genre by enabling the bildungshelden to narrate the untouched and unknown dimensions of formation that have been repressed by the State or the Oedipal Society. Restructuring the rite of passage into forming an inward journey towards self-criticism and self-appreciation, for instance, is a concept most clearly manifested in the works of moderns such as Stuart and Joyce, and revisited only ironically by notable contemporary Irish authors such as Doyle, McCabe, Tóibín and most recently Marina Neary’s *Martyrs and Traitors: A Tale of 1916* (2011). Stuart’s *Black List, Section H*, for instance, engages in resisting a culture of division caused by the dualistic politics of submission and safety on the one hand, and rebellion and separatism on the other by accepting exile and the inward journey, whereas his other works, for instance *Victors and Vanquished*, are centred on a different narrative of Irish formation, depicting those who are affected by the partition caused by the clash between the nativist definition of identity and those who were forced to accept Othering. While both are affected by the concept of division, it is the former that finally succeeds in restructuring the national discourse and perception of Bildung.

The protagonists examined in this thesis can be classified as those who accept the inward rite of passage only to resist the politics of division. For them, internal exile and socio-political Othering transform into a dichotomous combination that at once distances them from not only the conventional perception of Irishness but also the authoritarianism of an Oedipal Society. Resistance, not exclusively in the form of exile but an introspective rite of passage provides the young modern Irish protagonist with what they most desire: on the one hand, an independent selfhood, faithful to the ideals of the Rising, and a novel look at the process of decolonization and independence in Ireland between the 1920s and 1940s, and a sublimated answer to a question that lays the foundation of their traumatic Bildung on the other: what if the child dreams of becoming something other than what society had intended?

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