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Irish nationalism and postcolonial modernity:
the 'minor' literature and authorial selves of Brian O'Nolan

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Abstract

In the immediate post-independence period, forms of state-sponsored Irish nationalism were pre-occupied with exclusive cultural markers based on the Irish language, mythology and folk traditions. Because of this, a postcolonial examination of how such nationalist forms of identity were fetishised is necessary in order to critique the continuing process of decolonization in Ireland. This dissertation investigates Brian O'Nolan's engagement with dominant colonial and nationalist literary discourses in his fiction and journalism. Deleuze and Guattari define a 'minor' writer's role as one which deterritorializes major languages in order to negotiate textual spaces which question the assumptions of dominant groups. Considering this concept has been applied to postcolonial studies due to the theorists' linguistic and political concerns, this dissertation explores the 'minor' literary practice of Brian O'Nolan's authorial personae and writing techniques. Through the employment of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the deterritorialization of language alongside Walter Benjamin's models of the *flâneur* and translation, and Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage*, this thesis examines the complex forms of postcolonial narrative agency and discursive political resistance in O'Nolan's work.

While O'Nolan is often read in biographical terms or within the frameworks of literary modernism and postmodernism, this thesis aims to demonstrate the politically ambivalent nature of his writing through his creation of liminal authorial selves and heterogeneous narrative forms. As a bi-lingual author, O'Nolan is linguistically 'in-between' languages and, because of this, he deterritorializes both historical and literary associations of the Irish and English languages to produce parodic and comic versions of national and linguistic identity. His satiric novel *An Béal Bocht* exposes, through his

use of an array of materials, how Irish folk and peasant culture have been fetishized within colonial and nationalist frameworks. In order to avoid such restricting forms of identity, O'Nolan positions his own authorial self within a multitude of pseudonyms which refuse a clear, assimilable subjectivity and political position. Because of this, O'Nolan's authorial voice in his journalism is read as an allusive *flâneur* figure. Equally, O'Nolan deterritorializes Irish mythology in *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a form of palimpsestic translation and rhizomatic re-mapping of a number of literary traditions which reflect the Irish nation while in *The Third Policeman* O'Nolan deconstructs notions of empirical subjectivity and academic and scientific epistemological knowledge. This results in an infinite form of fantastical writing which exposes the limited codes of Irish national culture and identity without reterritorializing such identities. Because O'Nolan's 'minor' literary challenge is reflective of the on-going crisis of Ireland's incomplete decolonization, this thesis employs the concept of 'minor' literature to read Ireland's historical past and contemporary modernity through O'Nolan's multi-voiced and layered narratives.

Keywords

Brian O'Nolan, Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen, pseudonym, Irish nationalism, postcolonialism, Deleuze and Guattari, 'minor' literature, 'becoming-minor', deterritorialization of language, rhizome, *flâneur*, *bricolage*, translation.

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

Signed: Brian Rock

Date: 01/10/2010

List of abbreviations

Brian O'Nolan's works

ABB *An Béal Bocht*

ASTB *At Swim-Two-Birds*

THL *The Hard Life*

TDA *The Dalkey Archive*

TPM *The Poor Mouth*

TTP *The Third Policeman*

Collections of Brian O'Nolan's journalism, essays, short fiction and drama

AW *At War*

BM *The Best of Myles*

CF *Comhthrom Féinne*

FC *Further Cuttings from Cruiskeen Lawn*

HD *The Hair of the Dogma*

MAD *Myles Away from Dublin*

MBM *Myles Before Myles*

SP *Stories and Plays*

VL *The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman and The Brother*

CL 'Cruiskeen Lawn' in the *Irish Times*

fn refers to material from footnotes in O'Nolan's texts

Introduction: The Position of the Irish Artist

> There is nothing wrong with Joyce, who, as Chesterton said about someone else, is sane enough; it is his commentators who are mad (Kavanagh).[1]

> The exile, refugee or runaway has no roots, even in his own country (*The Dalkey Archive*).[2]

In April 1951 the editors of the short-lived Irish periodical *Envoy* (1949-51) published an edition devoted to critical commentaries on James Joyce (1882-1941) and his writing.[3] The editors invited Joyce's fellow countryman Brian O'Nolan (1911-1966) to write an editorial note to this issue. O'Nolan accepted this proposition and, rather than producing an expected critical and scholarly assessment of Joyce, O'Nolan provided an amusing, anecdotal essay entitled 'A Bash in the Tunnel' which mocks the authoritative voice of Joycean academic reviewing.[4] This short piece has been read as O'Nolan's response to the increasing critical attention and commodification Joyce's

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[1] Kavanagh, Patrick, 'Diary', *Envoy: A Review of Literature & Art, 5:17* (Apr 1951), 70-2 (p. 70)

[2] O'Brien, Flann, *The Dalkey Archive* (London: Picador, 1976 (1964)) p. 126; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (TDA, 126).

[3] *Envoy*, edited by John Ryan and subtitled 'A Review of Literature & Art', was modelled on the British cultural review *Horizon*, edited by Cyril Connolly, and dealt with issues of Irish national identity and Ireland's relationship with Britain. This edition of *Envoy* includes essays on Joyce by Denis Johnston, Andrew Cass (the pseudonym of John Garvin, O'Nolan's civil service superior and literary mentor), Niall Montgomery (O'Nolan's university friend), Joseph Hore and W.B. Stanford, and is concerned with Joyce's treatment and reputation, particularly in relation to biographical misreadings and uncritical literary appraisal and assimilation into the Irish canon. Andrew Cass argues that '[t]he literature of Joyce's life and work is growing apace but a large amount of it is inaccurate in biographical detail and uncritical in literary appraisal. Such writing is worse than useless for it tends to turn the man into a myth and to embalm his works in shrouds of speculative and unfounded commentary.' Cass, Andrew, 'Childe Horrid's Pilgrimage', *Envoy: A Review of Literature & Art, 5:17* (Apr 1951), 19-30 (p. 19). Equally, Denis Johnston is highly critical of American scholarship on Joyce which he perceives as a jargonistic industry and fears an over significance placed of Joyce's writing. Johnston, Denis, 'A Short View of the Progress of Joyceanity', *Envoy: A Review of Literature & Art, 5:17* (Apr 1951). See Shovlin, Frank, *The Irish Literary Periodical 1923-1958*, *Oxford English Monographs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) for a socio-historical analysis of the cultural function of Irish periodicals such as *The Irish Statesman* (1923-30), *The Dublin Magazine* (1923-58), *Ireland To-Day* (1936-38), *The Bell* (1940-54), *Envoy* (1949-51) and *Rann* (1948-53).

[4] See Nolan, Brian, 'A Bash in the Tunnel', *Envoy: A Review of Literature & Art, 5:17* (Apr 1951), 5-11; reprinted as O'Brien, Flann, 'A Bash in the Tunnel', in *Stories and Plays*, ed. by Cockburn, Claud, (London: Grafton Books, 1973), pp. 199-208. Claud Cockburn depicts O'Nolan in this essay as a 'Professor' and the reader as his audience who 'settle into our seats in the lecture room to listen to some reasonably well-tried assessment, obiter dicta etc. etc., from the critic and sage.' However, 'this is not going to be our portion' as O'Nolan subverts his role as literary critic to offer a whimsical anecdote. Cockburn, Claud, 'Introduction', in *Stories and Plays*, ed. by Cockburn, Claud, (London: Grafton Books, 1973), pp. 7-20 (p. 16)

fiction began to receive during the mid-twentieth century which, in O'Nolan's words,

> seeks to establish that Joyce was at heart an Irish dawn-bursting romantic, an admirer of de Valera, and one who dearly wished to be recalled to Dublin as an ageing man to be crowned with a D.Litt. from the National and priest-haunted University.[5]

O'Nolan's essay challenges any academic or nationalist appropriation of Joyce which attempts to portray him as a leading player within the Irish literary canon who can be incorporated into the dominant discourses of state nationalism, American academia, and the Catholic Church's social and moral teaching through the National University of Ireland.[6] However, the essay reveals little in the way of literary assessment of Joyce's fiction, and instead highlights O'Nolan's own literary style and relationship with the process of authorship and Irish national politics.

In his introduction, O'Nolan raises the question '[w]hat is the position of the

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[5] O'Brien, 'A Bash in the Tunnel', p. 208; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (SP, 208). Costello and Van de Kamp note that in the 1950s O'Nolan was critical of the Joyce Industry. Costello, Peter, and Peter Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing 1987) p. 23. While John Ryan, A.J. Leventhal, Anthony Cronin, Patrick Kavanagh, Tom Joyce and O'Nolan organized a fiftieth anniversary Bloomsday prigimage in 1954, O'Nolan was to later complain about the commodification of Joyce into what has been referred to as the 'Joyce Industry'. Hence, Cronin notes that '[i]t is typical of O'Nolan's ambiguity towards Joyce that he was prepared to organize and take part in this elaborate act of piety although his column that morning contained an attack on Joyce as an 'illiterate''. Cronin, Anthony, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien*. [New edn (Dublin: New Island, 2003) pp. 194-5 (p. 194). See also CL, 16 June 1954 and Ryan, John, 'The Incomparable Myles', in *Remembering How We Stood: Dublin at the Mid-Century*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1975), pp. 127-47 (p. 138) for further discussion on O'Nolan's view of Joyce. In O'Nolan's novel *The Dalkey Archive* (1964) Joyce is resurrected from the grave as a barman in the town of Skerries in North County Dublin who renounces the claim of authorship of his work, and desires to become a Jesuit. See Dotterer, Ronald L., 'Flann O'Brien, James Joyce, and *The Dalkey Archive*', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 8:2* (Summer 2004), 54-63 for a detailed analysis of O'Nolan's revision of Joyce's representation in *The Dalkey Archive*.

[6] Bernard Benstock argues that O'Nolan, in this essay, 'is not quite as cranky as Patrick Kavanagh's poem, "Who Killed James Joyce?"', which appears after O'Nolan's essay in *Envoy*, however he 'reflects a similar attitude: that Joyce escaped our wrath through exile, that his genius makes him almost invulnerable and he must therefore be accepted, and that American critics deserve to be attacked instead for making a cult out of *our* Joyce.' Benstock, Bernard, 'The Three Faces of Brian Nolan', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 3:3* (1968), 51-65 (p. 59 fn). See also Kavanagh, Patrick, 'Who Killed James Joyce', *Envoy: A Review of Literature & Art, 5:17* (Apr 1951), 12 in which Kavanagh presents a satiric dialogic poem about who killed Joyce, accusing people with Harvard theses for burying Joyce in symposiums and a Yale academic for killing Finnegan. Mick, the protagonist in *The Dalkey Archive*, makes a similar statement regarding Joyce in his critique of the Joyce Industry developed through American academia.

artist in Ireland?' as a response to the critical appropriation of Joyce's fiction.[7] He answers this question through the use of a humorous anecdote which describes not only Joyce's artistic position on a metaphorical level, but also reveals the *flâneuresque* and *bricolage* nature of O'Nolan's writing. This comic anecdote of a man 'having a bash with a bottle of whiskey in the locked lavatory of a locked, unoccupied dining-car, out of service, and shunted into a siding' can be analyzed as an illumination of the tragedy of the Irish émigré artist Joyce who is positioned within a darkened tunnel, locked in the privacy of his own private railway car.[8] However, as Dotterer notes, the metaphor describes O'Nolan's own artistic position as 'the artist-who-stayed-within-his-native land that comments on his own ambivalence toward art.'[9] It is this ambivalence towards the position of the artist in Irish society which haunts O'Nolan's writing and the presentation of his own authorial identity. As Kiberd notes, O'Nolan had an 'obsession with the problem of establishing his own literary identity' in his writing through his use of multiple pseudonyms.[10] Like the *flâneur* of nineteenth-century Paris who positioned himself outside of the capitalist modernity that surrounded him through a number of allusive poses and forms, O'Nolan under his various pseudonyms, such as Myles na gCopaleen, Flann O'Brien, John James Doe, George Knowall, Brother Barnabas and

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[7] O'Brien, Flann, *Stories and Plays*. ed. by Cockburn, Claud (London: Grafton Books, 1973) p. 202; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (SP, 202)

[8] Cockburn, 'Introduction', pp. 16-7. Cockburn, with reference to the anecdotal quality of 'A Bash in the Tunnel', argues that '[o]n the evidence it appears that to O'Nolan almost any thesis, argument or criticism could best be expressed in terms of a story.' (p. 15)

[9] Dotterer, 'Flann O'Brien, James Joyce, and *The Dalkey Archive*', p. 56. For another view of Joyce as a lonely, exiled artist, see Morgan, Edwin, 'James Joyce and Hugh Macdiarmid', in *James Joyce and Modern Literature*, ed. by McCormack, W.J. and Alistair Stead, (London: Routledge, 1982), pp. 202-17. Morgan writes that 'Joyce and MacDiarmid both emerged from social and literary environments where they felt impelled to adopt a critical, single-minded, often lonely role. They laid on themselves a weight of responsibility which Joyce dealt with almost entirely in terms of art and which in MacDiarmid issues in ceaseless journalistic and publicistic activity as well as in art but both men had deep roots in their national feelings about Ireland and Scotland as places presenting challenges and problems quite distinct from those of England' (p. 204; cited in Jackson, Ellen-Raïssa, and Willy Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism', *interventions, 4:1* (2002), 68-78, (p.70))

[10] Kiberd, Declan, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996) p. 499

the Count O'Blather, manipulates his own authorial identity formation through his *bricolage* production of mass-consumerable fictional news stories and novels in mid-twentieth-century Ireland.[11] The pseudonymous figures of O'Nolan's writing maintain two roles within the journalistic or literary texts that he produces: they are both textual creations and perpetual creators of texts, whereby both O'Nolan's persona and the articles or fictional novels he produces are in a constant state of revision both in style and form.

In his essay, O'Nolan has been asked by the editors 'to try to assemble material for this issue of *Envoy*', and so he goes to the Scotch House in Dublin 'to drink a bottle of stout and do some solitary thinking' when a stranger approaches him. The stranger becomes intimate with O'Nolan by expressing his surprise at finding O'Nolan, as an artist, drinking in a pub (SP, 202). The stranger presumes that artists would prefer to 'have [a drink] in the cars' instead. The stranger's anecdote which follows describes his reason for why he thinks O'Nolan would prefer 'a good bash' in the privacy of his own dining car in a train carriage. The stranger, referred to by O'Nolan as 'my informant', tells the story of the time he was involved in a three day drinking session, or bash, in a darkened tunnel. The stranger's father's job is to reload dining cars for the railway company 'with costly victuals – eggs, rashers, cold turkey and whiskey' (SP, 203). The stranger's habit is to steal his father's 'secret key' to a dining car so that he can penetrate the pantry and gain access to 'such fabulous fare' (SP, 204, 203).[12] He then customarily locks himself in the lavatory so that he will be able to consume all the food and drink in peace. However, this stranger is resentful about a three-day session he

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[11] Ironically, in the essay the stranger addresses O'Nolan by his name, but the reader is never told which name that might be as O'Nolan is seen by the stranger as a 'man like myself'.

[12] Interestingly, Hackett in *The Dalkey Archive* is in a similar situation in relation to his father, however he cannot access his father's keys to benefit himself. He comments that 'I work for the father, who's a jeweller but a man that's very careful with the keys. No opportunity of giving myself an increase in pay.' (TDA, 12)

underwent because of the railway personnel who move, or shunt, coaches around the railway tracks. He says 'I always try to see, for the good of me health, that a bash doesn't last more than a day and a night' and, because the stranger does not carry a watch, he presumes that when 'it's bright, it's day. If it's dark, it's night'. However, the stranger does not realise that the shunters have moved his carriage into a darkened Liffey tunnel for three days, causing him to assume that the night is just a very long one. As a result of this, he drinks copiously which causes him to be 'in bed for a week', and so he resents the railway shunters who he calls a 'crowd of bastards', and vows to never have a bash in a tunnel again (SP, 205).

While, on the one hand, this is merely one of the many witty anecdotes which proliferate O'Nolan's work in its narrative digression from the main task at hand of writing an editorial note on commentaries on Joyce in *Envoy*, on the other hand the image of the man in the darkened tunnel assists O'Nolan in his reflection on the position of the Irish artist in the contemporary world. The anecdote acts as a metaphor to explain why the stranger found it odd that an Irish artist like O'Nolan would be drinking in a pub because he affiliates his own experience with that of the Irish artist's. O'Nolan writes

> Funny? But surely there you have the Irish artist? Sitting fully dressed, innerly locked in the toilet of a locked coach where he has no right to be, resentfully drinking somebody else's whiskey, being whisked hither and thither by anonymous shunters, keeping fastidiously the while on the outer face of his door the simple word, ENGAGED?
>
> I think the image fits Joyce: but particularly in his manifestation of a most Irish characteristic – the transgressor's resentment with the nongressor (SP, 206).

O'Nolan's interpretation of the anecdote's image portrays an artist who occupies territory, both literally and in academic appraisal, which does not belong to him, and who is resentful towards those who would interrupt his occupation of such space. The

anecdote presents the Irish artist as someone who needs his own 'ENGAGED' space or territory to complete 'some solitary thinking' which is set in contrast to the earnest academic criticism undertaken on Joyce and his work during the 1950s (SP, 206, 202). O'Nolan achieves this by retiring to the Scotch House in Dublin to think about how to write his introduction, just as the stranger attempts to carve out his own space within the lavatory of the dining car. However, the space the stranger occupies in the carriage does not belong to him: it is the railway company's property which he can only gain access to by stealing his father's key. He has no right to be there but he continues to inhabit this space and is resentful when whiskey spills on his knees when his carriage is being moved around the tracks.[13]

However, this image of Joyce as a resentful transgressor who is shunted, like the stranger in his carriage, between different forms of academic inquiry, may be more a reflection of O'Nolan's own self-conscious *flâneur* position and *bricolage* method of composition within the context of post-independence Ireland. O'Nolan, who is 'instantly on my guard' both to the stranger's 'toucher' status and any critical appraisal of Joyce more generally, is a *flâneur* author who can be read as loitering between literary and popular styles, languages, and ambivalent political and authorial positions throughout his work (SP, 202). In relation to the essay, Cockburn argues that

> [o]ne has an immediate and lively vision of our three-headed man locked there in the lavatory in the train in the tunnel, and simultaneously, as by some tremendous bound, he is outside, roaring abuse and derision at the bastard shunters, and – simultaneously again – he is there drinking a large one with the Toucher in the Scotch House, listening, writing a novel, an Irish artist

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[13] Paradoxically, the stranger is at the will of the shunters or nongressors who move his carriage about and deceive him into staying in the carriage for a number of days because he is left in the tunnel. The stranger and O'Nolan disapprove of the 'endless enshuntment' of the cars as 'a bloody scandal and a waste of the taxpayers' money', a comment which Myles na gCopaleen often makes regarding government policy. The stranger's car is shunted by one group of shunters to the siding of the Liffey Junction, and then by another group to the yards behind Westland Row Station (SP, 204). This causes the stranger to spill his whiskey as he sits on the lavatory due to 'the jerks of them shunter bastards!'. The stranger's 'resentment was enormous. Be it noted that the whiskey was not in fact his own whiskey, that he was that oddity, an unauthorised person' (SP, 205).

paradoxically proving and disproving his own thesis at the same time.[14]

Like the three-headed O'Nolan-Flann-Myles who observes Joyce from multiple and contradictory positions throughout his career, the *flâneur* can position himself both in the crowd and outside the crowd as he observes it on the streets of nineteenth-century Paris. In this anecdote the author paints a picture of the Irish artist as a writer who displays an ambivalent attitude towards authority and the power relations of discourse and language. O'Nolan creates an active solidarity between Joyce and himself as Irish writers who transgress modernist and nationalist discourses in order to dismantle them from within in the form of a drunken and chaotic bash. This type of chaotic bash is a form of *flânerie* in its seemingly purposeless nature, and a form of *bricolage* in its collection of a number of stories placed side by side to act as a critical commentary on Joycean studies and even Joyce himself. O'Nolan can be read as a *flâneur* figure who, like the *flâneur* of the Parisian streets, aimlessly wanders through the city observing and recording its day-to-day business for his own benefit as an artist. The narrative he produces for *Envoy* has a *flâneuresque* structure: it meanders in and out of ideas, and includes many asides and bracketed phrases to further express side thoughts by both O'Nolan and the stranger. For example, before O'Nolan describes why the stranger has 'a bash once a week in the cars', he writes that '[o]ne must here record two peculiarities of Irish railway practice. The first is a chronic inability to 'make up' trains in advance, i.e. to estimate expected passenger traffic accurately' and '[t]he second peculiarity – not

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[14] Cockburn, 'Introduction', p. 17. Cockburn also describes O'Nolan as having 'the visage of a Satantic cherub' (p. 9). Gallagher refers to O'Nolan as 'the corporeal manifestation of both Myles na Gopaleen and Flann O'Brien' within the Trintiy of O'Nolan, Myles and Flann which makes it difficult to grasp the real O'Nolan behind the eccentric, ironic and contradictory persona. Gallagher, Monique, *Flann O'Brien: Myles from Dublin: A Lecture Given at the Princess Grace Irish Library on Monday 18 September 1989, The Princess Grace Irish Library Lectures 7* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1991) p. 7. Caulfield presents a version of this three-headed man in her radio play whereby the three voices of Myles, Flann and O'Nolan engage in dialogue throughout the play. The play is based around the moment when O'Nolan left the civil service in 1953. See Caulfield, Annie, 'Your Only Man: Based on the Life of Irish Writer Flann O'Brien', BBC Radio 3, 2009 and Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 181-5 for accounts of O'Nolan's final days in the civil service after eighteen years service.

exclusively Irish – is the inability of personnel in charge of shunting engines to leave coaches, parked in far sidings, alone. At all costs they must be shifted.' (SP, 203-4)

O'Nolan's anecdote provides an alternative metaphor for understanding Joyce and, more generally, for comprehending his own role as artist. His fleeting, transient expression of Irish nationalist modernity does not reflect the harmony of nationalism, or even the academic and liberal appraisal of Joyce, and should be located in a subversive realm which poses a challenge to the foundational categories of Irish nationalist modernity and artistic production. The solitary thinking which is necessary for the Irish artist is set in contrast to O'Nolan's position in the public house, and his engagement in conversation with the stranger whose story he uses in his own text in *bricolage* fashion. Both the Irish artist and the stranger are drinking from someone else's whiskey, just as O'Nolan adopts the stranger's anecdote for a metaphorical and ambiguous model to define Joyce's literary position. The 'costly victuals' the stranger eats and drinks in the carriage represent the modes of expression that the Irish artist must adopt when writing in the English language and for Anglo-American publishers: because these luxurious substances are locked away and are only accessible through his father's key, the artist Joyce is forced to become a thief and an unauthorised person who, like a *bricoleur*, takes hold of 'this assortment of material and utensils' or tools of language which are not his own. O'Nolan subverts the master's tools to dismantle from within the master's abode and refuses to abide by the academic research practices and grand theories associated with Joycean studies. O'Nolan asks his reader to '[r]eflect on that locking. So far as the whole world was concerned, the car was utterly empty. It was locked with special, unprecedented locks. Yet this man locked himself securely within those locks' (SP, 204). The transgressive stranger gains power by choosing to lock himself in the lavatory of the carriage, even if no one is aware of his transgression. In the same way,

the Irish artist is able to run riot because he now has access to the tools of discourse for play.

As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, O'Nolan is engaged in a re-assessment of the role of the Irish artist and his own authorial identity in his fiction, journalism and lesser writings from a 'minor' literary position which works from within the literary canon to de-mystify it. As the editorial note in *Envoy* demonstrates, O'Nolan's work attempts to corrupt the signifying process and framework he must work under, whether that be the use of the English or Irish language and the novel genre, or the expectations of dominant nationalist, colonial and literary discourses which shaped Irish identity during the mid-twentieth century. His work produces identities which do not reflect the authority of the author, but instead challenge it through digressive and multi-dimensional narratives and authorial personas. As will be shown in the next section, Gilles Deleuze (1925-95) and Félix Guattari's (1930-92) three tenets on the function of 'minor' literature help to illuminate O'Nolan's work within the postcolonial context of post-independence Ireland and its evaluation of Irish cultural nationalism and forms of modernity. Following this, there will be a brief survey of how this concept has been applied within postcolonial, and specifically Irish contexts, before moving on to an outline of the overall argument and chapter-by-chapter structure of the thesis.

0.1 What is a 'minor' literature?

In their impressionistic study *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975; 1986), Deleuze and Guattari define a 'minor' writer's role as one which deterritorializes or disrupts the mimetic codes of major languages in order to negotiate textual spaces

which question the assumptions of dominant groups or discourses.[15] If 'a major language is one which has forgotten that it depends upon poetic metaphoric creation' and believes it describes a shared and homogenous world, the two authors make a distinction between the terms 'minor' and 'minority', implying that 'minor' literature stands in opposition to established canonical literature and does not necessarily have to be written by an author from a minority background.[16] This concept of 'minor' literature allows for European modernist writers such as Joyce, Samuel Beckett (1906-89) and Franz Kafka (1883-1924) to be considered as having a 'minor' position due to their production of heterogeneous texts which challenge the authoritative element of description and resist forms of the reterritorialization of sense.[17] Deleuze and Guattari develop a common ground between a minority writer and an experimental 'privileged' European writer in terms of how they write rather than in relation to their postcolonial, critical or minority positioning. So, rather than thinking of 'minor' literature as belonging to a particular minority group, small nation or avant-garde movement, critics

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[15] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)

[16] Cormack, Alistair, *Yeats and Joyce: Cyclical History and the Reprobate Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) pp. 65-6. Such types of minority writers could include female, third world, non-white or gay and lesbian authors. Bhabha notes that specifying social division and bearing witness to historical differences through the term minority can often result in 'repetitious piety' or 'multiculturalist mantras' which 'instantiates differences without revealing those interstitial articulations through which categories of difference constitute new social movements.' This can lead to dangerous normalizing forms of social difference through the title of minority as a form of 'homogeneous victimization'. Bhabha, Homi K., 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', *Critical Inquiry, 23:3* (Spring 1997), 431-59 (p.435). Hence, one should be wary of the term minority when it is employed to literary authors and read the term 'minor' metaphorically rather than in relation to an author's social, sexual or racial background.

[17] Deleuze and Guattari have been criticised for focusing their study of 'minor' literary practice on European avant garde writers who are normally analysed in relation to the 'great' European canon. They identify Joyce and Beckett as Irishmen who live within the genial conditions of a revolutionary, 'minor' literature because they write in dominant European languages, English and French, which are affected by an Irish use of these languages. However, they argue that Joyce's texts, through their use of every language, produce reterritorializations characterised by 'exhilaration' and 'over-determination, while Beckett, through his bi-lingual work in English and French, goes to the extremes of language where nothing is left but 'intensities'. This results in two options for the Irish 'minor' writer: excessive or reduced linguistic engagment. Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 19. Mr. Bloom is of course representative of a 'minor' migrant figure who is dispossessed through language, particulary through his mis-signification by other characters in *Ulysses* who refer to him as 'him' or 'L. Boom'.

should examine it as 'a way of writing, a use of language' which is different to canonical literature.[18] Hence, the term 'minor' must be understood in a metaphorical sense when describing the work of a particular author.[19] Any examination of the 'minor' qualities of a writer's work must involve analysis of the writer's linguistic and generic practice and the extent to which it asserts a political deterritorialization of language and literary genre in relation to canonical texts and their traditional structures.

0.1.1 The deterritorialization of language

Firstly, Deleuze and Guattari argue that a 'minor' literature is produced within a major language. In this production, the 'minor' literature attempts to deterritorialize the formative elements of the major language's literary and institutionalised system of signification.[20] They provide Kafka's use of German in his fiction as an example of language which 'is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization.'[21] Kafka was a Jewish writer from Prague who wrote in German. Because of this, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that his 'minor' position is due to his ethnic and linguistic minority

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[18] Bogue, Ronald, 'Minor Writing and Minor Literature', *Symploke: A Journal for the Intermingling of Literary, Cultural and Theoretical Scholarship, 5:1-2* (1997), 99-118 (p. 114). As Barthes has warned, critics should avoid classifying texts as avant garde or classic as '[t]he Text is not to be thought of as an object that can be computed.' Instead, 'it is not a question of drawing up a crude honours list in the name of modernity and declaring certain literary productions 'in' and others 'out''. Barthes, Ronald, 'Work to Text', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Cain, William E., Laurie Finke and Barbara Johnson, (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 1470-6 (p. 1471). Hence, as Borges argues, it is not what one represents but how one represents it that marks an author's cultural position. See Borges, Jorge Luis, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', in *Labyrinths*, Irby, James E., ed. by Yates, Donald A. and James E. Irby, (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 211-20 for a discussion on the position of the Argentine writer.

[19] As Bhabha notes, 'Deleuze and Guattari's discourse is almost exclusively wrought in the register of metaphorization and figuration' in relation to their reading of Kafka. Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations'*,* p. 441. The authors employ the metaphors of fasting, hiding, crying, and feeding on the major canon to describe Kafka's 'minor' aesthetic.

[20] Rosaldo offers a useful definition of the term deterritorialization in terms of the 'minor' writer's exiled position and linguistic expression: '*Deterritorialization* refers both to writers' positions (outside their homeland and using a language not their own) and to their extreme modes of expression (either excessive and inflated, in the manner of James Joyce, or sparse and intensified, in the manner of Franz Kafka).' Rosaldo, Renato, 'Politics, Patriarchs, and Laughter', in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. by JanMohamed, Abdul R. and David Lloyd, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 124-45 (p. 124); emphasis in original.

[21] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 16

position within a Czech region of the German-speaking Austro-Hungarian Empire.[22]

Deleuze and Guattari maintain that because of his social position he is trapped between several languages and does not feel fully comfortable in any one language: therefore, his work results in the 'impossibility of not writing because national consciousness, uncertain or oppressed, necessarily exists by means of literature.' It is argued that German for Kafka was a elite bureaucratic or 'paper language' which he used to speak with his family, while Czech was the language he used to communicate with servants and was the language his Jewish father disowned in favour of German. As a consequence of Kafka's social position and ambivalent relationship to language, Deleuze and Guattari argue that his work turns the literature of Prague Jews 'into something impossible – the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German'.[23] As Anderson has argued, literature has been exploited as a tool to achieve a sense of national consciousness. Anderson notes that the novelistic and journalistic discourses grew out of the need to develop a sense of collective nationhood. Such print capitalism 'gave a new fixity to language' and this, for Kafka, created a sense of distance for Czech Jews on the fringe of the German-speaking empire which excluded the linguistic variations of Czech people's use of the major language German.[24] Kafka's 'Prague German' is a deterritorialized language which is 'appropriate for strange and 'minor' uses' which disrupts the use of German within literary productions to develop a

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[22] Kakfa was born into a Jewish family living in Prague during the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Kafka was sent to a German rather than a Czech school due to his father's desire for social advancement. Critical comparisons have been made between the plight of the Jews and that of the Irish from James Joyce's Mr Leopold Bloom in *Ulysess* (1922) to historical connections between the two peoples. Robert Kee, for example, writes that '[f]or over seven centuries the history of the people who lived in Ireland had been a folk-trauma comparable in human experience perhaps only to that of the Jews.' Kee, Robert, *The Green Flag/the Most Distressful Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989 (1972)) p. 8. Kennedy also refers to the murals in Belfast depicting the famine as a holocaust. Kennedy, Liam, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1996) p. 186.

[23] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 16

[24] Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) p. 44. Anderson argues that 'print capitalism…made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways', particularly in terms of the nation (p. 36).

collective national identity.[25] The major language German, which achieved its dominant discursive power through conquest, is rearticulated in a deterritorialized form through an inclusion of local signifying practices by German-speaking Jews in Prague and by a defamiliarization of the German language.

Kafka's deterritorialization involves disrupting 'traditional structures of expression' unlike reterritorialization which reinforces these structures as natural.[26] This results in the possibility of invention in relation to forms of mimetic representation. Deleuze and Guattari see Kafka's work as blurring words in his production of animal noises and non-singing sounds which move towards the limits of representative mimesis. They call for a perpetual deterritorialization of language in order to avoid the lure of becoming in turn a hegemonic dominant signifier. Deleuze and Guattari argue that one way to achieve creative literature in a major language is 'to artificially enrich this German, to swell it up through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of a hidden signifier.' Uncovering these hidden signifiers in the power relations of language is vital for a 'minor' writer. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that Kafka achieves this by opposing 'a purely intensive usage of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying usages of it.'[27] Bogue refers to Kafka's 'linguistic dispossession' which enables him to discover an unsettling 'minor' usage that is already present within the dominant language German which 'opens it to creative deformations'.[28] If language for Deleuze and Guattari is charged with power relations that classify, organize and explain the world, an analysis of the political implications of

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[25] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 17
[26] Delaney, Paul, 'Decolonization and the Minor Writer', in *Postcolonial Forum*, Jan 2001, pp. 1-9 (p. 2). Equally, as Hunter has argued, '[f]ar from trying to compensate for the curiosity of his linguistic inheritance, the 'minor' writer emphasizes and reaffirms the deterritorialization by transgressive and defamiliarizing devices in his work.' Hunter, Adrian, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 139
[27] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)*p. 19
[28] Bogue, 'Minor Writing and Minor Literature', p. 105

Kafka's 'minor' use of German becomes all the more pressing for them. As Delaney notes, 'minor' literature 'is shown to be characterized by an implicit and anxious questioning of the terms of collective identification'.[29] Deleuze and Guattari argue that

> [w]hat interests Kafka is a pure and intense sonorous material that is always connected to *its own abolition* – a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification, composition, song, words – a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying.[30]

Kafka dismantles the fixed chain or linguistic system of the 'paper language' German in favour of the production of non-signifying sounds which reflect upon the political implications of language. It is important to note that while Deleuze and Guattari's first tenet of the deterritorialization of a dominant language 'is extremely suggestive and quite accurate in its generality, it tends to be problematic on its specific application because it is based entirely on his analysis of Kafka's texts'.[31] Deleuze and Guattari's model of Kafka's deterritorialization of language can be applied, with modification, to O'Nolan's own treatment of literary and journalistic styles of print capitalism and forms and both the Irish and English languages to raise concerns over the signification processes of Irish nationalism and British imperialism.

An examination of O'Nolan's 'minor' use of language is particularly relevant, especially because, as Clissmann states, he 'had a command of at least three languages' and an 'awareness of linguistic nuance that resulted from this command reveals itself in the style of his novels and in the *Cruiskeen Lawn* column.'[32] Not only does O'Nolan

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[29] Delaney, 'Decolonization and the Minor Writer', p. 2

[30] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)*p. 6, emphasis in original. As Bhabha argues, Deleuze and Guattari imagine 'Kafka's minority writing as starving the German language, making it cry, tearing out its deterritorialized heart'. Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 440

[31] JanMohamed, Abdul R., 'Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse', *boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture, 12:3* (Spring - Autumn 1984), 281-99 (p. 296).

[32] Clissmann, Anne, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* (Dublin and London: Gill and Macmillan, 1975) , p. xiii. O'Nolan was bi-lingual, and learnt German at university.

deterritorialize the major colonially-inherited language of English, but he also decodes the nationalist significations inherent in the minority-spoken Irish language. Therefore, language is an important thematic issue both in postcolonial studies and in O'Nolan's writing, and an examination is needed of the 'minor' uses of the colonial language English and nationalist language Irish within processes of Irish print capitalism and modernity. As Shea notes, O'Nolan's first novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) 'repeatedly subverts any traditional notions of an author's control over the words she sets down. O'Brien powerfully calls our attention to the ways language runs away from an author, assuming an authority of its own, determining meanings unintended by the writer.'[33] This leads to multiple possibilities of meaning and an unreality without true omnipotence and authority in O'Nolan's work, and 'minor' writing more generally.

0.1.2 The political nature of 'minor' language

Due to his linguistic dispossession, Kafka's thematic and narrative innovations can be read as having social and political implications as, for Deleuze and Guattari, one cannot extract an individual subject from the political significations of his or her writing. Deleuze and Guattari argue, secondly, that 'minor' literature must be charged with a sense of action and political immediacy. They define major literature as metaphorically occupying a lot of territory and space: this leads to a homogenization of social concerns whereby individual concerns are subsumed under dominant national and cultural discourses. In contrast to this, 'minor' literature lies on the periphery of major language and 'is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics'. Because a 'minor' writer occupies less space or territory, his or her work has to be necessarily more political in nature. These 'minor' creations where 'everything in them is political' reflects upon the effects of

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[33] Shea, Thomas F., 'Patrick McGinley's Impressions of Flann O'Brien: *The Devil's Diary* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*', *Twentieth Century Literature, 40:2* (Summer 1994), 272-81 (p. 274)

economic, political and social determinants which shape everyday reality for such groups as Prague Jews.[34] JanMohamed argues that '[t]he political nature of minority literature must be stressed, particularly in view of the deliberate and systematic, if unspoken attempt of various humanisms to repress the political characteristics of literature.' He furthers his argument stating that

> [b]ecause the writer and his or her community are steeped in the politics of domination and subordination […] politics is a major and inescapable ingredient of his psychic and social formation. Thus works of minority writers are linked by the imperative to negate, in various ways, the prior negation of his culture by the dominators […] it implies an affirmative search for an alternative that is yet unarticulated.[35]

In the case of Deleuze and Guattari, 'minor' literature is the problem of immigrants and their children who become linguistically negated, estranged and displaced with the major language through which they express themselves and are signified by others within the dominant culture. These communities 'live in a language that is not their own'. Hence, 'minor' writers are defined in consequence of social, cultural or psychic dislocations and deterritorializations of their surroundings.[36] In Kafka's work this political conflict occurs within father-son conflictual relationships which work as an analogy for the state and the dispossessed or disenfranchised. Kafka's own diasporic experience leads to an analysis of the German-speaking Jews in Prague as nomads within their own language German. Further displacement or

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[34] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 17. Hence, Bhabha argues for the importance of moving away from concerns about the individual personhood of an author which he maintains should be restaged in terms of questions of historical and geographical location. He sees the value in 'shifting the question of identity from the ontological and epistemological imperatives – *What is identity?* – to face the ethnical and political prerogative – *What are identities for?* – or even to present the pragmastist alternative – *What can identities do?*' Hence, Bhabha stages his discussions of identity within historical locality in the discourses of migration, diaspora and postcoloniality. Hence O'Nolan should not been read as an individual author but as an author who explores the wider concerns of Irish cultural history and transition between modernity and tradition. Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 434

[35] JanMohamed, 'Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse', p. 296

[36] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 19

deterritorialization for Kafka is only made possible by a disruption of traditional structures of expression within the major language, as he uncovers the ruptures and contradictions that already exist within major language. In relation to O'Nolan's writing, an examination of his critique of the homogenization of Irish post-independence national space, language and identification must be provided to establish his own social position and dislocation, despite not having emigrated from the country, to the dominant cultural and social codes of his life time. In particular, an investigation of O'Nolan's ambivalent and nomadic political positioning must be engaged with to test both the limitations of Deleuze and Guattari's second tenet of the political nature of 'minor' literature, particularly as while O'Nolan's writing shows the potential of varied artistic creativity through multiple discourses for Ireland, he does not necessarily offer a viable new community to forge a new means of creativity to base the new nation upon. As Deleuze and Guattari maintain, it is only through the process of constant deterritorialization of reterritorialized language that 'minor' writers can create revolutionary conditions to ensure that deterritorialized language does not become a universal standard.

0.1.3 The collective value of 'minor' enunciation

The final characteristic of 'minor' literature is that 'in it everything takes on a collective value.' Kafka's writing, Deleuze and Guattari argue, rests upon a practice of collective enunciation and communal expression whereby there is no possibility for individual expressions that can be separated from a collective enunciation.[37] Deleuze and Guattari argue that 'minor' literature, while it does not apply to any one region or

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[37] Cormack supports this view of the collective value of 'minor' writing: 'For the writer of a 'minor' literature the imaginative world is fragmentary, somehow elsewhere, and thus it can never be fully owned or separated from a collective consciousness.' Cormack, *Yeats and Joyce: Cyclical History and the Reprobate Tradition* p. 64. Cormack's study reads Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Yeats's *A Vision* as a form of 'minor' writing which corrupts easy understanding of the meaning of the texts through their use of irony and parody (p. 65).

minority position, is a movement.[38] They posit that because there are not many talented 'minor' writers, these writers benefit from conceiving of something that is 'other than a literature of masters; what each author says individually already constitutes a common action'.[39] This literature of masters attempts to build a homogeneous national consciousness, something which Deleuze and Guattari view as being fragile and easily broken down through a deterritorialization of language and genre. They see literature's role as one of 'collective, and even revolutionary enunciation' because literature produces 'an active solidarity' and 'if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility'.[40] As the next section will detail, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'minor' literature has been applied to postcolonial writing because postcolonial literature is very much concerned with a collective re-imaging of colonial and nationalist discourses to develop alternative depictions of reality from a 'minor' position, even if these writers belong to or write within a modernist or Westernized heritage. Lloyd and JanMohamed argue that the collective nature of minority discourse should be attributed to a certain sharing of cultural and political experience, such as colonial history.[41] As a challenge to Deleuze and Guattari's third tenet of 'minor'

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[38] Hence Deleuze and Guattari want the term 'minor literature' to replace terms such as popular, marginal, or proletarian literature. By thinking of these literatures under the concept of 'minor' they maintain that a 'collective machine of expression' can be created. Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 18

[39] ———, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 17. Rosaldo notes Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on a 'minor literature without individuated masters' which is characterized by a 'paucity of talent among the producers of minor literature'. Rosaldo, 'Politics, Patriarchs, and Laughter', p. 124

[40] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 17: 'What each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement (*énoucé*).' (p. 17)

[41] JanMohamed, Abdul R., and David Lloyd, 'Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?' in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. by JanMohamed, Abdul R. and David Lloyd, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 1-16 (p.10)

literature, JanMohamed argues that

> [t]he "communal" characteristic of minority literature is due not to the "scarcity or talent," as Deleuze argues, but, at least in Third World literature, to the fact that the minority writer, whose social formation is not yet adequately controlled by Western bourgeois culture, has not sufficiently internalized the fiction of the autonomous subject.

Therefore, because there is a tension between 'the experience of the self-as-an-individual and the self-as-a-social-being, the experience of the Third World writer tends to be at the collective end of the spectrum': 'the tendency of the dominant culture [is] to characterize and treat him as a categorical, generic being, rather than an individual, ultimately confirm[ing] his sense of solidarity with his community.'[42]

This idea can be applied to O'Nolan's own self-positioning within historical post-colonial Ireland as well as the positioning of his characters and narrative voices in colonial and national cultural terms, particularly as he re-inscribes his role as signifying author within collective and dialogic voices, rather than as individualized authors, which defy easy classification within ethnic or social models. JanMohamed argues that 'the collective or individual experience represented in minority literature is one of dehumanization and abject marginality. In fact, we must insist that the fourth fundamental characteristic of minority literature is its representation of marginality; paradoxically, marginality is the "universal" of minority literature.' He provides the example of African-American author Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* which he argues focuses on the politics of hegemony and marginality: like the countless unnamed narrators of O'Nolan's fiction and journalism, '[t]he unnamed narrator/protagonist of the novel is constantly propelled by the desire to identify himself by achieving some kind of centrality, but he is repeatedly betrayed and remarginalized until he learns to

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[42] JanMohamed, 'Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse', p. 296

celebrate his invisibility and to define himself through it.'[43] It is this celebration of invisibility which must be examined in relation to O'Nolan, especially as his desire for literary recognition is in contrast to his refusal to maintain clear meaning, stable character subjectivity or political positions in his texts.[44]

0.2 'Minor' literature studies: the postcolonial language question

Bogue notes that the concept of 'minor' literature has been accommodated within cultural studies, especially in relation to colonial and postcolonial literature, because of its engagement with what he refers to as the "language question".[45] Many studies have been completed on postcolonial writers from Africa, India, Latin America, the United States, and Ireland which advance Deleuze and Guattari's original arguments in relation to Kafka's way of using language.[46] Kafka's deterritorialization of German is seen as a strategy similar to linguistic postcolonial concerns in Africa and India. For example, 'minor' literature studies have examined how Indian writers are forced to choose between regional, Indian languages and English just as Kafka chooses between Czech, Yiddish, Hebrew and German, and how African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe have to decide whether or not they should write in their ethnic language or in the European language inherited from colonization, just as the

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[43] ———, 'Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse', p. 297. Ellison (1914-94) was a novelist and literary scholar who wrote on black experience in the U.S.A. His novel *Invisible Man* (1952) explores the theme of an unnamed man's search for his place in New York society in the 1940s. The man is figuratively socially invisible in the novel because people refuse to recognise him, and so autobiographical writing becomes a way to regain presence in the text. Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man* (London: Penguin, 2001 (1952))

[44] Such texts by O'Nolan can be configured within Barthes's view of the Text: 'the Text is that which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc.).' Barthes, 'Work to Text', p. 1471

[45] Bogue, 'Minor Writing and Minor Literature', p. 105

[46] Recently, 'minor' literary analysis has been applied to Latin American and African American literature. See Martinez-San Miguel, Yolanda, *From Lack to Excess: 'Minor' Readings of Latin American Colonial Discourse* (Lewisburg, P.A.: Bucknell University Press, 2008) ; Perez, Rolando, 'What Is 'Minor' in Latino Literature', *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, 30:4* (Winter 2005), 89-108 and Albrecht-Crane, Christa, 'Becoming Minoritarian: Post-Identity in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*', *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 36:1* (Spring 2003), 56-73 for examples of such studies.

Irish Literary Revival and the Gaelic League were engaged in debate over whether to resurrect the Irish language as a literary language of the nation or to write in an Hiberno-English form of the English language. In the case of the inheritance of colonial languages, an aesthetic issue is inherent in postcolonial writing because canonical imperial literature is seen as upholding 'colonial images and ideals' throughout the empire in the form of writing.[47]

This results in an ongoing difficulty of speech, particularly when one is already spoken for and inscribed within by a colonial language. For example, Achebe termed this 'my Middle Passage' as he recognised the importance of speech, presence and literary representation in sustaining colonial power. As C.L. Innes notes, Achebe inserts his ethnic language Igbo into his English language novels which 'rarely lets his reader forget the otherness of Igbo culture and the language which embodies it' because 'his use of Igbo words is one means of insisting on this otherness, of bringing the reader up against the barriers of non-English sounds and concepts'.[48] Postcolonial writers are more aware of their social position as authors and of the political impacts of colonialism and neo-imperialism on their individual societies, and because of this, their work is necessarily more political in its linguistic nature. The English language is of value to such writers because, through working within the major language, new presences and literary representations can be created to avoid the homogenization of colonial

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[47] Boehmer, Elleke, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 14. Achebe, for example, insists that he wrote his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) to take on a branch of English literature that is dense with stereotypes and misrecognitions of African culture, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Edgar Wallace's *Senders of the River* (1911, film 1935), and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939). As many of these texts were included on the English literature syllabus in the 1950s at University of Ibadan, Achebe saw Africa as a narrative construction in literature which was used to justify colonial regimes. He claims the right to quote from British literary heritage in order to rework this canon for the African mind. See Achebe, Chinua, 'The African Writer and the English Language', in *Morning yet on Creation Day*, (New York: Anchor Press/Doubeday, 1975), pp. 91-103. Equally, as Cormack argues, a writer like Borges is in a fortunate position of knowing Western culture and being able to turn it on its head. Cormack, *Yeats and Joyce: Cyclical History and the Reprobate Tradition* pp. 67-8.
[48] Innes, C. L., *Chinua Achebe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 34

representation. Deleuze and Guattari define this type of 'literary machine' which many postcolonial writers produce as one which 'becomes the relay for a revolutionary machine-to-come' because, as Fanon notes, literature becomes the people's concern.[49]

If colonial literature tries to rationalise the world of the Other, O'Nolan's response to any rationalisation through colonial and national discourse in Ireland must be investigated, particularly in terms of its difference from other types of postcolonial writers both in Ireland and abroad. Fanon, in his essay 'On National Culture', argues that the intellectual 'must be an element of that popular energy' who must fashion a revolution with the people. The culturally colonised African intellectual must be engaged in a 'battle of Africa' in his historical mission to break down colonialism and affirm his own national culture.[50] While Fanon recognises that 'the objective problems' within each colonial nation 'were fundamentally heterogeneous', he desires the development of a Negroism which will unite Africans under a common anti-colonial struggle.[51] This echoes Deleuze and Guattari's claim that 'minor' literature is a collective movement as Fanon calls for a need for anchorage of the native intellectual with the people and his roots so that the native intellectual will not take on the aspects of a cult or religion, or contribute to upholding the actions of politicians.[52]

However, postcolonial writing, like other forms of minority writing based on distinctions of social class, gender or sexual orientation, does not necessarily deterritorialize the signification that language and literary genres partake in to the extremes that Kafka undertakes in his work because many authors rely on inherited oral

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[49] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 18
[50] Fanon, Frantz, 'On National Culture', in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 166-99 (pp. 166-8)
[51] For example, the civil rights movement in the U.S.A. is fundamentally different to that in Angola. Fanon, 'On National Culture', p. 174
[52] ———, 'On National Culture', p. 175

and written forms to build an alternative version of their national tradition to that of extreme nationalism and colonialism.[53] This may be explained by Appiah's argument that ideas of postcoloniality emerge from 'a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained, group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery.'[54] The periphery here refers to 'Third World' nations which have been affected by the legacy of imperialism and neo-colonialism. Appiah notes that artists and critics from postcolonial areas depend upon Western intellectual life and Euro-American publishers and readers to promote and represent their production of art and criticism, and this is true of Achebe as much as O'Nolan. With reference to African art, Appiah argues that 'questions of what we call "aesthetic" value are crucially bound up with market value' and that African art has become a commodity with buyers at the centre, that is, the Western world, who are permitted to judge African art in terms that may not reflect the artist's vision.[55]

Irish literature can also be located within Appiah's view of the influence of the Western publishing world and academia on postcolonial artistic production and evaluation. Lloyd argues that 'Irish intellectual life is, for better or worse, profoundly marked by metropolitan circuits of theory, and in particular by English and American

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[53] Fanon comments that while the glory of the Aztec civilization does not help the diet of the poor Mexican peasant, the recovery of his civilization helps to legitimize the anxiety shared by native intellectuals which fear they are being swamped by Western colonial culture. Instead, they hope to discover beauty beyond the present day colonial poverty, misery and resignation in order to gain dignity and glory in their past rather than shame. Hence, a claim for a national culture in the past rehabilitates the nation and serves as justification for hope for a future national culture. See ———, 'On National Culture', pp. 168-9

[54] Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992) p. 149. Flannery repeats this argument, referring to Derrida's concept of a 'white mythology' of the European Enlightenment thinking which has shaped postcolonial critics and the fact that Irish postcolonial critics 'have undertaken to prospect the margins or alternative times and spaces of the Enlightenment.' Because one cannot remove the impact of this long humanist tradition, Flannery advocates instead 'a question of expanding the temporal and spatial maps of modernity to embrace marginal and alternative modernities' to avoid 'recession into opposition or essentialism' in Irish critical debate. Flannery, Eóin, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 4-5

[55] Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* p. 138

influences, as we apprehended our own productions refracted through international prisms.' This results in a sense of 'self-estrangement' for Irish culture as a 'site of a profoundly contradictory and intensely political ambivalence' which is similar to other post-colonial locations.[56] This ambivalence and estrangement is displayed by postcolonial writers like O'Nolan who became disenchanted with the goals of nationalism and notions of national and ethnic identity after independence was gained after 1922 for the Irish Free State. Because of this, these postcolonial writers attempted to reinvent artistic forms, such as the novel genre and the journalistic column, to produce alternative heteroglossic ways of viewing the world that are not based on past notions of the pre-colonial or locked within nationalist intellectual assumptions and definitions. Instead, many post-independence Irish authors destabilise the realist novel form and challenge dominant discourses that arise out of independence to move across borders and transgress norms of writing and perceiving.

Within an Irish context, analysis of 'minor' literary strategies has been extended to modernists Joyce and Beckett as well as the poet James Clarence Mangan.[57] These

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[56] Lloyd, David, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993) p. 1. Lloyd employs Joyce's phrase of the 'cracked looking-glass of a servant' to express in an Irish context 'that perception of self-estrangement, of being perceived and perceiving through alien media'. (pp. 1-2). Joe Cleary makes a similar argument about '[t]he depressingly Anglocentric and Anglophone nature of the modern Irish education system' which he views as having 'limited its intellectual horizons because it is 'mediated almost entirely through the journals and academies of England and the United States', has a 'dependence on largely empire-friendly and Eurocentric regimens of knowledge' and lacks 'both the language skills and the material research resources'. Cleary, Joe, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 42:1-2* (2007), 11-57 (pp. 23-4).
Fanon, who Lloyd borrows from in his analysis, also refers to the effect of cultural anxiety and estrangement for the African caused by universal European cultural values being placed upon them. He calls for the need for the native intellectual to give back to his past the value that has been taken away from it. Fanon, 'On National Culture', pp.169-175. See the following for further analysis of 'self-estrangement' or 'ambivalence' in other postcolonial locations: Bhabha, Homi K., 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Bhabha, Homi K., (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-7; Thiong'o, Ngugi wa, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Currey, 1986) and Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Greenfeld, Howard (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991 (1957))
[57] See Lloyd, David, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment*. Lloyd analyses Mangan as an example of an early 'minor' writer in the context of colonial Ireland and its entry into a hegemonic phase of Young Ireland's

'minor' applications call into question these authors' status as members of a wider Irish and European literary tradition. Instead, these authors are re-read within the light of postcolonial concepts to assess their relationship with language and the colonial and postcolonial circumstances of Irish history. Lloyd's study of Mangan, for instance, focuses on the context of the development of modern Irish nationalism: Lloyd wants to understand the political and cultural effects of colonialism and points to the importance of Ireland for other postcolonial states in terms of its reactions to colonial attempts to signify an Irish identity which could act as a cultural counterpart to imperial identity. Lloyd defines major literature as the production of autonomous identity for the subject which re-creates on a higher aesthetic level the original identity of the national race to produce an archetypal man. He believes that such literature gains hegemonic force due to its refusal to recognise cultural differences, whereby minority peoples are othered as not fully realized forms of humanity. Therefore, a 'minor' literature refuses to produce an autonomous identity narrative which can be constituted as a productive colonial or national narrative.[58]

Lloyd argues that 'Ireland has largely conformed to the model of bourgeois nationalism that Fanon analyzed in *The Wretched of the Earth*.[59] Lloyd writes that the

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Irish nationalism and political aestheticisation of culture. Lloyd maintains that Mangan refuses to reproduce versions of Irish national authentic identity in his work and instead rejects the nationalist aesthetic underlying major canonical Irish literature (1987, pp. 25-6). Hence, through the use of techniques such as the use of persona, false translation and patterns of allusion which pre-figure modernism Mangan resists through his allusiveness (p. xii). In *Anomalous States* Lloyd continues this argument in relation to Beckett and Joyce's work. Because Beckett, like O'Nolan, is rarely addressed in terms of the political implications of his work or his historical moment, Lloyd situates his writing 'in relation to Ireland's post-colonial moment' in order 'to-read his anti-nationalism as a critical political intervention'. However, Lloyd critiques the 'canonical status' pertaining to Seamus Heaney both nationally and internationally 'which gave sanction to the 'tribalist' interpretation of the Anglo-Irish conflict', and contrasts this with his analysis of Beckett who is engaged in an 'elaboration of the insurmountable contradictions of identity' which is the real focus of a 'minor' literature (1993, 4).

[58] Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* pp. 19-20.

[59] ———, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 7. Lloyd argues that the Irish Free State's adoption of the state institutions of the colonizing power and its conformity to models of representative democracy are indicative of this.

question of identity within this bourgeois nationalism

> has to be rethought not in terms of any ontological or ethnic determination, responding to the question 'Who or what are we?', but in terms of the function of these insistently *unanswerable* questions in the assimilation of subjects as citizens for the state [because] the constitution and reconstitution of the terms of Irish identity has principally been aimed at the integration of a highly differentiated population into the modern nation state, a project which has always sought to transcend antagonisms, contradictions and social differences for the sake of a unified conception of political subjectivity.[60]

Lloyd is conscious of the role of canon formation in Irish literature as part of Irish nationalism's creation of a modern Irish state based upon a number of key identity markers to unify its people: hence, Lloyd views marginal, non-canonical forms as valuable sites of resistance and as vital moments of hybridity in Ireland which 'refuse the homogeneity of 'style' required for national citizenship'.[61] Because Lloyd is a leading practitioner of minority discourse theory, an analysis of the hegemonic role of culture in the formation of its citizen-subjects needs to be completed in relation to a study of O'Nolan. Returning to the anecdote at the beginning of this introduction, this thesis aims to evaluate to what extent O'Nolan comments on the role and position of the Irish artist in terms of his or her subordination or exclusion from state-nationalism and its cultural policy. An examination of Deleuze and Guattari three tenets of 'minor' literature in relation to O'Nolan's fiction will help to explain the elusiveness of his style and his attitude towards authoritative models of language and genre and the role of the omnipotent author. However, this response is difficult to trace due to the contradictory political allusions running through his work: as JanMohamed notes, colonized people

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[60] ———, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 5; emphasis in original.
[61] ———, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 6. He recommends that critics need to revalue the marginal elements of Irish culture and reinsert them into the dynamic of identity formation. He calls for analysis of 'cultural practices which have appeared discontinuous' and of 'the developing state apparatus in Ireland which is at one and the same time the analysis of the hegemonic role of culture in the formation of citizen-subjects' in order to recover marginalized practices which have been read as incoherent or pre-modern (p. 7). For example, Lloyd views Irish street ballads and folk songs as vital representations of hybridity of a colonial culture and as sites of resistance and a means of popular instruction.

are faced with a difficult task

> [f]or while we may wish desperately to be culturally independent, we are attracted to and enthralled by Western society […] we are left with a difficult job of mapping our own ambivalences, of analyzing the manner in which Western culture infiltrates and dominates other cultures.[62]

Ireland is caught in an ambivalent relationship in its entry into modernity and state nationalism and it is O'Nolan who demonstrates this contradictory ambivalence through his re-mapping of the cultural influences on his Irish society.

0.3 Thesis Plan: the stylistic indeterminacy of O'Nolan's writing

This thesis contributes to the growing field of minority discourse studies pioneered by Deleuze and Guattari. This research attempts to fully engage with the concepts of 'minor' and major writing created by Deleuze and Guattari and later expanded by Lloyd and JanMohamed through a study of O'Nolan's three major novels *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *An Béal Bocht* and *The Third Policeman* and his *Irish Times* journalism. I raise the question of to what extent these concepts can adequately describe the Irish condition of self-estrangement outlined by Lloyd, and more specifically, O'Nolan's response to this. As yet there has been no extended study focusing on O'Nolan in terms of postcolonialism and in relation and comparison to other Irish and international postcolonial writers and criticism. I work under the assumption that becoming 'minor' is not a question of essence but of position defined in political terms. To explore the strengths, weaknesses, affirmations and negations inherent in this position, an analysis of O'Nolan's use of language and genre and his political and authorial position will be provided, with particular attention to how O'Nolan developed narrative strategies which examine his relation to literary tradition.

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[62] JanMohamed, 'Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse', p. 21

Chapter One

This thesis is concerned with tracing the development of the discipline of Irish postcolonial studies by making a case for O'Nolan as an agent of deterritorialization despite both critical disagreement over Ireland's postcolonial status in relation to other postcolonial nations and previous critical responses to O'Nolan's work. My main thesis question investigates if O'Nolan is 'minor' because he chooses to avoid clear signification in both his use of pseudonymous identities and his literary and journalistic styles of writing. Deleuze and Guattari note that the breakdown of empire increases crises and movements of deterritorialization and invites new and complex reterritorializations.[63] Chapter one will detail the methodological concerns expressed by postcolonial and revisionist Irish critics over developing a postcolonial strategy to analyze the representation of the breakdown of empire and the establishment of a national literary culture in Ireland. This will involve an outline of the current critical debate in Irish postcolonial studies about the use of the term 'postcolonial' and the creation of an Irish postcolonial canon to uncover what Lloyd refers to as 'the value of another theoretical circuit, that emanating from other post-colonial locations in all their disjunctions and analogies with one another, to find ways in which to comprehend the apparent peculiarities of Irish cultural history'.[64] After this, a detailed literature review will be provided of both historical and contemporary critical responses to O'Nolan's work which have attempted to define him in relation to frameworks such as modernism, postmodernism and Bakhtin's theories. While these analyses are all valuable in illuminating O'Nolan's literary experiments they do not always take into account the social and contextual world O'Nolan wrote in and his engagement with the nationalist and hegemonic politics of post-independence Ireland. While there has been some

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[63] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 24
[64] Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 2

attempt at a postcolonial reading of O'Nolan's work, my methodology aims to test the limitations of applying the terminology and theories of postcolonial and minority discourse theories to his work: this will be achieved through an exploration of O'Nolan's complex refusal to offer a monologic version of Irish national identity. My method will assess the performativity and inconclusiveness of O'Nolan's postcolonial self and allusive writing style which reject the need for post-independence narratives to conform to the values of the national bourgeois state.

Chapter Two

The next chapter will place O'Nolan within the specific historical context of his work and times with a focus on the prevailing tropes of post-independence Irish culture, that is, Catholic nationalism, the Irish language, and Gaelic folk tradition during a time of increasingly secularised modernity. I read O'Nolan within the context of nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish nationalism to discover what effect the end of empire and the installation of a nationalist Catholic state had on O'Nolan and his contemporaries' writing. Deleuze and Guattari analyze historically the politics of culture and see 'minor' literature as combative and calling into question the hegemony of central cultural values which are required for the development of a stable and modern nation-state. Kiberd argues that the revival of the Irish language in pre and post-independence Ireland was part of a wider debate amongst Irish nationalists 'about how best to modernize' Ireland.[65] Taking the view that O'Nolan's fiction and journalism positions itself politically as anti-canonical and anti-authoritarian in a form of internal linguistic exile,

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[65] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 134. Kiberd maintains that while 'the invention of modern Ireland had far more in common with the state-formation of other European countries such as Italy or France' in other ways, especially in relation to culture, it has more in common with 'the emerging peoples of the decolonizing world. The debate about language revival, like the arguments about nationality and cosmopolitanism in literature, anticipated those which would later be conducted in Africa and Asia.' The language question was 'conducted in familiar terms of tradition versus modernity, but this was not quite so: at a deeper, more interesting, level, the debate was about how best to modernize.' (pp. 135, 134)

to what extent is being 'minor' 'to hate all languages of masters', especially considering his destabilisation of both conservative and liberal views of the Irish language revival movement through his use of pseudonymous letter writing.[66] It will be argued through an analysis of excerpts from O'Nolan's journalism that O'Nolan, through his inclusion of linguistic variants of both Irish and English, exposes the clichéd nature of both languages when used within the dichotomised colonially inherited relationship of Irish and British identity. As a bi-lingual postcolonial author, O'Nolan deterritorializes both English and Irish, producing a 'minor', hybrid linguistic form which is always engaged in a process of description which never reaches a stable conclusion. Because of this, O'Nolan's can be positioned as a nomadic and dislocated writer 'between languages'.[67]

Chapter Three

This chapter demonstrates Britain's imperial image of the stage Irishman, and how O'Nolan adopts this character through the use of the pseudonym Myles na gCopaleen in order to offer a critique of both imperial fantasies and Irish metropolitan discourses which repeated these images and reinforced them during the time of colonial and postcolonial modernity. O'Nolan is engaged in a quarrel not just with colonizing England but also with the effect this colonialism had on the cultural nationalism and the postcolonial national bourgeoisie that was produced after political independence. Myles na gCopaleen, as author of O'Nolan's only Irish language novel *An Béal Bocht*, provides a parodic *bricolage* which can be considered as a type of complex metanarrative which has a historiographic awareness of how Irish folk culture and the

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[66] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 26

[67] Edward W. Said refers to himself as being 'between languages': 'I have never really known which is my first language, whether it is Arabic or English. It is strange, and I do not feel completely at home in either…which is why, early on, I got interested in Conrad, because he had the same feeling. The Irish writers have that same sensibility.' Pollack, Andy, and Kevin Whelan, 'Interview with Edward W. Said', *Postcolonial Text, 3:3* (2007), 1-15 (pp. 1-2) Equally, authors such as Beckett, Ionesco and Nabokov also wrote in two languages.

Irish peasantry have been represented by editors, translators and Irish-speaking peasant authors as well as within colonial and Anglo-Irish representations. I argue that O'Nolan maintains a 'minor' position in relation to both the Irish and English representations of authentic forms of Irish identification and literary canon through the *bricolage* structure of the novel and his use of an assortment of literary and popular cultural references. Equally, his re-development of Myles the stage Irishman works within the racial codes inherent in Anglo-Irish writing and colonial stereotyping in order to swell up and expose their significations through his use of cliché and parodic characterisation. By positioning O'Nolan's novel and employment of the pen-name Myles na gCopaleen within the context of the time in which he wrote in, a focus on O'Nolan's critique of the nationalist modernity of the 'Irish Ireland' movement's fixity of nationalist identification and generic form and its promotion of the Irish language as an authentic marker of Irish national identity and cultural difference will be provided to demonstrate that O'Nolan was a major social critic during the post-independence period. O'Nolan uses the minority language of Irish as a political stance against dominant cultural nationalism to disrupt the master canons that his post-independence world maintains.

Chapter Four

The subsequent chapter, through an analysis of O'Nolan's personae and multiple styles in 'Cruiskeen Lawn', will demonstrate that O'Nolan's adaptation of the author-character Myles na gCopaleen, when read as a version of Baudelaire and Benjamin's socially dislocated and exiled *flâneur* figure, demonstrates the author's refusal to attain the stable or omnipotent Irish subjectivity which dominant nationalism demanded during this period. Forms of mid-twentieth century Irish print media, such as literary periodicals and newspaper columns, demonstrate Ireland's shift from a conservative and nationalist nation to a more secularised and global country. During

such moments of transition, postcolonial scholars often focus on issues of 'identity', 'resistance' and 'agency' to account for such historical changes, however these terms need to be re-examined in relation to the use of fictitious personae in print media which conceal authors' identities and political allegiances. O'Nolan is engaged in a complex debate through his *flâneuresque*, pseudonymous and voyeuristic persona and style; Myles, as an journalist figure, is constantly on his guard against pretension and absurdity from dominant forms of culture, and through an evaluation of his self-creation, destruction and definition, I wish to demonstrate that the postcolonial focus on transgressive self-articulation through the medium of print is more complicated that it may appear.

Equally, the digressive and anecdotal structure of his column and periodical writing must be examined. Jackson refers to 'Cruiskeen Lawn' as 'surely one of the great monuments of the century, a modernist (or rather a proleptically postmodernist) *coup de maître*, written in two primary and several secondary languages whose boundaries are repeatedly breached and confused.' He refers to the column as 'some unidentified subspecies of the fiction family, a random, episodic, wildly innovative rough beast of a 'novel'', a description which reflects the 'minor' and undefinable nature of O'Nolan's journalism.[68] One needs to examine the textual structure and use of language in 'Cruiskeen Lawn' in terms of the persona of Myles as an ambivalent *flâneur* figure who explores his own local and modern identity formation within both parochial and international contexts. His column and other writing in print results in O'Nolan being transformed into a textual creation and a perpetual creator of an infinite number of texts made out of historical and literary references rather than a single, authoritative voice. Ultimately, O'Nolan exemplifies an ironic voice whose creation of

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[68] Jackson, John Wyse, 'Introduction ', in *At War*, ed. by Jackson, John Wyse, (Sante Fe: Dalkey Archive Press, 1999), pp. 7-18 (p. 11)

incognito identities and the complex and the often contradictory opinions he projects towards national debates must be re-framed in order to avoid any simple postcolonial analysis of forms of agency, identity and resistance within the post-independence setting.

Chapter Five

The following chapter will examine O'Nolan's relationship to the modes of translation of Irish mythic narratives into English.[69] In his English language novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* O'Nolan exposes the significations inherent within the master canons of nationalist translations by the Irish Literary Revival in his production of creative deformations of ways of representing Ireland. O'Nolan's *bricolage* metafiction, rather than being simply a postmodern strategy which re-invents generic form and trangresses the norms of writing, also enables him to question ideas of authentic, inherited national culture and of liberal and nationalist modernity after independence by exposing the fragile, fictional and constructed nature of all texts and their authorial voices. O'Nolan's palimpsestic and rhizomatic 'realist' novel advocates multiple and ambiguous beginnings and endings which challenge the notion that the reader, as primary signifier of the text, will be able to decode and enter the text in a straightforward fashion. Instead, O'Nolan offers a multitude of beginnings to a multitude of texts, many of which are cut short in their production, reshape and remap one another, go around in a cyclical fashion or end in sudden or strange ways. Because authorial or character agency for O'Nolan is only ever achieved through such fragmentation, Deleuze and Guattari's image of a 'minor' writer who is constantly in a state of 'becoming' is a useful metaphor to critique and place O'Nolan's narratives. His novels are always in a

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[69] An examination of translation is a justified focus for a reading of *At Swim-Two-Birds* because, as Cronin notes, '[t]he two principal devices of *At Swim-Two-Birds* were the juxtaposition of myth with sordid contemporary reality and the novel within a novel.' Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 52

state of process of transliteration and transformation which avoid achieving a set number of meanings and identifications.

Chapter Six

The final chapter works through Deleuze and Guattari analysis of language's reterritorialization of sense.[70] They argue that language can be seen as an instrument of Sense or any fixed system of signification such as scholarly criticism or science. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that in Kafka's 'minor' literature '*Language stops being representative in order to now move toward its extremities or its limits*' and that his narrative 'remains a mixture, a schizophrenic mélange'.[71] I want to investigate to what extent this is true for O'Nolan through an analysis of his novel *The Third Policeman.* In the text, O'Nolan exposes critical and scientifically empirical notions of truth and the autonomous subject. Through his abandonment of the sense contained in words, national subjectivity and generic form, O'Nolan favours invention and nonsense to play with, on a comic level, our mimetic notion of language at the limits of representation, imitation and figuration. O'Nolan's novel is an expression of the postcolonial experience as fragmentation which produces a fractured Self with a painful ambiguity. Ultimately, the protagonist of the text must learn to celebrate his lack of clear subjectivity and authorial control as he navigates unexpected, non-linear forms of development in a ruptured and estranged world. It is the infinitive and limitless nature of O'Nolan's cyclical work which avoids any form of reterritorialization of sense and literary form. Thus, his work is less a search for centrality, and more a desire for deferral, contradiction and marginality.

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[70] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 20-1

[71] ———, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 23, 26; emphasis in original.

Conclusion

The conclusion will evaluate my analysis of the politics of representation in O'Nolan's deconstructive work and use of personae in relation to the need for authentic and stable national and cultural representation in post-independence Ireland in order to decide what kind of 'minor' literature O'Nolan produces. I will bring together the major themes of the dissertation to demonstrate how the thesis has developed and rethought Deleuze and Guattari's ideas within the framework of the Irish postcolonial experience and in relation to O'Nolan's supposed major status as a modern writer within Irish and international canons. I will also offer ideas for further research in this area of study.

As this introductory chapter has outlined, O'Nolan's work will be examined within the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's three tenets of a 'minor' literature, and in relation to the postcolonial concern with language and within the framework of the *flâneur* figure and *bricolage*. Literary critics have accused O'Nolan of maintaining an ironic stancelessness throughout his work which results in a lack of any one clear political position. Benstock writes of O'Nolan's 'perpetual tendency for last-minute cold feet' in any challenges he makes; he continues that '[i]t is the serious lack of commitment in any direction that limits Brian O'Nolan and ensnares him within the second rank, below Joyce and Yeats and Seán O'Casey'.[72] However, O'Nolan's ironic stancelessness can be re-read as a 'minor' literary stance which enables him to re-map the literary and national landscape without resorting to newer reterritorialized hegemonic representations of authorial and national identity. As Gallagher notes, 'the

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[72] Benstock, 'The Three Faces of Brian Nolan', p. 61. Benstock also asks where does O'Nolan stand in relation to the 'burlesques of Catholic matters' in *The Dalkey Archive* as '[h]is hands are clean and he is paring his fingernails, nicely refined out of existence, having opted for the authorial prerogative of remaining non-commital.' (p. 54)

permanent, unifying factor in the disparity of his literary productions is O'Brien's dissidence' which produces a multi-faceted form of non-conformity which moves beyond simple forms of liberal postcolonial criticism.[73] It is O'Nolan's choice to position his authorial identity in a complex and contradictory relationship within the dialectics of Irish-English relationships and alongside other binary oppositions such as cosmopolitan and rural, and empirical knowledge and literary fantasy. Rather than reterritorializing his own authorial presence, O'Nolan offers an endless destabilization of literary forms and language as his only form of resistance is his stylistic allusiveness and presentation of an inassimilable authorial persona.

Returning to the editorial note in *Envoy* discussed at the beginning of this introductory chapter, further on in the essay O'Nolan reports another anecdotal story, this time from a friend of his who met 'a well-known savant who appears in *Ulysses*.' When asked about his characterisation in Joyce's text, the savant, 'with a heated statement', argues that 'he was by no means a character in fiction, he was a man, furthermore he was alive and he had published books of his own. ''How can I be a character in fiction,' he demanded, 'if I am here talking to you?'' (SP, 206). The savant also confuses the name Joyce with Patrick Weston Joyce who catalogued geographical names:[74] 'The savant did not quite understand, but ultimately confessed that he had heard certain rumours about the other man. It seemed that he had written some dirty

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[73] Gallagher, *Flann O'Brien: Myles from Dublin: A Lecture Given at the Princess Grace Irish Library on Monday 18 September 1989* p. 7. Equally, Jacquin notes the 'ethical' nature of O'Nolan's comic vein as he laughs at what is not good in Irish society, whether that originates from pretentious intellectual speeches, ambitious politicians or nationalist censors. Jacquin links O'Nolan to the Irish tradition of the satirists and moralists (aorthóir) who attack and castigate the deficiencies of the Irish people. Jacquin, Danielle, 'Flann O'Brien's Savage Mirth', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 1-7 (p. 5)
[74] See Joyce, P.W., *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places* (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1887) . P.W. Joyce (1827-1914) was a historian and writer who had an interest in Irish place names and linguistics. The reference to the 'savant' refers to Oliver St. John Gogarty who was frustrated because he was made into a character in *Ulysess*.

books, published in Paris.' (SP, 206)[75] Once again O'Nolan provides a humorous quip

to comment on the Irish artist's authoritative role as writer. This aside acts as support to

the main metaphor of Joyce in a darkened tunnel and helps to explain why, throughout

his fiction and journalism, O'Nolan is intent on problematising the role of authorship

through a production of ambiguous significations. He blurs the real and the imaginary

representations of the savant and of Joyce whereby both their identities in relation to the

text *Ulysses* are left undecided. He writes that

> Joyce spent a lifetime establishing himself as a character in fiction. Joyce
> created, in narcissus fascination, the ageless Stephen. Beginning with importing
> real characters into his books, he achieves the magnificent inversion of making
> them legendary and fictional. It is quite preposterous. Thousands of people
> believe that there once lived a man named Sherlock Holmes. (SP, 206-207)[76]

If Joyce was engaged in the re-representation of real people in his fiction, O'Nolan is

the ultimate exemplar of this in his creation of authorial personae which never existed

in the first place. This collapse of the distinction between the savant as a real person and

his role as character is furthered by O'Nolan when he offers an alternative title and

author for his own introduction to *Envoy*: '*Was Joyce Mad?* by Hamlet, Prince of

Denmark.' (SP, 201). Just as he confuses his reader as to the true identity of the savant

and of Joyce, O'Nolan also confuses his identity as a 'minor' signifying author. As the

next chapter will explore, there was a 'crisis' during twentieth-century Ireland between

the too simple binary dichotomy of 'revivalism and modernism' and between those who

'seek to revive the past' and those who 'choose to rewrite or repudiate it altogether'.[77] If

Ireland's entry into modernity is characterised by the practice of cultural self-reflection

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[75] This image of Joyce is perpetuated in *The Dalkey Archive*, whereby Joyce the character renounces any claim on the authorship of his books and instead aims to lead a moral existence as a Jesuit.

[76] Hence, Joyce is a character for O'Nolan in his fiction.

[77] Kearney, Richard, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) pp. 10, 12. McMullen argues that Kearney offers a too simple dialectic, placing O'Nolan's intertexual scrutiny of a number of texts and traditions as a too straightforward rejection. McMullen, Kim, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction, 27:1* (Autumn 1993), 62-84 (p. 75)

of the past, it is this very questioning of notions of Irish and international modernist literary canons, national forms of authenticity and identification, and the development of journalistic and novelistic narratives which O'Nolan performs throughout his 'minor' literature.

Chapter 1: Fraught cultural debates: Ireland, modernity and the postcolonial

Since the publication of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Yeats and Beckett's Nobel Prizes for Literature, awarded 1923 and 1969 respectfully, there has been a certain critical irony in how these Irish modernist authors have been assessed: not only are they viewed as the vanguard of the transnational, cosmopolitan, literary experimentalism that characterized international modernism for the first half of the twentieth-century, they are also perceived as quintessential postcolonial authors who trace the process of decolonisation and modernisation of the Irish nation. For example, Jackson and Maley argue for a re-positioning of Joycean studies within a postcolonial framework because

> [c]ritical readings of Joyce have tended to concentrate on his role as a European or internationalist writer, viewing his focus on Dublin as the precise and obsessive examination of a microcosm, conveying a cosmopolitan outlook on art and politics. Portraying Joyce as an author who transcends his national milieu marks a failure to appreciate the extent to which political and literary agenda interrelate in his work, particularly in his approach to language.[1]

Joyce's international modernist outlook has been re-theorized through postcolonial frameworks in order to explicate Joyce's political viewpoint of the Irish nation through his heterogeneous use of language and literary form. This re-evaluation of Joyce is part of a growing critical prevalence of postcolonial critique within Irish Studies of the

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[1] Jackson, and Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism' p. 70. As Graham has argued, Yeats and Joyce remain points of inevitable critical return in Irish studies through discussions of Irish national identity politics and the past. Graham, Colin, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001) pp. 54-5. Useful essay collections which explore Joyce through the framework of colonial and postcolonial politics include Attridge, Derek, and Marjorie Howes, eds., *Semi-Colonial Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Brannigan, John, Geoff Ward, and Julian Wolfreys, eds., *Re: Joyce: Text, Culture, Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), Lawrence, Karen R., ed., *Transcultural Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Boheemen-Saaf, Christine van, and Colleen Lamos, eds., *Masculinities in Joyce: Postcolonial Constructions* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) and Orr, Leonard, ed., *Joyce, Imperialism, and Postcolonialism* (Syracruse: Syracruse University Press, 2008). See also Wales, Katie, *The Language of James Joyce* (London: Macmillan, 1992) for an analysis of Joyce's use of language.

anomalous position of Irish literary modernism.[2]

Irish postcolonial critics such as Lloyd argue that Ireland maintains an anomalous position as both a European nation and a former British colony. Such a position provides a peculiar and important paradigm for postcolonial studies in the island's conflicted identity. Lloyd argues that Ireland is a site of hegemonic domination which experienced the disciplines and control similar to other British colonies and acted as an early testing ground for the British state in its imperial endeavors. Ironically, as Lloyd points out, this imperial hegemony assisted in the emergence of one of the first modernist, nationalist and cultural movements, the Irish Literary Renaissance, which attempted to achieve independence from the British Empire and acted as a model for other decolonizing nations. For Lloyd, Ireland is a 'site of a profoundly contradictory and intensely political ambivalence' due to its colonial experience. Lloyd maintains that Ireland experienced 'a more fundamental dislocation quite familiar in a culture which is geographically of Western Europe though marginal to it and historically of the decolonizing world, increasingly assimilated to that Europe, while in part still subject to a dissimulated colonialism'.[3] He recommends that the dominant theoretical paradigms relating to Ireland's specific historical determinants of cultural forms need to be re-thought to account for how Ireland 'plays out the anomalous states of a population whose most typical experience may be that of occupying multiple locations, literally

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[2] Edward W. Said initiated a postcolonial re-assessment of Irish modernism when he published a pamphlet entitled 'Yeats and Decolonization' through the Field Day Theatre Company in 1988. In this pamphlet Said argues that Yeats has been assimilated into discourses of European high modernism without evaluating his interaction with Irish historical and political traditions. Hence, Said maintains that Yeats's poetry exemplifies the complex situation of writing in English during the turbulent period of the Irish national struggle and so he views Yeats as an important national poet during a period of anti-imperialist resistance who offers a restorative vision for the Irish people. Hence, Said positions Yeats's work within a colonial context which enables Irish literary scholars to 'investigat[e] how centuries of empire had conditioned the production of knowledge in the West and how the modern university remained embedded in that history.' Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993) pp. 265-6; originally published as Said, Edward W., *Yeats and Decolonization, Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1988)
[3] Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 2

and figuratively' due to Irish emigration and the location of Irish literary production within many theoretical zones, both Western European and postcolonial.[4]

If Irish literary production and history have been positioned as an anomaly in relation to postcolonial studies as well as European forms of literature and imperial culture, this chapter will examine Irish postcolonial criticism's focus on the Irish nationalist and anti-colonial struggle.[5] However, there is a general distrust of Irish postcolonial research, with revisionist academics suggesting that 'Irish postcolonial scholars have, in various ways, become colonising as they shift, along with their theoretical and political baggage, from discipline to discipline'.[6] What is, then, the agenda of Irish postcolonial analysis, and should it be considered as a stalking horse to justify and uphold nationalism or as a viable critique of identity and nation-state formation?

In order to contribute to this debate over Ireland's status as a European colonial

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[4] ———, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 3. This concept of Ireland as a colonial anomaly within Europe is also explored by Cleary who argues that Ireland is 'an anomaly of some sort' which was never included in the British historiography of empire because Ireland 'had never really fitted comfortably into an official body of imperial writing' because the island is geographically too close to Britain to be colonially exotic. Equally, Ireland is often misread as a sign of the failure of the Act of Union in 1800 due to the island's associations with poverty, failed policy and rebelliousness rather than within colonial frameworks. Cleary refers to such analysis of Ireland as 'British indifference to Ireland's historical place in the empire'. Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context'*,* p. 21. Similarly Williams, in terms of nineteenth-century British tourism in Ireland, sees Ireland as an anomaly due to its non-touristic foreignness which, on the one hand, makes the island part of the United Kingdom, yet, on the other hand, Ireland's different language, customs, superstitions, vast poverty, and lack of urban industrialization make it exotic and different for the British traveller. Williams writes that 'Ireland was therefore an anomaly to the British visitor: not quite a foreign country but definitely not "home" either.' Williams, William H. A., *Tourism, Landscape, and the Irish Character: British Travel Writers in Pre-Famine Ireland*, *History of Ireland and the Irish Diaspora* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008) pp. 4-6. Pettitt makes a similar argument regarding Ireland's anomalous character: 'Ireland's historical development has provided the country with an indeterminate, in-between character. Its modern and contemporary history is characterised by an uneven process of emergence and self-definition, economically and politically, socially and culturally.' Pettitt, Lance, *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) p. 2

[5] Such a focus on Irish-English relations within colonial and postcolonial frameworks can result in an over emphasis on 'the story of Ireland's quarrels with England, and not Irish social or cultural traffic with the wider world of empire'.Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context'*,* p. 21

[6] Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 6

anomaly within the context of post-independence Irish writing, this chapter will firstly outline the current critical debate over the use of postcolonial theory within Irish studies, and the adoption of the elastic, umbrella term 'postcolonial' to describe Irish experiences. There will be a particular focus on how critics have attempted to make sense of modernist literary productions from Ireland, which have historically been situated inside the canon of European literature, within postcolonial frameworks. As Innes notes, the example of Ireland helps us to question certain kinds of oppositions and divisions common in a number of discussions on the postcolonial.[7] My own inclusion of a case study on O'Nolan's literary and journalistic work and authorial personae will examine O'Nolan's critique of the emergence of a nationalist modernism and literary canon in Irish literature. This chapter will offer a literature review of historical and contemporary critical responses to O'Nolan with a focus on biographical and stylistic analyses of his fiction and the recent debate over his postcolonial or postmodern status. Just as Joyce, Yeats and Beckett's modernism has been re-appraised due to the introduction of postcolonial critical theory within Irish studies, criticism of O'Nolan's writings has fluctuated depending on current trends and fashions in literary and cultural criticism from new criticism to postcolonialism.[8] The literature review will highlight how critical theories have been employed in an attempt to account for the meaning of his fiction in relation to frameworks such as modernism, postmodernism, metafiction,

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[7] Innes, C. L., 'Postcolonial Studies and Ireland', in *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures*, ed. by Bery, Ashok and Patricia Murray, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 21-30 (p. 21). Equally, Nolan refers to Ireland's unique and often contradictory instance of a modernist movement in a colonial setting which presents an important challenge to theorists of modernism and postcolonialism alike. Nolan, Emer, 'Modernism and the Irish Revival', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, ed. by Connolly, Claire and Joe Cleary, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 157-72

[8] Foster notes that, in relation to *At Swim-Two-Birds*, O'Nolan's inventive writing 'has received the bemused and perplexed criticism of all writing that forges a new direction in literature' and so 'has become the playground for myriad critical theories, has been compared (often speciously) to every experimental novel under the sun.' Foster, Thomas C., 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An Introduction', in *A Casebook on Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds*, ed. by Foster, Thomas C., (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005)
http://www.centerforbookculture.org/casebooks/casebook_swim

and the theoretical musings of Bakhtin. I argue that there are difficulties in reading O'Nolan solely under any one of these theoretical 'isms' as they do not incorporate both his specific portrayal of Irish modernity alongside his international appeal. More generally, the wide and often contradictory mass of critical attention on O'Nolan's work generates questions about where to locate his work in relation to particular literary canons: is he part of the Irish language or English language literary canons? Is he a modernist, postmodernist or postcolonialist?

The difficulty of assessing O'Nolan's multi-faceted shifting voices and writing styles is reflective of the general diagreement over how to read Irish literary production within various theoretical models. Viewing the process of modernity in Ireland as uneven and incomplete, there needs to be a re-evaluation of O'Nolan's work both within the post-independence environment, and in respect of his relationship with the Irish nationalist movement, both before and after independence. Deane, writing on the 'Production of Cultural Space' in Ireland, argues that 'it is possible to characterize Irish writing from the Act of Union [in 1800] to the Irish [Literary] Revival as having the standard characteristics of a minority or of a colonial literature'. For Deane, this literature was 'disempowered by the canonical forms of the colonizer's discourse' about Ireland and 'reempowered by the experimental search for alternatives to it' in 'the common plight of decenteredness, deterritorialization and even reterritorialization of the major language of the colonizer'.[9] Deane sets up a comparative relationship between experimental, anti-colonial Irish writing and other anti-colonial or minority writing across the colonial world, using the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'minor' literature. In their study *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, the two authors argue that a 'minor' literature is produced within a major language's system of

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[9] Deane, Seamus, 'The Production of Irish Cultural Space', *boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture, 21:3* (Autumn 1994), 117-44 (pp. 138-9)

signification by moving and mingling through the major language's linguistic borders and literary forms. If one equates, on Deane's terms, the concept of major language and canonical forms with English literary traditions and representations of the Irish in the colonial period, the 'minor' literature that is produced between 1801 and 1922 attempts to deterritorialize or decode the formative elements of these major discourses in order to negotiate textual spaces which both question the assumptions of colonialism and re-empower the Irish author. To this extent, Irish writing, particularly Joyce and Yeats's, is crowded with stereotypes, revisions and rebuttals of the representations of Irish national character, and this deterritorialization of dominant forms of discourse is continued in the post-independence period by authors like O'Nolan.[10]

This chapter will outline my methodological choices for positioning O'Nolan in relation to the concept of 'minor' literature in order to explore O'Nolan's continuing deterritorialization of not only colonial representations of the Irish national character, but also of post-independence perpetuations of such stereotypes. It will be argued that O'Nolan cannot be located easily within modernist, postmodernist or postcolonial theoretical models due to his indeterminate and often contradictory political voice. Through his employment of multiple authorial personae and narrative voices alongside his use of a wide array of literary styles and sources, a case for O'Nolan as an agent of deterritorialization of all forms of major epistemological knowledge will be made. Through the employment of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the deterritorialization of language, the rhizome and the process of 'becoming-minor', alongside Benjamin's model of translation and the *flâneur*, and Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage*, I will explore differing and often complex forms of postcolonial narrative agency and critique

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[10] As Cormack argues, 'the reality of decolonisation did not remove the conditions of, or the need for, a minor literature' in post-independence Ireland. Cormack, *Yeats and Joyce: Cyclical History and the Reprobate Tradition* p. 67

in O'Nolan's work which cannot be classified simply as a form of 'writing back'. Instead, Benjamin, Lévi-Strauss and Deleuze and Guattari's models offer alternatives for reading O'Nolan's work and allow us to examine postcolonial themes such as authorial agency, the construction of difference in identity, ideas of ambivalence and in-betweenness in language, and forms of hybridity and discursive resistance in post-independence Irish writing.

1.1 Methodological concerns in describing Ireland as 'postcolonial'

Postcolonial theory's disillusionment with the nation-state formula and its desire to develop a newer national consciousness has assisted Irish critics who wish to re-evaluate the Irish nation-state and to describe the interactions between global and local relations in Ireland.[11] Flannery notes that due to Irish critics' reactions to conservative forms of nationalism which were prevalent during the mid-twentieth century, '[p]ostcolonial studies emerges first as a challenge to the dominance of "New Critical" literary criticism and education in Ireland, as well as providing critiques of purely empirical and depolicitized historiography' which Irish historical revisionism entailed

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[11] In structuring this survey of Irish postcolonial studies, and I have chosen a contrastive structure between postcolonialism and revisionism. This echoes Eóin Flannery's point in his own survey of Irish postcolonial studies that 'in a critical survey of Irish postcolonial studies, there is no *natural* starting point. Equally, when I trace the genealogical roots of theoretical postcolonial studies to Said's 1978 intervention, it is a matter of contingent selection. There is no natural beginning, or for that matter consecrated *telos*, in the discourse of critical analysis; the contingency of critical interrogation is matched by the contingency of the selection of texts.' Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 1. For useful surveys of Irish postcolonial studies, see Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', , Cleary, Joe, 'Postcolonial Ireland', in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kenny, Kevin, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 251-88, Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia*; Howe, Stephen, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). In particular, Cleary offers an 'overview of emergent intellectual trends that are redefining the study of empire today' and surveys modern Irish scholarship on empire in three axes: Atlantic History, Commonwealth History and postcolonial studies. He offers ideas for how Empire Studies on Ireland may be reoriented 'so as to deal not only with Irish responses to the now-vanished British Empire but also to the wider European imperial system and to the American neo-imperialism that emerged in its wake.' Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', p. 11

in its re-evaluation of the Irish nationalist struggle.[12] If, as Brown suggests, there has been a creative struggle in the Republic of Ireland over the issue of Irish identity since the 1980s, how is this reflected in new appreciations of Irish literature under new theoretical headings such as 'postcolonial' and in the production of contentious but fruitful debates if '[t]he very idea of a *bona fide* postcolonial society, whatever that means, residing within the borders of a modernised continent is abhorrent and/or nonsensical to many revisionist critics'?[13] To what extent do postcolonial theories help us to make sense of Ireland's historical past and literary production, particularly in the case of O'Nolan, because '[m]ost authors who have analyzed Ireland from this colonial perspective have done so through an examination of fiction'?[14]

Within the Irish Republic of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century there has been an increase rather than a decrease in academic controversy and analyses over the nation's identity and sense of place as the country has become more globalized and wealthy due to its recent Celtic Tiger economy. Brown wonders why in a time when Ireland has been improving economically, the national cultural debate is still so fraught. He argues that '[i]t was probably that the focus of debate was often the status of the country itself in which much emotion was invested – fragile post-colonial society in a global capitalist world or a confident nation taking its proper place among the richest countries of Europe' which heightened this cultural debate.[15] Howe, with

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[12] Flannery, Eóin, 'Irish Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Theory', *Postcolonial Text, 3:3* (2007), 1-9 (p. 5). Such New Criticism in Ireland include work by Denis Donoghue, Donald Davie and Vivian Mercier who were engaged in a quest for objectivity in Irish cultural studies. See Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* p. 48 for more details on their work.

[13] Brown, Terence, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002*. Rev. edn (London: Harper Perennial, 2004) p. 398; emphasis in original.

[14] White, Timothy J. , 'Modeling the Origin and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland', *Postcolonial Text, 3.3* (2007), 1-13 (p. 1)

[15] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 418. Brown, suspicious of what Flannery refers to as 'the advent of an Irish franchise of postcolonial studies', muses that '[t]he relationship of post-colonial theory to nationalism and the degree to which it transcended or merely offered in a new guise the emotional satisfactions of a new Irish nationalist feeling was in fact a recurrent issue in the cultural debate in the 1990s.' (p. 417) Brown warns critics to be wary of this, stating that Roddy Doyle's

reference to Colm Tóibín's rejection of Field Day's claim to the supposed postcolonial status of Ireland, writes that 'explosions of rage are lurking, barely concealed, beneath the surface of much of the writing we are examining, from all sides of the arguments' over Ireland's dual identity in our contemporary globalized age. This is due the detailed, intertwining debate in literary politics to do with 'arguments over historical interpretation, national identity and politics itself'.[16] As Lloyd posits, '[s]uspicion of much contemporary 'post-colonial theory' has been justly grounded in the criticism of its easy transferability'.[17] Lloyd warns that there is a need for a far wider interpretation of the term postcolonial beyond a definition framed in terms of national independence and unification. If we call Ireland postcolonial, do we imply that Northern Ireland is still colonised or in the final stage of Ireland's decolonisation? Is Ireland both a site of

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claims that the Irish are the blacks of Europe in his novel *The Commitments* (1987) gave the concept of postcolonialism 'cultural kudos' within Ireland (p. 415). Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 16. Because of such a glamourization of postcolonial culture, critics like Kiberd refuse to re-colonise Ireland under what Kiberd refers to as the fashionable theory of postcolonialism and instead argues that 'the introduction of the Irish case to the debate will complicate, extend and in some cases expose the limits of current models of postcoloniality'. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 5. In response to such a concern, Deane, in an interview, argues that 'everyone in the Dáil wants to see Ireland as a modern European nation […] In academia there's some investment in insisting on the relation between Ireland and modernity […] How viable is the analogy between Ireland and the postcolonial Third World? The investment for me is to awaken contemporary Ireland to its history and affects of capitalism' because Deane believes that 'the Third World is politically and intellectually more advanced than we poor benighted Irish' and so can offer radical and alternative models to European capitalism. Callaghan, Dympna, 'An Interview with Seamus Deane: University College, Dublin, June 1993', *Social Text, 38* (Spring 1994), 39-50 (pp. 42, 43)

[16] Howe, Stephen, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 142. Tóibín commented, in relation to the Field Day group in Northern Ireland, that '[u]nreconstructed Irish Nationalists have always had real difficulty with the 26 Counties. The 26 Counties are limbo, they believe, waiting for the day when our island will be united and the British will leave. This leaves out any idea that Southern Ireland has been forming its own habits and going its own way.' Tóibín, Colm, *Sunday Independent* 24 Nov 1991, p. 8 cited in Longley, Edna, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994) p. 34. Tóibín highlights a tension between different and competing forms of Irish nationalism both North and South of the border. In response to Tóibín's book *Walking along the Border*, Deane argues that 'he wrote a futile book called *Walking along the Border*' and that '[n]o matter what I write, I will be accused of too much provincial involvement.' Callaghan, 'An Interview with Seamus Deane: University College, Dublin, June 1993', p. 49

[17] Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 9. Hence, Caitríona Moloney and Helen Thompson argue that 'in order for Ireland to be considered part of the postcolonial paradigm, the paradigm itself must change. And conversely, Irish studies must do away with its isolationism […] in order to see itself relationally with other cultures and nations.' Moloney, Caitríona, and Helen Thompson, 'Introduction: 'Broader Traffic'', *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies, 7:1* (2000), 3-14 (p. 4)

colonialism and anti-colonial struggle simultaneously?[18]

Postcolonial theory attempts to supply an emancipatory function to question cultural and political formations in the contemporary world. Flannery argues that 'it is more urgent to formulate emancipatory political projects that are concrete but that do not revert to hapless relativism.'[19] In attempting to analyse O'Nolan's status as an emancipatory postcolonial writer who challenges forms of cultural, national and political hegemony, my key question is to establish what kind of critical discourse I can adapt to analyse O'Nolan's experimental post-independence texts in order to reflect Ireland's dual identity as both a site of postcoloniality and a European nation. An appreciation of Ireland's ambiguous relationship to European modernity due to its form of nationalism must be provided in order to demonstrate what sense of identity, tradition, and literary heritage O'Nolan writes from within. I will focus upon this in the next three sections to examine the major arguments around these cultural formations within Irish Studies. This will involve an outline of the current critical debate in Irish postcolonial studies about the use of the term postcolonial and the creation of an Irish postcolonial canon.

1.1.1 Emancipatory nationalisms: applications of postcolonial theories to Ireland

Said's studies *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) have been appropriated by a variety of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities and have 'enabled, indeed some would argue created, a lateral field of discursive resources

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[18] Lloyd, David, 'Outside History: Irish New Histories and the 'Subalternity Effect'', in *Postcolonialism: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Desai, Gaurav and Supriya Nair, (Oxford: Oxford International Publishers, 2005), pp. 410-26 (p. 410). See Kirkland's study of Northern Ireland as an 'interregnum' state which is only discussed in terms of crisis in literary criticism and production. Kirkland, Richard, *Literature and Culture in Northern Ireland since 1965: Moments of Danger*, (London: Longman, 1996)

[19] Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 4.

in the form of postcolonial studies'.[20] Said's work has given Irish postcolonial studies paradigms with which to understand its anti-colonial resistance, as seen in seminal works by Cairns and Richards, Kiberd, and by Deane, through his work with the Field Day Theatre Company which included voices from outside of Ireland.[21] These authors have adopted a Saidian approach to cultural criticism which focuses on the role of Britain as colonizer and cultural influence during Ireland's history of colonialism and entry into modernity. For Said, Irish writers demonstrated a spirit of resistance which inspired him: he writes that Ireland, South Africa and India are places of resistance which

> have meant a great deal to me culturally, not just because there was always a spirit of resistance, but because out of it, there is this huge cultural effort which I think is much more important than arms, and armed struggle.[22]

If Said positions Ireland's cultural output as one of resistance beyond armed violence in comparison with other ex-colonies of Britain, this has enabled Irish postcolonial theorists to focus on anti-imperial writing by Irish nationalists.[23]

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[20] ———, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 2 See Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia provide a useful analysis of Said's theories: Ashcroft, Bill, and D. P. S. Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (London: Routledge, 2001)

[21] See Deane, Seamus, 'Introduction', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, ed. by Eagleton, Terry, Fredric Jameson and Edward W. Said, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 3-22; Deane, Seamus, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) ; Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*; and Cairns, David, and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland : Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*, *Cultural Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988)

[22] Said, cited in ———, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 1

[23] Said, who was interested in the writing of Jonathan Swift, the prison diary of John Mitchell, James Connolly's socialism and the Irish Literary Renaissance, referred to the value of Irish literature in terms of '[t]he longevity of resistance' in their work, stating that the work of Wilde, Yeats and Shaw were like 'my mother's milk to me.' Said, in an interview, continues that 'I am so grateful to Ireland, especially for its literary and cultural example. You have had many more years of imperialism than we have had, and you have produced a fabulous culture of resistance and an extraordinary spirit'. See Pollack, and Whelan, 'Interview with Edward W. Said', The interview was originally published on 3 July 1999 in the *Irish Times*. Cleary furthers the importance of Said's work in terms of how the impact of empire is re-thought in cultural terms. Cleary argues that 'Said's works had enormous reach and appeal in this context because they provided synoptic intellectual histories that argue that empire rested not just on economic strength or military capacity but also on civilizational conviction, a national sense of mission, and a drive to intellectual mastery.' If the study of colonial power relations is a major issue for Said, he asks critics to 'reappraise the role of culture, scholarship, and knowledge more generally in the normalization of

The ethos of Said's work is exemplified in the work of Irish critics since the 1980s. Flannery argues that

> what unities Irish postcolonial criticism to Said's project, in spirit if not always in practice, is a utopian commitment to the problematisation of the naturalising exertions of empire, which in an Irish context includes the country's coerced insertion into the political, economic and cultural machinations of capitalist modernity.[24]

Irish postcolonial studies question Ireland's 'natural' progression into European capitalist modernity and consider when this entry into modernity supposedly occurred by reading Ireland's history and cultural production through a colonial framework. For example, Kiberd's book *Inventing Ireland* (1995) draws on the writings of Fanon to assess the decentering cultural nationalist movement the Irish Literary Renaissance.[25] Kiberd's book responds to *The Empire Writes Back* (1988), which bypasses Ireland's colonial and postcolonial condition, and instead asserts how Ireland established its nation-state as a response to British colonialism.[26] Kiberd argues that while there is great variation and complexity between each colonial situation 'it is precisely the "mixed" nature of the experience of Irish people, as both exponents and victims of British imperialism, which makes them so representative of the underlying process' of

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Western hegemony.' Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', p. 14. This focus on culture is the very thing revisionists critics of Irish postcolonial studies fail to take into account in their economic analyses to prove that comparative studies between Ireland and the Third World are not valid.

[24] Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 5. Said positions his own work in an emancipatory model, stating that '[l]iterary work has to do with the demystification of the rhetoric of false humanism' and 'the duplicitous use of language.' Pollack, and Whelan, 'Interview with Edward W. Said', p. 11

[25] See Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967 (1961)) and Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968 (1952)) in particular. Said, C.L.R James, Albert Memmi, Aime Césaire, Fanon, Nandy and the cultural politics of resistance movements are crucial to Kiberd's analysis. Other critics who have compared Irish and African national movements include Innes who examined the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonized Irish postcolonial subject. She also examined cultural nationalism's role in the formation of a national literature and physical, economic and cultural resistance in both Ireland and Africa to Britain. Innes, C. L., *Chinua Achebe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and *The Devil's Own Mirror: the Irish and the African in Modern Literature* (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1990).

[26] Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002)

colonialism and postcolonialism.[27] He argues that the Irish were the first nation to decolonize and so comparisons with African resistance movements help to illuminate the country's historical past.[28] Kiberd believes that 'the English helped to invent Ireland' as 'a foil to set off English virtues, as a laboratory in which to conduct experiments, and as a fantasy-land in which to meet fairies and monsters.'[29] By setting up a dialectical reading of Irish-English relations and forms of Othering within a colonial framework, Kiberd maintains that the 1916 Rebellion was a call to the end of such stereotyping by a modernizing Irish elite and points to the importance of artists who inspired these political leaders, ultimately framing the Irish Literary Revival as an emancipatory cultural movement preceding the political revolution of 1916 and anticipating the emergence of Third World nation-states and their own cultural renaissances.[30]

Unlike Kiberd, Deane's general introduction to the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* did not 'propose that we have here an exemplary instance of either a 'national' or a 'colonial' literature or body of writing'.[31] The anthology contains discussion on Ireland's national and colonial identity in relation to Europe under Deane's editorship

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[27] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 5

[28] Such postcolonial critics as Bhabha, Said, Fanon, Memmi, Cesaire and Nandy study the dynamic created out of the affect of colonisation which 'spawned greater political and economic cooperation among peoples. Imperialism thus aroused a response in the indigenous culture that did not previously exist' as 'nationalists accentuated those values which were helpful in the struggle for independence.' White, 'Modeling the Origin and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland', p. 4

[29] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 1

[30] ———, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 4

[31] Deane, Seamus, 'General Introduction', in *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1991) (p. xx). This statement has been much criticised by critics of Deane's anthology programme. Founded in 1980 by the playwright Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea, the Derry-based Field Day Theatre Company has been engaged in the production of theatre, pamphlets, anthologies and literary-critical historiographical monographs. Said describes his engagement with debates on Ireland's postcolonial history when he singles out the Field Day Theatre Company as 'a movement that represents the vanguard of postcolonial studies in Ireland.' Said cites this cultural initiative as a series of inspirational postcolonial events and asserts that such a movement is 'to be cherished as it is an undertaking with international importance.' He views 'Field Day as a revisionist literary movement' with global significance which he associates with 'similar groups in the Arab world, in India, subaltern studies, in the United States, the revisionist historians'. Pollack, and Whelan, 'Interview with Edward W. Said', pp. 1, 14

which involved inclusive re-readings of multiple traditions of Irish writing. Many critics

complained that the pluralism of the anthology was undermined by its overarching

assumption that all those traditions shared a colonial predicament in which a healthy

nationalism had not yet been realised. For example, Mulhern argues that the anthology

expressed a 'prospective' nationalism and essentialism whereby Field Day

> takes its distance from one after another version of cultural nationalism but
> holds on to the axiom that founds them all: the proposition that the sovereign
> cultural concern of the Irish population is its national identity. To a nationalist
> this is a self-evident truth.[32]

If Field Day is seen as being too nationally centred despite its claims otherwise and its

attempt to offer a critique of Irish cultural nationalism, a modified version of

postcolonial theory beyond the examination of Manichean dichotomies in Irish

literature becomes all the more pressing.

The high theory of postcolonial critics such as Bhabha and Spivak as well as

mid-twentieth-century European theorists of modernity have played a large part in

developing postcolonial Irish studies, particularly Bhabha's early 1980s essays which

directly challenged Said's dialectic formations in *Orientalism*.[33] Bhabha provides a

complicated postcolonial criticism with a broader range of theoretical options which

raises questions about the true nature of colonial contact. Bhabha reads the moment of

contact in colonial discourse as a densely layered, multivocal, and conflicted discourse

and he disagrees with the notion that power is possessed solely by the coloniser.

Bhabha argues that colonial subjectivity is fragmented and employs his concepts of

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[32] Francis Mulhern, cited in Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* p. 119. Deane has always refuted such criticism, stating that '[a]ny notion of "Irishness" could be said to necessarily base itself in some kind of essentialism. And most of what I've been doing with Field Day, and occasionally in Ulster, has been to argue against an essentialist version of Irish nationalism. To say this is not to deny the need people have to construct an historical identity, or the viability of essentialist arguments as political strategies.' Callaghan, 'An Interview with Seamus Deane: University College, Dublin, June 1993', p. 40

[33] See Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)

mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity as strategies to circumvent and problematise colonial representation and authority. Hence, critics like Cleary, Lloyd, Smyth, Graham, Kirkland and Gibbons theorize the European periphery to offer a critical stance with regards to the homogenising effects of Ireland's unquestioning entry into and participation in modern capitalistic modernisation which is promoted by post-independence successive governments, and to uncover the roots of this entry in colonial history. For example, Lloyd employs the theories of Bakhtin, Benjamin, Bhabha and Spivak to offer a more skeptical view of the notion of nation and of postcolonial comparisons between Ireland and other countries in previous work by Saidian-influenced Irish critics.[34] These types of analyses do not celebrate the successful nation that heroically invented itself, but instead offer an examination of the on-going crisis of the colonized world under the system of state and neo-colonial capitalism. Hence, as Brown argues, these Irish theorists are 'self-avowedly radical' because they align themselves with the subaltern studies of the Indian subcontinent through their examination of Ireland's past and present.[35]

1.1.2 'We Are All Revisionists Now': objections to postcolonial theory

However, postcolonial re-readings of Ireland's national history and entry into modernity within the context of colonialism have resulted in a backlash of criticism from economists, historians and literary critics alike who are suspicious of postcolonial

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[34] Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment*. Graham and Kirkland argue that Lloyd opens possibilities for a more sophisicated and external post-colonial analysis beyond 'Field Day's anthologizing act of bravura' which they argue catalogued Ireland. Equally, Gibbon's work links cultural studies and postcolonial criticism and thus creates more flexible reading approaches. Graham, Colin, and Richard Kirkland, 'Introduction', in *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity*, ed. by Graham, Colin and Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-6 (p. 1). See also Gibbons, Luke, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, *Critical Conditions. Field Day Essays and Monographs No. 2* (Cork: Cork University Press in association with Field Day, 1996)

[35] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 416. Lloyd positions postcolonial Irish projects as uncovering multiple historical movements which have been occluded from state and institutionalised forms of dominant history and which are not adequately represented in legal or archival records. Lloyd, David, *Ireland after History*, *Critical Conditions: Field Day Essays* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999) p. 41

criticism as a cultural theory which celebrates the 'triumph of the independent post-colonial nation'.[36] As Kennedy has noted, historians writing on Ireland 'have generally found colonial concepts of limited and little value in charting the course of social and economic change in Ireland after 1800.'[37] The concept of a postcolonial Ireland is challenged because of Ireland's geographical location which links the Irish national struggle and recent Celtic Tiger economics to the national struggles of countries like Poland rather than to Third World anti-colonialism.[38] Many critics argue that historically Ireland was never a colony of Britain and it would be reductive to argue otherwise, mainly because a period of colonisation is normally seen as involving political and economic domination which such authors feel Ireland did not undergo.[39] Others argue that even if Ireland may have once been a colony prior to the Act of Union in 1801, it was treated differently to other territories in the British Empire and collaborated in the British imperial project, particularly in North America and in terms of military and missionary work in Africa and Asia.[40]

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[36] Graham, and Kirkland, 'Introduction', p. 4

[37] Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* p. 167

[38] See Lloyd, 'Outside History: Irish New Histories and the 'Subalternity Effect'', p. 411 for a discussion on this issue. The modern context of Ireland's involvement in the European Union trading block only problematises Ireland's framing within postcolonial debates: for example, Kennedy argues that the Irish Republic '[t]hrough its involvement in various international treaties and frameworks, […] defend[ed] its own interests *against* Third World countries.' Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* p. 180; emphasis in original. However, Ireland has a more complex relationship with the European Union, such as voters' initial rejection of the Lisbon and Nice Treaties due to concerns over national self-determination, abortion and the European constitution. Hence, as Pettitt notes, there is a 'populist view in the Republic that [colonialism and its effects are] over and done with its colonial past.' Pettitt, *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* p. 21. This populist view is reassessed by Irish postcolonial critics who examine the unquestioning embrace of the modernisation of Ireland under a model of Anglo-American capitalism whereby Ireland has been viewed as 'progressing' away from its historical past.

[39] Kevin Kenny makes a concession to this point, viewing Ireland as both a subject and object of British imperialism: Kenny, Kevin, 'The Irish in Empire', in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kenny, Kevin, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 90-122 (p. 93)

[40] For histories of Irish involvement in the early European exploration and plantation in North America, see the works of Atlantic historians David Beers Quinn and Nicholas Canny: Canny, Nicholas P., 'Revising the Revisionist', *Irish Historical Studies, 40* (1996), 242-54; Canny, Nicholas P., 'Atlantic History: What and Why?' *European Review, 9* (2001), 399-411; Canny, Nicholas P., 'Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World', *The Historical Journal, 46* (2003), 723-47. Cleary argues that Quinn explores the 'merging of the histories of English settlement in Ireland and in "the westward enterprise" to North America' which Canny fully investigates. Cleary positions Canny as

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that in relation to the Irish, Welsh and Scottish nations, '[w]hile it is possible to argue that these societies were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial.'[41] Because of this, critics have argued that current postcolonial models available in criticism are inappropriate in discussions of Irish history and culture. For example, Kennedy offers economic evidence based on comparative economic structures, living conditions and quality of life indicators to disprove that Ireland is a post-colonial society, both in the pre and latent post-independence eras.[42] He argues that

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an anti-revisionist historian: 'In Canny's view, revisionism had privileged a foreshortened perspective that took the nineteenth-century as the pivot of modern Irish history, treating earlier periods as interesting only to the degree that they might throw light on the "origins" of those issues deemed central to Ireland post-1800.' Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', pp. 26-7. For Canny, only an Atlantic rather than a British Isles framework is suitable for giving a comprehensive view of Irish society and its social mobility.

Cleary notes that despite the large Irish congregations and missionary magazines 'the world of the Irish missionaries across the Empire has never been a staple feature of modern Irish writing'. Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', p. 20. Exceptions to this rule include the character of Father Jack in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) and Brian Moore's *Black Robe* (1985), a novel about French Jesuits living amongst the Huron people of colonial North America. Equally, there is a lack of military themed fiction by Irish authors.

[41] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* p. 33. Ironically, as Jackson and Maley note, there has been a 'strong urge to bring together cultural analyses of Scotland and Ireland' in recent years. Jackson, and Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism', p. 70. This has included the AHRC funded Irish-Scottish Academic Initiative at Aberdeen University as well as work by critics such as Ray Ryan and Murray Pittock. Whether this is in reaction to the devolution of Scotland in the late 1990s and the need for a comparative model with other smaller nations, the Scottish-Irish comparison has helped to highlight the wealth of Ulster-Scots heritage, both in a national and colonial sense. Topics for further research in this area could include making links between the national and literary projects of the Irish and Scottish Literary Renaissances as 'clearly internationalist in politics but whose work was acutely engaged with their own national contexts.' (p. 70) See McIlvanney, Liam, and Ray Ryan, eds., *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society, 1700-2000* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), Pittock, Murray, *Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685-1789* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) , Pittock, Murray, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) and Pittock, Murray, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

[42] Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* pp. 167-181. Kennedy attempts openness in his analysis, stating that he will test the possibility in case 'the heritage of colonialism may have had latent dimensions, and the malign effects may have only revealed themselves in the fullness of time' (p. 172). He presents tables showing a range of indicators between Ireland and Third World countries in 1989 to prove that 'Ireland inhabits a world other than the Third World (p.173). Similarly, Kennedy offers comparative material on Ireland and the Third World 'on the eve of emergence from colonial dependency' focusing on issues such as the dependency 'on the production of primary commodities', 'a weak industrial sector', and '[t]he distribution of labour between different sectors' (p. 168). He offers comparative tables between various African and Asian countries in relation to Ireland, showing the similarity between Third World countries in their dependence on agriculture and weakness in the industrial sectors, where Ireland is more industrialized and half as dependent on agriculture (p. 169).

'[t]he condition of Ireland prior to its partial breakaway from Britain bore little relationship to that of African and Asian societies at the historic moment of decolonisation in these continents.'[43] He points out Ireland's improvement in terms of GDP per person, life expectancy, educational opportunities, housing stock and citizen's rights to prove that Ireland is not economically or historically comparable to Third World nations.[44] Kennedy is frustrated by the oppositional argument that, firstly, despite Ireland's global economy the country's fundamental condition of dependency is similar to the neo-colonial conditions of Third World countries, and secondly, that this did not change the cultural and psychological pathologies related to the on-going crisis of capitalist modernity.

Kennedy's critical attitude is affirmed within Irish revisionist historical studies: it is in this area of historical writing that the tension between postcolonial studies and the revisionist advocates of Irish modernisation have been particularly played out. Cleary notes that Irish revisionism developed after the 1960s 'against the backdrop of accelerated modernization and European integration' to challenge what was considered the insular nature of nationalist history for a form of secularised, post-nationalism.[45] In

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Instead, he links Ireland to countries on the periphery of Europe arguing that '[a] much more relevant reference point for Ireland would be the contemporary continental European countries. Ireland was situated in the mainstream of the European experience' (p. 169).

[43] ———, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* p. 171

[44] Kennedy, in his analysis of economic welfare, uses comparative scales of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head of population to argue that '[t]he conclusion is inescapable: average incomes in Ireland, even a half century earlier in time than in the case of African and Asian countries, belonged to a quite different economic league. That league was a West European one'. ———, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* p. 170

[45] Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', p. 22. Flannery supports Cleary's view of revisionism whereby 'the advocates of modernisation are principally identified as 'revisionist' historians or cultural critics.' Such revisionist historians caricatured 'forms of atavistic Irish nationalism' in order 'to purge Irish political and cultural debate of what are perceived as retrogressive, debilitating and anachronistic political excesses.' Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 11. The idea of post-nationalism is particularly associated with the work of philosopher Richard Kearney. Kearney expands upon revisionist and Field Day critiques of Irish nationalist orthodoxy to deconstruct the regressive trends in nationalism while at the same time highlighting its emancipatory elements. Kearney moves away from a singular focus on the past historical experience of the fixed territory of the island of Ireland to foreground issues of multiple diasporic liberating identities and territories. Kearney advocates a 'Europe of the regions' approach to

1986, the newly founded *Irish Review* headed its first issue with a much-quoted article by Irish historian Roy Foster entitled 'We Are All Revisionists Now'. In the article Foster assumes that the historiographic, nationalist revolution set in motion in the 1930s has been completed, making the story of the Irish people coming out of captivity from Britain no longer viable for Irish academic research. Foster envisioned a serene post-nationalist future for Irish historians in a country which he believed had come of age where its past history with Britain no longer matters.[46] For Foster, all historians must now be 'revisionist' and move beyond nationalist debates that have previously occupied them.

Within Irish literary studies there has been resistance from writers and academics in Northern Ireland who suggest that the postcolonial label suggests a homogenised nation and fails to distinguish between the Republic and the North.[47] Edna Longley regards postcolonial readings as reductively nationalist, claiming that they fail to respect or acknowledge Protestant and Unionist values and experiences in Northern Ireland.[48] Longley reads Field Day postcolonial analyses as a regrettable reversion to a traditional nationalism in Ireland's intellectual life and argues that, while the term colonial fits some Irish experiences, she 'disputes the one-size-fits-all zeal of most theorists'.[49] She regards postcolonial models as not applicable or desirable because they

analyze Ireland in order to move beyond models of national independence and multinational dependence for a model of mutual interdependence. He argues that '[p]ostnationalism cuts across nationalism by positing instead the concept of critical regionalism, a federal system of regions within a European grouping.' Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* p. 10. See also Kearney, Richard, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997)

[46] See Foster, R.F., 'We Are All Revisionists Now', *The Irish Review, 1* (1986), 1-5 and Foster, R.F., *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1989). To a certain extent, revisionism arose due to the violence at Northern Ireland in the 1970s as historians set out to write a more politically neutral and less celebratory version of Irish national history.

[47] See Stewart's response to Kiberd's focus on nationalism in his book study *Inventing Ireland* as an example. Stewart, Bruce, 'Inside Nationalism: A Meditation Upon *Inventing Ireland*', *Irish Studies Review, 6:1* (1998), 5-16

[48] Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* pp. 9-68.

[49] Longley prefers an internalized European colonial model to those of Fanon or Said's for Ireland, and notes a degree of parallelism between the early periods of Irish and New World colonial experiences, but agrees with Kennedy's statistics that one cannot place Ireland in relation to Third World nations. More

repeat Ireland's nationalist preoccupation with England and valorise nationalist resistance movements in Ireland through comparative models with Third World counter-parts. Longley concludes that in the context of Northern Ireland '[poetry] and politics, like church and state, should be separated.'[50]

However, as Brown notes, in the early 1990s such historical and literary revisionism was critiqued by academics, especially Deane who argues that revisionism fails to take into account the increased hard-line British imperial policy since the Reformation in relation to trade, land control through plantation, military action and cultural Anglicisation.[51] In 1991 the Field Day Theatre Company's collection of essays *Revising the Rising* depicted the assumed pretensions and failings of revisionism.[52] Deane's essay in the volume launched an attack on what he saw as the unionist, partitionist, pluralist and British nationalist ideology which he took to underpin revisionism and Foster's work. This volume set the tone for cultural theorists who took as a given that historical writing was one discourse among many and that

historical writing that claimed to dispel the myths of the past, when not simply

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generally, she is resistant to any theorizing of Ireland within political concepts which she views as reductive of the aesthetics of literary production. ———, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* p. 30 She sees Northern Ireland as 'a frontier region, a cultural corridor' where Britain and Ireland permeate each other (p.195). Longley's analysis of Northern Ireland is in contrast to Cleary's who employs Gramsci's concept of an 'interregnum' state to offer a comparison between the experience of partition in Ireland, Israel and Palestine. Cleary depicts these states as relying on military force, repression and external rule in order to maintain the status due to the fear of marginalization of being subsumed into a more dominant state. Cleary, Joe, *Literature, Partition and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

[50] Longley, Edna, *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1986) p. 185

[51] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 405. See Hechter, Michael, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) , Brady, Ciaran, and Jane Ohlmeyer, eds., *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Canny, Nicholas P., and Alaine Low, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Canny, Nicholas P., *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) for historical studies of Ireland as an internalised colony of Britain. Such studies focus on how Ireland was a testing ground for further New World expansion, and on British unwillingness to grant Catholic emancipation and Home Rule, as well as the heavy-handiness of British colonial policy in relation to the Famine, landlordism, and the decimation of the Irish language.

[52] See Dorgan, Theo, and Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, eds., *Revising the Rising* (Derry: Field Day, 1991), Graham notes that critics such as Kiberd, Deane and Eagleton attack, dismiss and discuss revisionism in order to clarify their own work. Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* p. 51

deluded, was as likely as not written in fully conscious or troublingly unconscious lack of sympathy for Irish nationalism or for the pain of Ireland's subject, colonial experience. [Historical writing] was deemed to represent too a form of shamefully evasive "liberal humanism," predicted on an impossible impartiality or objectivity.[53]

Revisionism is viewed as a form of troubling liberal humanism which attempts to move beyond national concerns: Deane views revisionism as an

anxiety to preserve the status quo, to lower the political temperature and to offer the notion that historical processes are so complex that any attempt to achieve an overview cannot avoid the distortions and dogmatism of simple-minded orthodoxy. This is a powerful antidote against criticism and rebellion.

This leads Deane to the conclusion that '[t]he rhetoric of revisionism obviously derives from the rhetoric of colonialism and imperialism.'[54]

If revisionist analysis of Ireland's national and colonial past results in new forms of neo-colonialism and distortions of history, in a reply to Kennedy's criticism of analysis of Ireland within postcolonial terms, Cleary argues that economic and social indicators of Ireland cannot be analysed ahistorically but must be part of an investigation of 'the *discrepant* ways in which Irish political and cultural life, which were obviously shaped and textured by European developments, were at the same time over-determined by the country's dependent socio-economic composition.'[55] This allows for an analysis of both the cultural as well as the historical and economic impacts of imperialist capitalist modernity on Ireland. Cleary further argues that due to Ireland's ambiguous continuing relationship with British colonialism in Northern Ireland and neo-imperial American policy which implicates Ireland in forms of colonialism across the globe, Ireland's contemporary and historical life is still relevant

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[53] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 406

[54] Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* p. 193

[55] Cleary, Joe, 'Misplaced Ideas? Colonialism, Location and Dislocation in Irish Studies', in *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Carroll, Clare and Patricia King, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), pp. 16-45 (p. 95); emphasis in original.

to postcolonial critical debates. Hence, a focus on Ireland's incomplete decolonisation and variegated anti-colonial efforts within its European, liminal location is crucial. However, despite the claims that the use of critical theory creates easy comparisons and generalisations, theory has enabled many critics to develop mechanisms of Irish enquiry to question 'the integrity of narrative representation and the unified subject position' which has become increasingly precarious in relation to revisionism's claims.[56]

1.1.3 A suitable postcolonial method: examining estrangement in Irish nationalist modernity

If, as Hooper argues, researchers must avoid generating a too easy set of comparisons and methodologies when comparing cultures and nations and locating Ireland in broader historical developments such as colonialism and imperialism, what suitable methodologies can be generated from postcolonial theory to analyse and take into account the above objections to Ireland's postcolonial status?[57] Rather than examining Ireland's entry into a period of modernisation and globalisation within the context of the secularisation of Irish society since the 1960s, there is a need to evaluate 'the wider historical and geographical span of modern colonial capitalism that constitutes the proper contextual frame for the study of modern Irish society.'[58] Cleary argues that 'modernisation discourse is simply a contemporary variant on the nineteenth-century bourgeois ideology of evolutionary progress, the occluded side of which has always been European imperialism and the colonial subordination of the

[56] Flannery, 'Irish Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Theory', p. 1. Flannery warns against the 'poststructuralist murkiness, paradigmatic vanity, and indulgent verbosity' of much postcolonial criticism. Equally, Said refers to the modern university system as 'the preserve of jargon-ridden specialists.' Pollack, and Whelan, 'Interview with Edward W. Said', p. 12
[57] Hooper, Glenn, 'Introduction', in *Irish and Postcolonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. by Hooper, Glenn, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 3-22 (p. 3)
[58] Cleary, 'Misplaced Ideas? Colonialism, Location and Dislocation in Irish Studies', p. 93. Flannery upholds this argument that Ireland entered modernity through colonial contact to counter the view that the 1960s as a watershed of modernisation in Ireland in terms of industrial and economic statistics for Ireland: because of this, 'Ireland, then, belongs exclusively neither to the genealogy of European Enlightenment modernity nor to a matrix of traditional, colonized societies.' Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* pp. 11, 13-4

greater part of the world to metropolitan domination'.[59] Thus, post-independence Ireland continues to experience a form of neo-imperialism in its engagement with the capitalist system. Postcolonial theory tries to offer ethical alternatives to this new form of imperialism: Cleary maintains that the trauma of colonial history in Ireland actually accelerated the island's entry into capitalist modernity, and because of this, one cannot examine Ireland's modernity without examining the role of imperial contact. This makes Ireland fundamentally different from its European neighbours, or as Lloyd puts it, makes Ireland into a European anomaly.[60]

As Hooper notes, modern Ireland is more difficult to categorise as postcolonial because of Ireland's ambivalent relationship with Britain; it is this very ambivalence which makes the post-independence Ireland of O'Nolan's world an interesting test case for postcolonial analysis.[61] As Lloyd argues,

> the modern state formation, not the moment of national independence in itself, is decisive for postcolonial projects. Rather than fetishizing the narrative that turns around the flagpole, postcolonialism […] is devoted to the archaeology of practices and formations that are not subsumed in or determined by the nationalist project of the capture of the state.

Postcolonial analysis is not about celebrating the moment of political independence and instead investigates what has been occluded due to the development of state nationalism. This leads us to an examination of the role and anomalous position of post-independence Irish authors from the Irish Free State between the 1920s and 1960s to evaluate what ethical alternatives they offer in their work to both the dominant cultural

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[59] Cleary, 'Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', p. 14

[60] Longley counters such an argument, maintaining that 'Deane's exclusive focus on the colonial/Third World paradigm owes something to the persistent Nationalist belief in Irish exceptionalism (echoed by the title of Lloyd's book and by Jameson's reference to 'the uniqueness of the Irish situation''. Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* p. 32. See Jameson, Fredric, *Modernism and Imperialism*, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature: A Field Day Pamphlet No. 14* (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1988) p. 20

[61] Hooper, 'Introduction', p. 13

nationalism and the continuing neo-colonialism of their contemporary world. Lloyd maintains that '[t]he 'post' in postcolonial refers not to the passing of colonialism but to the vantage point of critiques which are aimed at freeing up the processes of decolonization from the inhibiting effects of a nationalism invested in the state form.'[62] Situating these authors in a minority position in relation to such modes of dominant culture is crucial as '[i]t is the task of the generation that follows those who liberated the colony to seek an accommodation between the idealized values of the nation and the values of economic progress and individual self-fulfillment that dominate Western culture.'[63]

In order to escape the either-or debate over whether Ireland was or was not a colony, and the division of Ireland into colonial and postcolonial chapters and stages of development, this thesis re-reads dissenting voices within Irish literary production from the immediate post-independence period within the framework of 'minor' literature. I concur with Clare Carroll who wants 'to open the debate about Irish Studies and bring forth objections and revisions from those working on postcolonial studies not just in Ireland but in other parts of the world.'[64] Carroll advocates a strategy to avoid the either-or terms about Ireland's history and instead employs a both-and approach which seeks to embrace multiple interpretations of Ireland's past and present. Instead of eliding differences of Irish and other colonial or postcolonial experiences under theoretical frameworks, one must recognise that 'the relationships and possibilities that exist between postcolonial criticism and nationalism(s) are more complex than are often imputed' and that postcolonial theory does not necessarily take an anti-nationalist

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[62] Lloyd, *Ireland after History* pp. 40-1
[63] White, 'Modeling the Origin and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland', p. 7
[64] Carroll, Clare, 'Introduction: The Nation and Postcolonial Theory', in *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Carroll, Clare and Patricia King, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), pp. 1-15 (p. 3)

stance.[65] Graham wishes to escape the binaries of revisionist and anti-revisionist debates as he criticises Deane's approach as a deconstructive version of postcolonial theory. Instead, Graham offers what he considers to be the proper object of study which is 'the fractured range of complex cross-colonial affiliations which have existed within the British-Irish axis by acknowledging and adapting the critical methodologies which post-colonialism has employed to disintegrate and fragment the monologism of cultural affiliation.'[66] His research claims to not presume a final realization of Irish identity unlike Field Day which he believes attempts to collect this plural Irish identity under the experience of colonialism and nationalism. Graham and Kirkland want to formulate serviceable archetypes, typologies and vocabularies to understand Irish experiences in order to locate 'moments of transience, instability and inauthenticity; a process designed not so much to buttress the existence of a new state but rather to question the frame in which the ideas of the state are articulated.'[67]

Employing Graham and Kirkland's call for a questioning of the frameworks of the Irish national state, the next section will offer a literature review of O'Nolan and his work within the context of Irish and international literary studies. As this section will indicate, there have been persistent efforts to canonise O'Nolan under a number of theoretical 'isms' and within the Irish national canon. However, rather than offering a discussion of whether O'Nolan's work is modernist, postmodernist and postcolonial,

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[65] Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 6. See McLeod, John, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, *Beginnings* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) for a discussion of whether postcolonialism is anti-nationalist or not.

[66] Graham, Colin, ''Liminal Spaces': Post-Colonial Theories and Irish Culture', *The Irish Review, 16* (Autumn-Winter 1994), 29-43. For further discussion on the purpose of postcolonialism and post-nationalism in Irish Studies, see Graham, Colin, 'Post Nationalism/Post-Colonialism: Reading Irish Culture', *Irish Studies Review, 8* (1994), 35-7; Smyth, Gerry, 'The Past, the Post and the Utterly Changed: Intellectual Responsibility and Irish Cultural Criticism', *Irish Studies Review, 10* (1995), 25-9 and Graham, Colin, 'Rejoinder: The Irish "Post"-? A Reply to Gerry Smyth', *Irish Studies Review, 13* (1995-6), 33-6

[67] Graham, and Kirkland, 'Introduction', p. 4. Graham and Kirkland are critical of Kiberd's use of older models of postcolonial theory, such as Fanon and Memmi's, and want Irish Studies to develop its own theoretical agendas rather than relying on models which are mainly applicable to Third World contexts.

this thesis aims to demonstrate the flexible interpretative nature of his work through the contradictions and ambivalence inherent in his political message and cultural output towards forms of state nationalism and modernity. Rather than offering a straightforward form of resistance to national concerns which many of his contemporaries undertook, O'Nolan, through his questioning of dominant narrative representation, forms of epistemological knowledge, and unified subject positions in the Irish Free State, does not seek to offer liberal alternatives for the nation-state. Instead, he provides complex social criticism through creative authorial personas which function due to their persistent unassimiability and fragmentation: rather than producing narratives which reach a sense of closure, O'Nolan offers an on-going deterritorializing postcolonial message which comments on Ireland's incomplete decolonisation and national pre-occupations. Hence, this thesis employs the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'minor' literature as a serviceable archetype to expose how O'Nolan engaged with Ireland's fractured historical past and contemporary modernity through his multi-voiced and layered narratives.

1.2 Indigenous and international receptions of O'Nolan's writing

Deane asks '[w]hy did such a small, ill-administered, economically broken, exploited little dump such as [Ireland] produce so many writers?' He comments that "genetic" arguments eventually creep into such a debate which presume that "the Irish are like that," because "the Irish are verbal" and "eloquent". Deane refers to such pigeonholing of Irish authors as 'one of the coarsest forms of essentialism that affixes' them into set roles.[68] O'Nolan, in particular, has been canonised within the Irish literary canon as a comic genius due to his witty use of language, and this in part has resulted in a lack of political readings of his multi-faceted work. Equally, O'Nolan has been

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[68] Callaghan, 'An Interview with Seamus Deane: University College, Dublin, June 1993', p. 44

viewed as an exemplar of both Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque, and Lyotard's postmodernist aesthetic. Through an examination of O'Nolan's biographical, cultural, social and political position as an Irish writer, O'Nolan's challenge to, and his contradictory relationship with, the Irish literary and international canon can be shown.[69] In particular, an examination of his 'minor' postcolonial condition will illuminate the irony of current, popular reverential regard of O'Nolan as a member of the trio of great Irish writers, Joyce, Beckett and O'Nolan, as the best of modern Irish literature, particularly as O'Nolan had a strong contempt for such comparisons with Joyce.[70] O'Nolan's 'minor' politics do not offer an ethical solution to Irish national concerns, through the creation of a sustainable counter-narrative, but instead only problematise the nation-state; his postcolonial output is not a simple form of anti-nationalism but an ambivalent examination of the role of the Irish author within the context of the cross-cultural and hybrid nature of Irish postcolonial modernity and its dominant monologic nationalism. Through his realisation of liminal, unpindownable authorial guises and his non-linear and fluid literary style, O'Nolan's texts open up but do not close debate on state formations, authentic national identity and culture, and the

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[69] Hopper notes that there are two broad strands of O'Nolan criticism, indigenous and international criticism, which are characterised by either their insularity or their decontextualised approach to O'Nolan's work. For Hopper, the indigenous school focuses on anecdotal evidence about O'Nolan and his work and thus lacks critical acumen, while international criticism tends to locate O'Nolan within the experimental avant garde tradition which fails to account for his Irish linguistic experiments. Hopper, Keith, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995) pp. 18-22

[70] Dotterer comments on O'Nolan's 'consistent contempt for the efforts to canonize Joyce.' Dotterer, 'Flann O'Brien, James Joyce, and *The Dalkey Archive*', p. 63. Equally, Sage notes O'Nolan's, as well as Borges and Nabokov's, 'scepticism about Joyce and all that Joyce stands for'. Sage, Lorna, 'Flann O'Brien', in *Two Decades of Irish Writing*, ed. by Dunn, Douglas, (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 1974) p.202. This is caused by what O'Grady refers to as O'Nolan's 'willful 'un-understanding,' a 'misreading' [of James Joyce] caused by the 'high anxiety' of the 'belated' writers who refuses to allow his precursor's view of life and letters to stand unchallenged' O'Grady, Thomas B., 'High Anxiety; Flann O'Briens Portrait of the Artist', *Studies in the Novel, 21:2* (1989), 200-8 (p. 205). Cronin rejects simple comparisons between Joyce and O'Nolan, stating that these are due to Joyce's positive review of his first novel on the dust-jacket. Hence, Cronin argues that one should read O'Nolan's use of mythology as similar to the modernist avant garde more generally, rather than simply in relation to Joyce's use of myth. Cronin, Anthony, 'Squalid Exegesis: Biographical Reminiscence: Part the First', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 37-45 (p. 44)

position of the Irish artist, and thus exist between the borders of modernism, postmodernism and postcolonialism.

1.2.1 From biography to literary criticism: early criticism on Flann and Myles

If the life and times of O'Nolan are crucial to our analysis of his anomalous position in relation to Ireland's mid-twentieth century nationalist modernity, biographical research on O'Nolan's life attempts to unlock his texts through the privileging of certain aspects of his life and work.[71] Such biographical writing on O'Nolan tends to re-instate O'Nolan's key role as a literary figure within Ireland who existed under a 'long shadow cast by James Joyce'.[72] Friend and literary colleague of

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[71] All biographies on O'Nolan tend to focus on O'Nolan's childhood, his university career as a writer and debater in the Literary and Historical Society at University College Dublin, his mysterious time in Germany, and then his literary career of achievement following the critical appraisal of *At Swim-Two-Birds* and disappointment due to the rejection of *The Third Policeman* by publishers. For example, O'Nolan's brother Ciarán provides a detailed and personalized account of their childhood and university years together. While the majority of the biographical details reflect Ciarán's experiences and feelings rather than O'Nolan's, Ciarán presents a vivid portrait of the artist as a young man. He presents his brother as being good with words, comic, and having a sureness of touch in handling material. He also argues that O'Nolan did not wish to satirise the Irish language which, like O'Nolan's work, has its roots in exuberance and the fantastic. Ó Nualláin, Ciarán, *The Early Years of Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien/Myles na gCopaleen*, trans. by Ní Nualláin, Róisín. ed. by O'Nolan, Niall (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998). Costello and Van de Kamp provide a somewhat mis-guided illustrated biography of O'Nolan based on photographs and portraits of the author which lacks critical acumen. They wish to position O'Nolan as part of a canon of Irish writers who they refer to as 'Bohemian Dublin of the 1950's' where there was 'a newer, livelier spirit in the air' after the passing away of what they call the 'brooding influences of Yeats and Joyce'. This includes making comparisons between Patrick Kavanagh and O'Nolan as journalists and social and literary outsiders in response to Yeats and Joyce's modernism. They note that Kavanagh and O'Nolan were both not publishing in the 1950s, their publishers' warehouses in London were bombed during World War Two, and they were earning their wage through newspaper columns. Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* p. 20.

[72] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. x. Cronin further argues that while Joyce and O'Nolan are similar due to the condition of the burden of nationality, religion and language in which they wrote under, he depicts O'Nolan as a conformist who, as a low-life humorist, produces jokes which defuse Joyce's critical challenge and intellectual values (pp. 49-52). Similarly, one of the first critical articles on O'Nolan by Mays sets up an image of O'Nolan as 'antagonistic' towards Joyce. Mays makes connective comparisons between O'Nolan, Beckett and Joyce and details O'Nolan's alternatives as a writer between internal Irish and external European models to aid perception and expression of life. He sees O'Nolan as rejecting both alternatives and looking at his values in his own individual way. Hence, Mays analyses O'Nolan as both a moralist communicating distaste for pretension and pride and an artist delighting in elaboration, intricacy and humorous effect, thus positioning him outside both the canon of international modernism and of Irish literature more generally as an individuated author. Mays, J.C.C., 'Brian O'Nolan: Literalist of the Imagination', in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by O'Keeffe, Timothy, (London: Martin, Brian O'Keeffe, 1973), pp. 77-119 (p. 108). Later critics such as Dotterer agree with this reading of O'Nolan as essentially antagonistic towards modernists like Joyce as O'Nolan attempts to transcend his literary influence. Dotterer argues that '[t]he consequent rebellion against an older rebel proved to be an unfinished bit of lifelong business for O'Nolan.' Dotterer, 'Flann O'Brien, James Joyce, and *The Dalkey Archive*', p. 55, 57. See O'Nolan's

O'Nolan, Anthony Cronin's biography is considered to be the most comprehensive and detailed of the biographical work on the author.[73] Cronin's establishes O'Nolan as a major Irish literary figure, representing him as a quintessential Dublin intellectual who combines wit and brilliance which was characteristic of the acerbic outlook of his time.[74] While Cronin praises O'Nolan for his early literary and journalist output, he sets up a dichotomy between the earlier and later work in terms of its wit and aesthetic quality. Equally, Cronin positions O'Nolan as a politically ambivalent anti-novelist and an assaulter on official and literary attitudes of the government and Irish cultural revivalists which other critics have picked up on and explored more thoroughly.[75]

If O'Nolan is considered a major literary figure and satiric critic, Timothy O'Keeffe, a strong admirer of O'Nolan and his work, is one of the first editors to encourage a sustained attempt to estimate his writing under the definition of "literary".[76] O'Keeffe's collection of essays contains mostly biographical reminiscences

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reviews on Joyce's work and academic appraisal in the *Irish Times*, such as na Gopaleen, Myles, 'Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress', *Irish Times* 14 Mar 1962 which reviews *Finnegans Wake* and its impact on scholarship, and na Gopaleen, Myles, 'Enigma', *Irish Times* 16 Jun 1962 on the opening of the Martello Tower as a museum devoted to Joyce.

[73] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien*; originally published in 1989. See Cronin, Anthony, *Dead as Doornails: A Chronicle of Life* (Dublin: Talbot, 1976) , Cronin, 'Squalid Exegesis: Biographical Reminiscence: Part the First', and Cronin, Anthony, 'Flann O'Brien: The Flawed Achievement ', in *Heritage Now: Irish Literature in the English Language*, (Dingle: Brandon, 1982), pp. 203-14 for further accounts of O'Nolan by his friend Cronin.

[74] Similarly, Costello and Van de Kamp are determined in their biography of O'Nolan to demonstrate that O'Nolan was less a drunkard and more of a shy man who was socially awkward, despite Cronin's factual information proving the opposite view of him. Costello and Van de Kamp wish to separate the public image of Myles, and by extension O'Nolan, as a rude, foul-mouthed drunk who was deeply bitter due to artistic frustration. Instead, O'Nolan is portrayed as a constant worker and reader who poured his talents into journalistic articles. Ironically, the two authors argue that the 'real man emerged when he sat down to write', an oxymoronic statement considering O'Nolan employed numerous pseudonyms to hide his own identity when he wrote. Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* p. 20. This contrasts with Clissmann who presents him as an embittered man after 1945 due to artistic frustration, including events such as resigning from the *Irish Times* and his bitterness over his tedious civil service job. Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* pp. 23-6

[75] This image of O'Nolan as a sharp critic of the prevailing attitudes of official discourse of the day is perpetuated by O'Nolan's friend Niall Sheridan. Sheridan writes of O'Nolan's 'satiric daemon, the *saeva indignatio* of a Swift, and the intellectual power to give it devastating expression' and states further that '[h]is literary bark was always accompanied by a satiric bite which gave durability to almost everything he wrote.' Sheridan, Niall, 'Brian O'Nolan: A Postscript', *Meanjin Quarterly, 30:4* (Winter 1971), 239-40

[76] O'Keeffe was O'Nolan's publisher.

from contemporaries, both friends and family, of O'Nolan, which portray O'Nolan as a private and scholarly man who tested himself to become a public and controversial figure in a comparatively small city.[77] O'Keeffe demonstrates that O'Nolan returned to fresher days after the re-publication of *At Swim-Two-Birds* in the 1960s, thereby, like Cronin, framing his journalism as one of the reasons for his failure to produce aesthetic fiction after the rejection by Longman of *The Third Policeman*. Equally, Clissmann maintains that his later work is 'variable in quality', such as his drama for stage and television and his novels and journalistic work from the 1960s. She provides the first major critical book-length study of O'Nolan's novels and newspaper writing to argue that the importance of his work is in the development of the modern novel within Anglo-Irish, native Irish and European novelistic and literary traditions.[78] She views him as being obsessive about some themes and treats his work chronologically which

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[77] O'Keeffe, Timothy ed., *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan* (London: Martin, Brian & O'Keeffe, 1973) Essays in the volume include: Sheridan, Niall, 'Brian, Flann and Myles', in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by O'Keeffe, Timothy, (London: Martin, Brian & O'Keeffe, 1973), pp. 32-53 reprinted from *Irish Times*, 2 Apr 1966; O'Nolan, Kevin, 'The First Furlongs', in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by O'Keeffe, Timothy, (London: Martin, Brian & O'Keeffe, 1973), pp. 13-31; Garvin, John, 'Sweetscented Manuscripts', in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by O'Keeffe, Timothy, (London: Brian, Martin & O'Keeffe, 1973), pp. 54-61; White, Jack, 'Myles, Flann and Brian', in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by O'Keeffe, Timothy, (London: Martin, Brian & O'Keeffe, 1973), pp. 62-76; and Mays, 'Brian O'Nolan: Literalist of the Imagination',

[78] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* pp. xi-xiii. The variable quality of O'Nolan's later work is particularly evident in the *bricolage* method of his dramaturgy. For example, O'Nolan re-located a translation by Hilton Edwards of the Căpek brothers' expressionist play *Ze Žĩvota hmyzu* (*The Insect Play*; 1921) in an Irish setting in his play *Rhapsody in Stephen's Green: the Insect Play* which was written by Myles na gCopaleen and produced by Micheál MacLiammóir in the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin in March 1943. O'Nolan employs the Căpek play as an allegory of unionist and nationalist conflict, using the formula of insects and the episodic structure of the play to offer a social satire based upon wordplay on Irish accents between the warring unionist ants and the green nationalist ants who are stamped upon. However, this play is considered by critics as banal and obscure in its satire and received negative reviews during its five nights of production. Robert Tracy notes O'Nolan's concern with language, both in its use and misuse, through his drama. Tracy argues that O'Nolan's drama was a provocative challenge as he makes language a theme and protagonist. He has an ability to write dialogue and local dialects but he lacked the skill to construct and sustain a plot or theme. Equally, there is little optimism in his plays as he targets human selfishness and pride. Tracy, Robert, 'Introduction', in *Rhapsody in Stephen's Green: The Insect Play*, ed. by Tracy, Robert, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1994). See Cornwell, Neil, *The Absurd in Literature* (New York and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) p. 253 and Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 135-6 for discussion on the play. See also O'Brien, Flann, *Rhapsody in Stephen's Green: The Insect Play*. ed. by Tracy, Robert (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1994) and na gCopaleen, Myles, 'The Insect Play (1943)', *Journal of Irish Literature, 3.1* (Jan 1974), 24-39

involves a certain level of repetition as she attempts to make sense of his varied career. She argues that his stylistic achievements were sporadic and there is no organisation or symmetry in his approach and so summarises that his unique vision of life comes from the inspiration of the early Irish tradition, naming *An Béal Bocht* as a classic in modern Irish writing full of subtle and complex linguistic jokes and allusions to contemporary events and leading personalities of the Gaelic Revival. This indicates a shift in O'Nolan studies away from European trends within modernist writing and towards a more focused 'Irish' reading of his work at the expense of the wider stylistic variations in both his Irish and English language texts.[79]

Clissmann's attempts at a critical study of his work highlights the innate ambiguity of his attitudes to literary modernism, Gaelic literature and contemporary environment. This is due to, not only his sporadic career as both novelist and journalist, but also his production of a variety of different types of texts which often contradict and rewrite his earlier work, thus creating instability in his critical reception as critics try to trace the reasoning behind his aesthetic vision. Later critics have tended to focus on certain texts from his canon, usually in essay format, such as Imhof's casebook which aims to show different approaches critics can make to his writing, prioritising *At Swim-Two-Birds* in this process. This casebook shows the trends and aspects of criticism on O'Nolan in their historical perspective and can serve as a useful reference guide rather than a comprehensive study.[80] Imhof provides us with a brief account of O'Nolan's life

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[79] Anne Clune (née Clissmann) notes that early research on O'Nolan was limited by unpublished and archival material not being available, by a lack of translations or knowledge of his use of different forms of Irish, and the difficulty to crossing the divide between his English and Irish language work due to divisions within literary studies. Clune, Anne, 'Introduction', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. xi-xv (p.xii). Ó Conaire's book study of the Irish language material of O'Nolan's oeuvre broke grounds in this regard. Ó Conaire, Breandán, *Myles Na Gaeilge: Lamhleabhar Ar Shaothar Gaeilge Bhrian Ó Nualláin* (Dublin, 1986)

[80] Imhof, Rüdiger, 'Introduction', in *Alive-Alive O! Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds*, ed. by Imhof, Rüdiger, (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985). The casebook provides a wide variety of criticism from 1939, where early reviewers of O'Nolan's work did not see the intrinsic artistic merits of his first novel, to the

and outlines the main trends of criticism on O'Nolan but his main focus is in his attempt

to point to the importance of *At Swim-Two-Birds* to post-World War Two innovative

fiction. This has had a crucial effect upon later criticism of O'Nolan's work, with the

first novel receiving most critical attention at the expense of the later work. Hence, not

only is a dichotomy set up between the literary Flann and journalist hack Myles, but

also between *At Swim-Two-Birds* and the later fiction. For Imhof, O'Nolan's first novel

is a comic parody of stylistic strategies and conventions of bildungsromans, and the

novel genre more generally in its exploration of the role of the god-like omniscient

narrator.[81]

1.2.2 Sylistic analysis: fantastic modernist and carnivalesque postmodernist

O'Nolan's innovative use of style and the novel form, rather than simply his

biography, began to be assessed by Imhof and Clissmann. Asbee offers a detailed

survey of O'Nolan's writing in terms of the modernist tradition of writers like Woolf,

Eliot and Joyce.[82] While Asbee de-contextualises O'Nolan from his Irish environment,

she examines his papers and letters, despite their often contradictory elements, as

evidence for her argument that O'Nolan's imagination veered towards the fantastic and

anarchic and that he fits into the traditions of modernist writers and is a precursor of

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1960s where tributes to artistic achievements occurred. Imhof also points out that 1970s studies started to judge O'Nolan alongside Joyce and Beckett.

[81] Bolton also notes O'Nolan's use of the comic hybridized bildungsroman genre in *The Hard Life*. Bolton writes that 'the comic bildungsroman becomes an apt generic hybrid in which to create comedies of failure that investigate the environments on which Irish youth are reared.' Just as *At Swim-Two-Birds* demonstrates a comedy of the failure of the student narrator to reach social maturity and aesthetic capabilities, the young brother protagonists of *The Hard Life* are 'superb examples of this comedy of failure, bildungsromane that dramatize the sufferings and botched maturity of youthful comic figures whose failure produced a kind of mirthless laughter' as well as 'insightful representations of failed maturity in Irish youth.' Bolton, Jonathan, 'Comedies of Failure: O'Brien's *The Hard Life* and Moore's *the Emperor of Ice Cream*', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 12:3* (Autumn 2008), 118-33 (pp. 118-9)

[82] Asbee, Sue, *Flann O'Brien* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991). Absee's study focuses on what she considers to be the two major works of O'Nolan, *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*, which have established his reputation (p. ix). She uses his other writings and journalism as support as she feels he was not a talented dramatist or journalist (p. x). She also upholds the dichotomy between his fiction and journalism, arguing that while his journalism was frequently inspired, it was not consistent (p. xi).

more recent trends from the 1960s. She argues that O'Nolan engages in high modernism's interweaving of myth and contemporary events and deals with the seedier sides of life. She points out that he was dissatisfied with the modernist belief that art can substitute religion and so sends up the idea that fragments of myth and legend can be held together in a secure aesthetic framework. Asbee views O'Nolan as a postmodernist due to the random, discontinuous nature of his work and sees *At Swim-Two-Birds* as more postmodern than his other work despite the fact that much of his later work is written within similar stylistic strategies. Like Asbee, Shea analyses his novelistic career in terms of his early 1930s prose experiments, unpublished letters and the two unpublished manuscripts of his first novel.[83] Shea is mainly concerned with the role of style and language in his work and sees O'Nolan as a writer who re-imagines the novel and confronts major literary issues generated by linguistic and fictional theories. Shea feels that it is reductive to tag O'Nolan and argues that he is best appreciated in his own terms as an experimental craftsman with words, with his early works during the 1930s showing later impulses in his work. Shea concentrates on O'Nolan's parodies of literary and non-literary conventions and sees his style as one of performance.

Asbee and Shea argue that O'Nolan is a master of parody in the novel form and in language, and is related to modernist techniques of writing. In contrast to this, Wäppling employs comparative and close-reading methods to argue that O'Nolan did not intend *At Swim-Two-Birds* to be a parody either of early Irish literature or its representation in English.[84] She argues that O'Nolan draws on the double tradition of

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[83] Shea, Thomas F., *Flann O'Brien's Exorbitant Novels* (Lewisburg and London: Bucknell University Press, 1992) See pp. 73-80 for a detailed account of the manuscript versions of *At Swim-Two-Birds.* Shea has also made useful comparative connections between O'Nolan and Irish writer Patrick McGinley. See Shea, 'Patrick McGinley's Impressions of Flann O'Brien: *The Devil's Diary* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*', ; Shea, Thomas F., 'Patrick McGinley's Appropriation of Cúchulainn: Revisions in *the Trick of the Ga Bolga*', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 5:3* (Autumn 2001), 114-27

[84] Wäppling, Eva, 'Four Irish Legendary Figures in *At Swim-Two-Birds*: A Study of Flann O'Brien's Use of Finn, Suibhne, the Pooka and the Good Fairy' (Thesis Ph.D, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984). She places great significance to the tale of *Buile Suibhne* in what she defines as a chain of events dealing

Gaelic texts being both tragic and comic equally, viewing the book as a dark comedy that blends comic and tragic elements to bring out the beauty and complexity of Irish legends. Through access to O'Nolan's letters and manuscripts, Wäppling concentrates her study on the four Celtic characters (Finn, Pooka, Good Fairy and Sweeny) which are used as narrative links between different parts of the novel. Wäppling's criticism can be seen as the beginning of a trend towards more detailed and concise treatments of O'Nolan's individual works or specific aspects of his work. This involves the employment of different critical theories to assess his work in different and fresh ways. For example, Booker, like Asbee, Shea and Wäppling, connects O'Nolan to the Irish comic tradition with its biting satire, use of the fantastic and play with language.[85] He argues that the Irish fantastic tradition shares the same elements as Menippean Satire as described by Bakhtin because Irish satire contains a diverse number of competing styles and voices, has a tendency to interrogate and parody various philosophical ideas, and has the energies of the carnivalesque. Booker argues that two stylistic lines of development occur in the novel genre, realism and metafiction, the second being far richer and more innovative.[86] Metafiction strives for generic, encyclopaedic

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with crime and punishment. She details O'Nolan's view of his own work (much of which should not be trusted), his interest in the old tragic Finn rather than the comic Finn, the three versions of the *Buile Suibhne* tale in the novel, the importance of Finn in those three levels, and popular beliefs about fairies and the struggle between good and evil in order to develop a way of understanding the structure of the novel more fully. Ó Brolcháin repeats Wäppling's argument that the inclusion of Sweeny is not to ridicule but to celebrate the Celtic love of nature through O'Nolan's inclusion of verses and lamentations on nature in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Ó Brolcháin, Caoimhghín 'Comparatively Untapped Sources', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 9-16 (pp. 15-16)

[85] Booker, M. Keith, *Flann O'Brien, Bakhtin, and Menippean Satire* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995)

[86] Equally, Clissmann views *At Swim-Two-Birds* as an anti-novel which undercuts realism, while Henry reads his use of metafictional strategies as a mainly technical achievement. See Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 101 and Henry, Paul L., 'The Structure of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, 20:1* (Spring 1990), 35-40. See Imhof, Rüdiger, 'Two Meta-Novelists: Sternesque Elements in Novels by Flann O'Brien', *Anglo-Irish Studies, 4* (1979), 59-90 for an analysis of Sterne's influence on O'Nolan in terms of the anti-novel. Cohen argues that *At Swim-Two-Burds* is about the enterprise of artistic creation itself because the novel 'presents itself as the record of its own growth, explicitly providing its background literature, biographical detail, and the aesthetic theories upon which it is based.' Because of this, the student narrator 'takes the living world for text and turns it into fodder for his art. In the course of his

comprehensiveness and introduces heteroglossia to the novel which Booker argues proves that O'Nolan is an anti-novelist and metafictionalist. Booker points to O'Nolan's dark vision in *At Swim-Two-Birds* in his portrayal of an author as essentially impotent because the author cannot control the implications of his own writing. For Booker, O'Nolan's use of language is particularly important as he is aware of the structuralist analysis of language which Saussure set up.

Hopper continues Booker's argument by stating that all literature is either shamanistic or ritualistic and that in the novel tradition the dominant literary practice is realism.[87] He views O'Nolan's metafictional or shamanistic works as a postmodern attempt to thwart realistic conventions and play games with our perceptions to disrupt the artificiality of traditional narrative forms. O'Nolan lays bare the literary process by juxtaposing different discourses and reconstructing them in new and startling ways. Hopper notes that early critics used the category of the 'anti-novel' to define his work, but the prefix 'anti' implies negative and cynical qualities to his work. Instead, Hopper sees his fiction as enriching literary tradition rather than abandoning it, arguing that O'Nolan empowers the reader by asking for greater involvement to free us from the stamp of familiarity in realist texts. It is useful to analyse O'Nolan in terms of metafictional and postmodernist theories as it opens up possibilities of interpretation of

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apprenticeship, he learns much about the nature of storytelling. We see how these lessons in composition, characterization, audience, gesture, mimesis, and moral revealed in the "*Biographical reminiscences*" are applied in "relevant extracts" from his manuscript.' Cohen, David, 'An Atomy of the Novel: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', *Twentieth Century Literature, 39:2* (Summer 1993), 208-29 (pp. 210, 212)

[87] Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist*. Formalists like Hooper view the concept of realism as unstable, dubious and contentious, arguing that it can only ever be a representation of reality no matter how true to life it may seem. If literature is a material object which often results in literary clichés penetrating and shaping our world, Hooper argues that the canon constructs our lives and so O'Nolan's novels are a study of the way our lives have been moulded by literary convention. Hence, Booker paraphrases Nietzsche's belief that 'all knowledge is indirect and metaphorical and "reality" is nothing but "an X which remains inaccessible and undefinable for us" whereby language refers only to itself. Booker, M. Keith, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility', *South Atlantic Review, 56:4* (Nov 1991), 37-56 (p. 37)

his work. However, many critics who use this postmodern framework simply see him as a poor man's Joyce, a late modernist and a critic of realism and modernism and fail to see that his second novel *The Third Policeman* is a postmodern masterpiece. Hooper identifies this and begins a process whereby critical attention is not solely given to O'Nolan's first novel and is instead compared to Beckett rather than simply Joyce and within the context of post-independence Ireland.[88]

In relation to this need to explore O'Nolan's post-revolutionary context, Hurson argues that O'Nolan produced works of spryness and profound despair during a period of artistic mediocrity and political containment.[89] While the writers of the 1930s retreated from the pyrotechnics of modernists to 'a self-effacing chronicle of jagged realities of a breaking world', Hurson sees O'Nolan's work as a parodic version of the author poised above his own handiwork. Hurson and Clune produced a collection of essays on O'Nolan to demonstrate the variety of critical methodologies that illuminate aspects of his writing. For example, Jacquin attempts to confront the difficulty of how a comic writer, like O'Nolan, achieves his effects and points out that there are radically different forms of the comic in his novels.[90] Meanwhile, Ó Brolcháin makes his Irish

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[88] Equally, in the line of Booker and Hopper's analysis of O'Nolan as a postmodernist writer, Joseph Brooker provides a general overview of O'Nolan literary studies combined with some analysis. He points out that theorists of postmodernism in the novel see O'Nolan as a key figure and that O'Nolan is beginning to be assessed within the particular historical and geographical context in which he worked. Brooker, Joseph, *Flann O'Brien* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005)

[89] Hurson, Tess, 'Preface', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. ix-x. For a similar argument, see Maslen, R.W., 'Flann O'Brien's Bombshells: *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 10:4* (Winter 2006), 84-104. Maslen argues that 'O'Brien's fiction is bound up with violence, and the extent to which the imaginary violence it contains has a grouding in reality. The independent Ireland of which *At Swim-Two-Birds* is an ambiguous celebration was built on armed conflict, and by the time the novel was published armed conflict was rapidly spreading throughout Europe.' Maslen offers an allegorical and contextual reading of the comedy and violence of the partisan characters of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, arguing that the novel is a 'cataclysmic joke of an impending war from which Ireland stands alone' (pp. 84-5).

[90] Jacquin, 'Flann O'Brien's Savage Mirth', Jacquin identities five types of laughter in his work from the satirical to the grotesque and links this laughter to notions of an Irish comic tradition of absurd satire and comic word play. See Mercier, Vivian, *The Irish Comic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) for details on the Irish comic tradition.

writing available to non-Irish speaking readers when he deals with O'Nolan's little known material in Irish, such as O'Nolan's M.A. thesis and the influence of *Die Harzreise* on his work.[91] Ó Hainle looks at the sources of material for the many objects of parody which mock the historicity of traditional translations of early Irish literature in the burlesque text *At Swim-Two-Birds*.[92] Asbee and Michael Cronin also highlight the metafictional elements in the novels designed to baffle and disappoint reader expectations.[93]

1.2.3 Caught between two 'isms': postmodernism and postcolonialism

Ultimately, there is a consensus within academia that O'Nolan's first novel is a key example of playful and sophisticated metafiction which 'prefigures the strategies of postmodernism.'[94] However, O'Nolan comes from the first educated Catholic middle class in Free State Ireland to critique the nationalist movement that was prevalent at the time.[95] Considering O'Nolan wrote within this environment, an examination is needed

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[91] Ó Brolcháin, 'Comparatively Untapped Sources', He traces the use of Heine's German novel *Die Harzreise* in the structure of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, a text which the student narrator mentions he has to buy for university (ASTB, 33).

[92] Ó Hainle, Cathal, 'Fionn and Suibhne in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 17-36

[93] Cronin, Michael, 'Mental Ludo: Ludic Elements in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 47-52. Michael Cronin examines O'Nolan's complicated relationship between the playful and the serious through his use of different kinds of word play and systematic parodic and burlesque versions of various literary styles and linguistic registers which expose existing modes of expression as inadequate. Asbee, Sue, '*At Swim-Two-Birds*: Readers and Literary Reference', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 53-6. Asbee argues that in the text O'Nolan aims to alienate the reader by inviting him to participate in the text to discover literary references and allusions like modernist authors more generally. However, unlike modernist authors which Asbee views as being elitest in their use of references which are difficult to trace, O'Nolan's text can be read as a parody of such scholarly texts as the reader remains uncertain if extracts used in the text are real or not. She argues that readers should not be expected to approach fiction in a reference-checking frame of mind: thus O'Nolan is read as taking an anti-intellectual stance towards modernist writing.

[94] Cohen, 'An Atomy of the Novel: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 225

[95] While many Irish authors in the post-independence period continued the romanticism of earlier Irish literature, such as A.E., Colum, Stephens and Yeats, O'Nolan is similar in his cultural attitude to other middle and lower class Catholic authors such as O'Faolain and O'Connor. It is important to note that many of the authors were former nationalists during the pre-independence period, such as O'Faolain who fought in the IRA and O'Casey who was an active member of James Connolly's labour movement. O'Caffrey notes that '[t]o them, Irish freedom means much more than separation from England and the restoration of an ancient language and culture; it is also a prelude to progress, prosperity, cultural

to establish what kind of postcolonial political message the author offers about post-independence Ireland, and what problems there may be in interpreting his postcolonial status when his textual strategies are normally read within modernist or postmodernist terms. McMullen, like previous critics, offers a Bakhtinian and dialogic reading O'Nolan's work, but argues that *At Swim-Two-Birds* is a 'pioneering postcolonial text' and that 'O'Brien succeeds in parodying […] any text-working class or Revivalist, Christian or Celtic, modern or postmodern, narrative or critical-which presumes to claim the last word on "the Irish."'[96] McMullen argues that *At Swim-Two-Birds* destabilizes conventional narrative frameworks through a constant juxtaposition and interrogation of various literary styles and versions of Irishness so that no one discourse of post-independence Ireland remains privileged.[97] This constant delegitimization and de-privileging of 'a thousand years of Irish tradition at a critical moment of national self-articulation' leaves a lot be desired for postcolonial theorists, such as the subaltern studies group, who seek alternative and viable subjectivities and historiographies for

advances, social reform, economic opportunities for the young, and an end to emigration as a panacea of Ireland's ills.' McCaffrey, Lawrence J., 'Trends in Post-Revolutionary Irish Literature', *College English, 18:1* (Oct 1956), 26-30 (p. 27) Hence, O'Casey offered a critique of urban poverty and tenement proletariat dwelling in his early plays and autobiography.

[96] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition'*,* pp. 62, 81. Equally, Evans reads *At Swim-Two-Birds* beyond analysis of how the text breaks literary conventions and boundaries to offer a Kiberdian reading of the novel in terms of O'Nolan's dissatisfactions with restrictions placed on the Irish subject and writer by the nationalist Irish government. She reads O'Nolan as highlighting real oppressions as a cultural observer in his 1930s post-independence context. Evans, Eibhlín, "a Lucuna in the Palimpsest': A Reading of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', *Critical Survey, 15:1* (2003), 91-107. Other examples of postcolonial analysis of O'Nolan's first novel include Esty's article which employs the term 'postcolonial postmodernism' to describe O'Nolan's text in relation to his destabilisation of English literary traditions. Esty, Joshua D., 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and the Post-Post Debate', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 26:4* (Oct 1995), 23-46. Equally, Comer's reads the novel as 'an incisive analysis of "soft" colonial oppression' which Comer distinguishes from other forms of colonial oppression; this soft colonialism for Comer involves 'the ideological control that operates through England's books and publishing houses' which 'perpetuates British hegemony through the reproduction of stereotypes' of the Irish (pp. 104, 106). Comer's aim is to demonstrate 'how politically orientated' the comedy of *At Swim-Two-Birds* is 'despite its playful exterior' which should be understood 'as an incisive political response to the oppressive gaze of another' (p. 104). Comer, Todd A., 'A Mortal Agency: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', *Journal of Modern Literature, 31:2* (Winter 2008), 104-14. For colonial readings of *An Béal Bocht*, see Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* and McKibben, Sarah, '*The Poor Mouth*: A Parody of (Post)Colonial Irish Manhood', *Research in African Literatures, 34:4* (Winter 2003), 96-114

[97] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition'*,* p. 81

minorities.[98] Booker argues against McMullen's postcolonial reading of O'Nolan's novel because '[u]ltimately, the radical undecidability of *At Swim* means that a reader who wishes to draw conclusions about the political implications of the text must simply choose a position and then stick to it.'[99] Booker argues that O'Nolan refuses to make a political choice and so his novel is not postcolonial because O'Nolan 'tends to dismiss as ludicrous all of the political positions it entertains, leaving no options standing and leaving the text without a real political position of its own.'[100] How do we analyse a text which refuses to offer a clear political message within the paradigms of postcolonial theory? Does Booker's reading highlight the process by which the wide variety of critical interpretations of O'Nolan's literary career have simply utilised theoretical 'isms' in order to access and establish a political reading of his texts?

Todd A. Comer answers these questions through a political postcolonial analysis

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[98] _____, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', p. 63. Hence, Tiffin would argue that while postmodernism and postcolonialism literary techniques are similar in their destablization of modernism's literary conventions and their crisis over representation, postmodernism sets up newer forms of Euro-American hegemonic grand narratives of development which postcolonial writing must continue to breakdown and transform. Tiffin, Helen, 'Introduction', in *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, ed. by Adam, Ian and Helen Tiffin, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. vii-xvi (pp. vii-xi)

[99] Silverthorne makes a similar argument to Booker's with regards to *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman* stating that the novels show O'Nolan's unwillingness to overthrown repressive forces at the moment of victory over authority figures. He reads this in terms of an Oedipal guilt and fear of the consequences of such an overthrow. This accounts for the shift of tone at the end of *At Swim-Two-Birds* towards the uncle and the rebellious characters from the 'sadistic inflictions' placed upon Trellis by his characters to the 'masochistic farewell' of the mad German in his suicide. Silverthorne further argues that '[m]y point is simply that the impossibility of overturning the repressive force, a constant in O'Brien's fiction, is a function, finally, of his ambivalence. Success, it would seem, entails rebellion, yet on the threshold of victory he hesitates overcome, I think, with the oedipal guilt and fear of consequences displayed so abruptly in the closing of *At Swim-Two-Birds*'. Silverthorne, J.M., 'Time, Literature, and Failure: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 11:4* (1976), 66-83 (p. 82)

[100] Booker, M. Keith, 'Postmodern and/or Postcolonial? The Politics of *At Swim-Two-Birds*', in *A Casebook on Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds*, ed. by Foster, Thomas C., (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005). Booker follows on from Jameson's argument that postmodernism relies on 'blank parody' which surrenders any critical literary message to 'pastiche'. While pastiche is similar to parody for Jameson, 'it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic'. Jameson, Fredric, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Foster, Hal, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 111-25 (p. 114)

of O'Nolan's first novel. Comer argues that

> [m]oments of agency within the text typically reproduce binary oppositions, instigating violence for violence as everyone tries to place themselves in the place of divinity […] Such agency does little to displace the system of oppression. Arguably, such agential oppositions augment the system. If agency is commonly understood as the substantiation of an oppressed subjectivity against an oppressive subjectivity, O'Brien's text ultimately rejects such a view.[101]

Systems of authorial oppression cannot be displaced in the text because new power structures will be created whereby individuals would gain a panoptical viewpoint and narrative control. The form of postcolonial agency and resistance O'Nolan provides through his constant deferral of a clear political narrative meaning needs to be assessed fully. Comer, writing in relation to the student narrator's aesthetic theories, argues that the novel is 'a democratic text which does not attempt to assimilate otherness to itself' and so 'this text's confusion should not be rationalized – should not (and cannot) be made sensible.'[102] Through O'Nolan's constant deferral of meaning and the limitless and infinite nature of his *bricolage* and parodic structures, he offers a 'minor' challenge to form, language and political meaning within postcolonial Ireland which defies an authoritative, stable political ground which Booker requires. Here I note Appiah's argument, in relation to postmodern techniques in African art, that 'postmodernism is a name for the rejection of that claim to exclusivity, a rejection that is almost always more playful – though not necessarily less serious – than the practice it aims to replace' and that in each domain 'this rejection of exclusivity takes up a certain specific shape, one that reflects that specificities of its setting.'[103] Despite Booker's analysis of *At Swim-Two-Birds* as an atypical postmodern text which coheres with Jameson's

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[101] Comer, 'A Mortal Agency: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 111. This violent form of 'writing back' can be placed in an Irish comic tradition where the sadistic and the grotesque are used as tropes in early Irish sagas. See Jacquin, 'Flann O'Brien's Savage Mirth', p. 6

[102] Comer, 'A Mortal Agency: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 113

[103] Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* p. 142

framework for postmodernism as a form of cultural capitalism,[104] it is the playful level of O'Nolan's work, both in terms of form and the presentation of authoritative viewpoints, which offers a curious postcolonial message through many of the linguistic and literary experiments which are inherent in any postmodern text, either from the West or from Appiah's Africa.

Through a focus on the particular historical setting of O'Nolan's literary position as both Irish writer and European late modernist, it will be demonstrated that what have been identified as O'Nolan's comic 'postmodern' textual strategies can still offer a serious political stance in relation to conservative nationalism and the impact of colonialism which was prevalent during the time when he wrote. O'Nolan's textual strategies, such as his use of metafiction and parody, have been labelled as examples of different 'isms' without locating them in relation to the historical circumstances by which he employs them, such as his need to offer an alternative to 1930s realist writing in Ireland which perpetuated the goals of state nationalism and Irish language revivalism. Appiah reflects that

> [t]o theorize certain central features of contemporary culture as *post* anything, is, of course, inevitably to invoke a narrative, and, from the Enlightenment on, in Europe and European-derived cultures, that "after" has also meant "above and beyond" and to step forward (in time) has been ipso facto to *progress*.'[105]

Appiah asks us to be wary of creating new master narratives which replace what we attempt to dismantle, that is, colonial dichotomies and grand narratives from the Enlightenment. Instead, there is a need to question our desire to place a developmental theoretical narrative on literature and the idea that postmodernism is a sign of artistic

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[104] See Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), particularly his idea of postmodern 'interfection': a process of cross-polination in which elements 'slowly begin to infect each other and colonise their neighbours, amalgamating in the most alarming …of ways' which Booker seems to draw upon in his reading of O'Nolan's novel (p. 373).
[105] Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* pp. 139-40

and cultural progress, particularly, as Appiah notes, that it is as difficult to distinguish high modernism from postmodernism as it is postmodernism from postcolonialism.

1.3 Methodology

Ultimately, culture is explained in hindsight by cultural critics through theories of categorisation and canon formatio. Because one needs to be mindful of how literary critics use theories of postcolonialism and postmodernism, O'Nolan is a useful case study through which to examine how suitable the various critical 'isms' and dominant tropes of postcolonial theory are. I wish to 'cut against the grain' of reading O'Nolan as a postmodernist, not to discount early research on his style which make connections between O'Nolan and other experimental authors, but to read this style within the wider implications of his writing in relation to his postcolonial historical musings on identity and nationalism. My focus moves O'Nolan into the realm of his critique of the packaged nation-centred discourses of Irish postcolonial modernity between the 1930s and 1960s which set out to establish a peculiarly nationalist brand of modernity. This thesis elucidates O'Nolan's challenge to the contradictory nature of Ireland's supposed natural progression into nationalist capitalist modernity which relies on pre-modern and essentialised symbols of national identity. What is liberating about O'Nolan's work is that, rather than offering a regressive number of themes, as in the work of the Irish Literary Revival and post-independence realism, it offers a multi-faceted critique of how Irishness has been thematised. In response to critics of the use of postcolonial theory within Irish Studies who argue that postcolonialism promotes national themes at the expense of other variations of Irish identity, O'Nolan is an exemplary figure of an author who questions such a process of nationalist canon formation and notions of authentic identity. After all, O'Nolan is in a curious liminal position of being 'in-between' two languages, many authorial personas and different generic forms of writing

which makes any classification of his career within the national canon difficult.

O'Nolan's critique of state-oriented nationalism and its modernizing institutions provides a different temporal logic which exposes historical understandings of Ireland's 'development' into a nation. Viewing O'Nolan as a 'minor' writer illuminates previous readings of his work and the complex nature of his 'in-between' position. O'Nolan is not anti-nationalist or anti-British, but he is critical of the perpetuation of the effects of nationalism and imperialism on Ireland.[106] Deleuze and Guattari write that 'the breakdown and fall of the empire increases the crisis [in representation and] accentuates everywhere movements of deterritorialization', whereby the process of decolonization is a contributory factor in the movement towards deterritorialization which encourages new reterritorializations. The two processes are not equitable as decolonization 'invite[s] all sorts of complex reterritorializations – archaic, mythic or symbolist'.[107] O'Nolan, from his early writing, was aware of both the cultural and psychological dependency Ireland has on its Celtic pre-colonial past and its defensive relationship to modernity at the moment when the British Empire began to fall apart in the 1920s during O'Nolan's childhood. O'Nolan's writing captured an Ireland in transition from a conservative cultural nationalism and postcolonial modernity to a more questioning secular age of the 1940s to 1960s when Ireland's earlier path to freedom from British imperialism was being reassessed as Ireland entered a form of capitalist modernity

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[106] Cronin writes that O'Nolan was different to other critics of the Irish Free state because he 'did not have a problem in relation to Catholicism in as much as he was a believer all his life; and he did not have a problem in relation to nationalism because basically and instinctually as well as by heredity he was a nationalist, at least of sorts.' Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 52. Hence, as Smyth argues, 'the most interesting and promising approach' to a critique of colonial influences on the state 'is predicted not on a rejection of, or alternative to, the identitarian discourse of liberal and radical modes, but on their *displacement* and *performance*'. Hence, O'Nolan exposes how all spaces are ideologically structured and the need to work within these constructs subversively. Smyth, Gerry, 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', in *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity*, ed. by Graham, Colin and Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 29-49 (p. 39); emphasis in original.
[107] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 24

which established newer forms of neo-colonialism in the nation.

O'Nolan will be read within the context of Irish postcolonial modernity through an examination of his problematising of authorial voice and intention, his self-positioning as a *flâneuresque* figure, his use of a *bricolage* of cross-cultural references, and his use of a hybrid, 'minor' form of language and literary form. Unlike earlier analysis of O'Nolan which reduced his novels to the function of anti-novels, the employment of the concept of 'minor' literature will not place O'Nolan's work as an anti or counter-canon to the Irish Literary Revival, Irish realism and Irish language texts he engages with, just as O'Nolan never provided a clear anti-nationalist or anti-imperialist stance throughout his work. His fiction does not burden itself with 'writing back' a subaltern history of Ireland. Instead, he 'open[s] the word onto unexpected internal intensities – in short, as asignifying intensive utilization of language'.[108] He does not produce an over-determined national identity except in parody and for the means of satirizing such identities. Hence, Clissmann argues that he expresses himself through 'inversion, side-track and complication. His point of view, where it can be discerned, often emerges as the product of mutually opposed attitudes. He looks obliquely at life, concentrates on its unusual aspects and only reveals himself grudgingly and in hints.'[109] Thus, rather than providing a clear agenda in his aesthetic practice, the 'minor', political nature of O'Nolan's work is contained in his self-positioning and allusive, unexpected style.

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[108] ———, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 22

[109] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 3 This is similar to Kafka's 'minor' literature, as Lambert argues that Kafka's work obscures his true political standpoint and ideology. Lambert, Gregg, *Who's Afraid of Deleuze and Guattari?* (London: Continuum, 2006) p. 15. Thirlwell makes a similar point about Kafka, arguing that it is 'tempting' to see his fiction as allegorical of his life. Thirlwell, Adam, 'Introduction', in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), pp. ix-xxviii (p. x)

1.3.1 Authorial agency

This dissertation positions O'Nolan as a liminal, 'in-between' literary figure who disrupts ideas of authorial biographical knowledge and political intent through his self-conscious creation of ambivalent identifications. While it is possible to offer a biographical sketch of O'Nolan's life which makes links to his fiction, one should be wary of devising straightforward parallels between his narrator-characters and O'Nolan. As Cronin warns, when reading his journalism 'it is dangerous to confuse the opinions and reactions of Myles na gCopaleen, with those of Brian O'Nolan [especially as] Myles na gCopaleen will usually be found to be on several sides of a question at once'.[110] Born in 1911 in Strabane, O'Nolan was the third of twelve children to Michael V. Nolan and Agnes Gormley.[111] O'Nolan grew up as a bi-lingual Irish and English speaker and, after completing a degree in Irish, English and German at University College Dublin, followed his father's career path into the civil service.[112] Parallels

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[110] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 124. The editors of *Envoy* make a similar stand against confusing the character of Stephen Daedalus with the author Joyce due to biographical similarities between character and author. The epigraph to *The Hard Life* exposes the fictional narrative voice of Finbarr by stating that 'All the persons in this book are real / and none is fictious / even in part'. O'Brien, Flann, *The Hard Life: An Exegsis of Squalor* (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1996) no page no.; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (THL, no page no.). However, Cronin is critical of *The Dalkey Archive* for breaking the boundary between the author O'Nolan and the protagonist Mick who he regards as resembling one another. Cronin reads the book biographically in terms of O'Nolan's personal conflicts with marriage, alcoholism and the civil service, which are paralleled in Mick's alcoholism, his difficult relationship with Mary, and his desire for literary fame to escape the drudgery of his civil service job (p. 229).

[111] Costello and Van de Kamp depict O'Nolan as searching for guardians throughout his life because of a communication gap between him and his father: they write that due to the lack of parents in O'Nolan's fiction, O'Nolan had a conflictual relationship with his father. Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* p. 32. Equally, O'Nolan's uncle Joe Gormley, who was a '[t]alkative, gregarious, a noted anecdotalist' journalist and entertaining sports writer for the *Irish Independent*, was a key influence of O'Nolan. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 8

[112] Michael Victor Nolan was a member of the Gaelic League, and actively encouraged his children to speak Irish at home, especially as his uncle Rev. Gearoid Ó Nualláin was an Irish scholar at Maynooth College. Michael V. Nolan was a Customs and Excise Officer, which resulted in the family moving from Strabane to Tullamore and then to Dublin during O'Nolan's childhood, which resulted in a nomadic life for O'Nolan. O'Nolan's father died in 1937, two years after O'Nolan entered the civil service as an administrative officer. In 1948 he became the principal officer of the Town Planning section and married civil servant Evelyn McDonnell. O'Nolan was fired from the civil service in 1953 on medical grounds. During his time in the civil service O'Nolan was Junior Administrative Officer in the Department of Local Government in 1935 and private secretary to four successive ministers. Interestingly, Kafka, Eliot and E.T.A. Hoffmann also had bureaucratic jobs like O'Nolan. Cornwell, *The Absurd in Literature* p. 252. Thus, Kiberd argues that 'O'Brien found himself on the cusp between the two groups', that is, bohemian Dublin and his role as a bourgeois civil servant. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of*

could be made between O'Nolan's life and those of his narrators: for example, like Finbarr and Manus in *The Hard Life*, O'Nolan attended the Christian Brothers School on Synge Street in Dublin, just as the student narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds* attends University College Dublin as O'Nolan did in the early 1930s.[113] However, as Myles himself forewarned: 'Autobiography is not so bad – indeed it is probably advisable to get in first. But the type of biography that lifts the veil, hacks down the elaborate façades one has spent a lifetime erecting – that is horrible.' (CL, 27 Feb 1957)[114] O'Nolan rarely published under his own name, which is partly due to his need for anonymity because of his position in the civil service,[115] but even when he did, there were many variations upon its spelling producing derivatives such as Brian Nolan and Brian Ó Nualláin or Ua Nualláin.[116] For his contemporaries, O'Nolan was more familiarly known under the many pseudonyms he produced as author-characters of his work, the most famous being Flann O'Brien and Myles na gCopaleen.[117] Due to this, any reading of O'Nolan's work should be aware of the use of authorial façades as part of his literary construction.

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the *Modern Nation* p. 516. Hence, as Asbee argues, like Kafka, O'Nolan's sense of the ridiculous helped him to retain his sanity in his civil service job which he felt contempt for in his desire for more literary success. Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* p. 8

[113] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 5

[114] cited in ———, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 3. As Asbee argues, O'Nolan discouraged parallels with his life and his work by encouraging misconceptions of himself and cultivating myths. Absee argues that O'Nolan is engaged in a jest at the modernist orthodoxy of authorial absence. Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* pp. 1-2, 59

[115] O'Nolan had to sign the Official Secrets Act when he joined the civil service; this limited his ability to publish under his own name. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 74

[116] Foster notes that O'Nolan even used a variety of spellings of his English and Irish language names on official documents. Foster, 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An Introduction', See also Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 3-4. Cronin notes in particular that O'Nolan used the surname 'Nolan' on his entrance examination to the civil service. While other civil servants used the Irish form of the their name to demonstrate their enthusiasm for the revival of the Irish language, O'Nolan chose to use 'Brian Nolan' at work. Cronin comments that 'for a fellow civil servant to revert to the English form of one's name after one had adopted the Irish form […] would be regarded as an extraordinary liberty and tantamont to an insult.' (p. 79)

[117] Genette defines a pseudonym as a false, borrowed or invented name which, like onymity, or the use of the real name of the author, indicates features of the author's identity such as gender, nationality, class and martial status. Genette, Gérard, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Lewin, Jane E. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 (1987)) pp. 39-40

O'Nolan refused to offer a clear biography of his own life, and so an investigation of such biographical influences of his work must always be handled with caution. As Clissmann argues, O'Nolan became 'a myth' in his purposeful confusion of his own biography based on stories and anecdotes where truth and fantasy cannot be distinguished. For example, in 1943 a *Time* magazine interviewer, Stanford Lee Cooper, was eager to know who the real O'Nolan was behind the pseudonym Flann O'Brien.[118] In an interview with *Time*, O'Nolan provides a part-factual and part-fictitious version of his own biography. While the article includes information about O'Nolan's daily life as a civil servant, O'Nolan falsely claims to have lived in Germany during the Weimer Republic years. O'Nolan told the journalist that in 1933 he went to Germany on a scholarship as a student; during this time he married an eighteen year old violinist named Clara Ungerland who later died, as well as getting beaten up in a beer hall for making uncomplimentary references to Hitler. Even O'Nolan's biographers Costello and Van de Kamp believe this fabrication by mistakeningly reading the report on face value.[119] Hence, Klinkowitz validly argues that '[t]here is no workable *auteur* theory for Brian O'Nolan. We are talking about a book, not a writer.'[120] Klinkowitz suggests that rather than analyzing O'Nolan as an author, critics should re-examine his textual presence through his pseudonyms and varied textual production.[121]

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[118] Cooper, Standford Lee, 'Eire's Columnist', *Time* 23 Aug 1943

[119] See Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* pp. 45-9. Clissmann notes that the *Time* biography is 'a work of fantasy' and 'indicates the length to which O'Nolan and his friends would go when trying to protect, not O'Nolan's identity, but his personality.' Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 2. See also CL, 13 Apr 1960 where Myles comments on and re-writes the biography of his fictional German marriage and shows his contempt for the biographer from *Time*. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* who demonstrates that there was no record of O'Nolan winning a scholarship and travelling to Germany between December 1933 and June 1934 (pp. 67-70).

[120] Klinkowitz, Jerome, 'Reconsideration: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', *New Republic*, 16, 23 August 1975, pp. 31-3

[121] Brooker explores the Wildean idea of putting on masks which enables writers to tell the truth through their work. He sees O'Nolan as engaged in several poses whereby he finds his voice by putting on voices to facilitate extravagant attacks. Brooker focuses on O'Nolan's uses of various caricatures, voices, accents and discourses as a self-consciousness postmodern writer. See Brooker, *Flann O'Brien*

Such a view of O'Nolan's textual presence leads us to Hadjiafxendi and MacKay's question of '[w]hat does it mean to author a text?', particularly as there are a diversity of authorial practices which demand different forms of writing.[122] This is particularly true for O'Nolan who wrote fiction, journalism, drama, television scripts and essays using a multiplicity of varying styles and authorial names within these forms of writing. However, O'Nolan corrupts the intended purposes of such authorial roles to make his reader aware of the genre, language, style and context he is writing within, and the power of the author to control the narrative. O'Nolan is engaged in a defamiliarisation of the relationship between the modern author's name and his text. As Barthes has argued, a work produced by an author is always caught up within its affiliation to the

> *conformity* of the work to the author. The author is reputed the father and the owner of his work: literary science therefore teaches *respect* for the manuscript and the author's declared intentions, while society asserts the legality of the relation of author to work

in copyright law since the French Revolution.[123] However, for O'Nolan, an author can create an infinite number of authorial identities which counter this concept of the conformity of his work. When the oddness of the character Mr Nemo Crabbe's name in *The Dalkey Archive* is commented upon, Dr Crewitt replies that '[y]ou could always change it […] In common law a man can call himself and be known by any name he likes.' (TDA, 28)[124] Hadjiafxendi and MacKay note that Barthes, in 'The Death of the

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As Cornwall argues, O'Nolan is similar to Kharms in his use of pseudonyms. Both Kharms and O'Nolan were interested in detective fiction, with Kharms often posing as Sherlock Holmes. Equally O'Nolan claimed to have written for the Sexton Blake detective series under the pseudonym of Stephen Blakesley. Cornwell, *The Absurd in Literature* pp. 252, 255. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 198-201 and Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* pp. 64, 89, 95 for accounts of the mystery behind whether this is true or not.

[122] Hadjiafxendi, Kyriaki, and Polina MacKay, 'Introduction: Authorship and Its Contexts', in *Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material*, ed. by Hadjiafxendi, Kyriaki and Polina MacKay, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1-12 (p. 1)

[123] Barthes, 'Work to Text', p. 1473

[124] In this juvenile humorous scene, Hackett replies to Dr Crewitt stating '[t]hat reminds me of a poor man whose surname was Piss, Hackett recounted. He didn't like it and changed it by deed-poll to Vomit.'

Author' (1968), and Foucault, in 'What Is an Author?' (1969), initiated a movement

against the author whereby the text is no longer considered an expression of the

author's unique personality or textual meaning but is instead 'the product of a

signifying process of difference and differentiation that make absolute truth and

authority impossible.'[125] If the author no longer has the power to originate ideas,

O'Nolan's work can be read as a *bricolage* of intra-textual activity between different

texts as he constructs his work from multiple sources and signs.

This, for Barthes, gives birth to the reader as O'Nolan's authoring is a form of

reading strategy in which he plagiarises and re-structures earlier texts, even to the point

where his narrator-authors are actively reading and engaging in texts as they write. For

Barthes, the author is not a solitary genius, but is involved in other texts and discourses

in a dialogic relationship, and this produces a plurality in both the textual creation of

O'Nolan's authorial personas, and the forms of writing he undertakes.[126] O'Nolan

challenges modern aesthetic ideas relating to authorship: as Buck-Morss notes,

> the aesthetic relies on an Enlightenment concept of the subject as (actually or
> potentially) whole, integrated, and perfectible. A similar critique emerges from
> Foucault's work. The belief that modernity has fragmented human nature […]
> assumes the existence of some organic or whole form to which we can return,
> and from which we have been separated.[127]

Rather than offering an integrated author figure and narrative function which fulfills

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(TDA, 28-9). This causes Nemo to reproduce his name backwards as 'Omen', which he finds poetic. Equally, Dr Crewett mentions the Arab name 'Ersa' which, when read backwards, is 'Arse' (TDA, 29).

[125] Hadjiafxendi, and MacKay, 'Introduction: Authorship and Its Contexts', p. 3. Barthes was a French theorist who in the 1960s and 1970s explored 'the conventionality of all forms of representation.' Barthes 'stresses the *process* of signification' of literature whereby '[t]he worst sin a writer can commit is to pretend that language is a natural, transparent medium through which the reader grasps a solid and unified 'truth' or 'reality'. Brooker, Peter, Raman Selden, and Peter Widdowson, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Fifth edn (Harlow: Pearson, 2005) p. 148; emphasis in original.

[126] While O'Nolan was engaged in 'solitary thinking' in 'A Bash in the Tunnel', he is also engaged with other discourses which surround him such as the stranger's story and Joyce's texts. The same can be said for the student narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds* who occupies the private space of his bedroom to think about a wide variety of discourses, from Celtic mythology to cowboy narratives.

[127] Kester, Grant H., 'Aesthetics after the End of Art: An Interview with Susan Buck-Morss', *Art Journal, 56:1* (Spring 1997), 38-45 (p. 44)

modernity's aims for development and aesthetic education, O'Nolan's fiction and use of masks becomes a site of uncertainty.[128] Hence, as Booker argues, '[t]he *mise en abyme* motif' in O'Nolan's work 'thus provides the perfect critique of Cartesian epistemology by demonstrating the way in which all knowledge does not in fact emanate from a locatable origin, but is simply produced as a by-product of an endlessly ongoing inquiry.'[129]

If O'Nolan's authorial voice cannot be easily located in his texts, then O'Nolan explores the ramifications of a complex authorial self to question notions of truth, authority and identity in post-colonial Ireland. For Foucault, authorship has an extra-textual element in its social and aesthetic function: he maintains that critics must 're-examine the empty space left by the author's disappearance'.[130] This disappearance occurs in terms of O'Nolan's authorial identity which functions aesthetically by both obscuring and displaying personality simultaneously. Hence, Jackson maintains that O'Nolan 'went into a sort of internal exile, rendering himself virtually 'unknowable' to all but a very few' through his use of pseudonyms.[131] Brooker writes that ''Brian O'Nolan' is relatively stable ground, the hard rock to which discussion of this writer

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[128] Said argues that Irish writers like Swift and Wilde intensified their personalities by splitting and multiplying then; hence, authorhood becomes a site of uncertainty of masked players who gain an agency and license to say new things. This is particularly true of the male characters in Wilde's plays and the mask of the drapier in Swift's letters. See Said, Edward W., *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991)

[129] Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility', p. 47. André Gide's developed the concept of *mise en abyme* or *mise en abîme*, which translates as 'placing into the abyss', in *The Immoralist* and in *The Vacation Sellers*, where he invents the novel in a novel structure where the novelist in the novel mediates on the motivations of his craft in an infinite, mirror-like form of reproduction. Considering O'Nolan most probably read Gide, he produces a similar effect through the student narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

[130] Foucault, cited in Hadjiafxendi, and MacKay, 'Introduction: Authorship and Its Contexts', p. 3. For further discussion on authorship, see Burke, Séan, *The Death and the Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992) and Burke, Séan, *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995)

[131] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 13. This, of course, contrasts with the actual physical exiles of authors such as Joyce and Beckett. Hopper reads O'Nolan as 'a writer whose exile was interior' in relation to his post-independence environment. Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist* p. 57

retreats from the shadowy waters of the pseudonym' and continues that

> [t]he identity of this writer does not reside simply in his brute reality, the curmudgeon whose appearance demystifies all his aliases out of existence. We need instead to understand the aliases as part of the identity: to say that in a sense O'Nolan became more himself, and more than himself, in writing. He found his voice by putting on voices: he enjoyed himself by making up selves.[132]

O'Nolan produces a fictional hall of mirrors as the reader is made aware of the imaginative production of both the author's identity and literary and journalistic texts. Hence, rather than positioning O'Nolan as part of the Irish literary canon, critics should examine him as a 'minor' Irish writer who questions nationalist and colonial authority through his pseudonymous role as signifying, destabilising authorial agent in postcolonial Ireland.[133]

1.3.2 *Bricoleur* **and** *Flâneur* **identity**

O'Nolan's narratives are not meant to produce definitive meaning and confuse the nature of authorial intent. One can view his camouflaged literary identity through the lens of two literary models in order to understand his 'minor' literary programme: the *flâneur* and the *bricoleur*. It must be recognised that O'Nolan writes within the frameworks of European modernism: thus, O'Nolan's modernist style will be read within the light of Baudelaire's conception of modern urban experience, as it is mediated through the figure of the *flâneur*, and through the style of Lévi-Strauss' definition of the *bricoleur*. As Myles, O'Nolan once wrote that he was 'painfully compiling [his] first novel'.[134] If writing is a form of *bricolage* accumulation of a

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[132] Brooker, Joseph, 'Mind That Crowd: Flann O'Brien's Authors', in *Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material*, ed. by Hadjiafxendi, Kyriaki and Polina MacKay, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 91-110 (pp. 94, 97)

[133] Dotterer objects to the creation of Irish literary patriarchies as, in O'Nolan's case, the 'reverential destruction lies at the heart of an author's creativity. To ignore it is to miss an important part of his aesthetic process.' Dotterer, 'Flann O'Brien, James Joyce, and *The Dalkey Archive*', p. 63

[134] O'Brien, Flann, *The Best of Myles*. ed. by O'Nolan, Kevin (London: Flamingo, 1993) p. 335; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (BM, 335)

number of materials at hand for Lévi-Strauss, the student narrator of *At Swim-Two-Birds* declares that the 'modern novel should be largely a work of reference'.[135] *At Swim-Two-Birds* demonstrates the dialogic nature of O'Nolan's *bricolage* aesthetic which works, like 'minor' literature, within varying forms of major canonical literature to demystify the function of the author and his or her textual production. The student narrator, in his manifesto on how to write a novel, warns that '[t]he novel, in the hands of an unscrupulous writer, could be despotic.'[136] Because of this the student aims to produce 'a self-evident sham' where '[c]haracters should be interchangeable as between one book and another' so that '[t]he entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required' (ASTB, 35).[137] O'Nolan achieves this throughout his writing career, even to the point of recycling his own material between his novels and journalistic articles, as various heterogeneous representations of Ireland are re-formatted in his work so that no one representation remains stable.[138]

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[135] O'Brien, Flann, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (London: Penguin, 2000) p. 35; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (ASTB, 35). In particular, Asbee's book study of O'Nolan locates his literary practice as a parody of the modernist aesthetic practice of literary reference and allusion which often results in a difficulty of understanding as the reader attempts to trace the references and organisation in the text. For example, Joyce provided Stuart Gilbert with a schema to explain the structural organisation of *Ulysses* in relation to the *Odyssey* in terms of eighteen episodes, allocating an art, colour, symbol, technique and organ of the body to each section alongside a chapter title and its Homeric equivalent. Gilbert published this schema in 1930. See Gilbert, Stuart, *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952 (1930)) . Asbee reads O'Nolan's work as a farce of this aesthetic practice as he pokes fun at the seriousness of modernist literary experimentation. Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* p. 21. Hence, the student narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds* attempts to write a modernist text, noting the importance of Huxley and Joyce to contemporary literature due to their inclusion of varieties of writing and specialised manuscript material in their work. See Ó Brolcháin, 'Comparatively Untapped Sources', p. 14 for a discussion on this.

[136] *At Swim-Two-Birds* in particular is filled with such despotic authors, from Mr Tracy who 'gave [Shanahan his] orders' to act in a cowboy narrative in Ringsend with Shorty Andrews and Slug Williard. (ASTB, 53), to Dermot Trellis who compels his characters to behave either uniformly good and bad (ASTB, 34-6).

[137] However, O'Nolan, in typical fashion, undercuts the student's manifesto on how to write contemporary literature as the student's long explanation is followed by Brinsley exclaiming 'That is all my bum' (ASTB, 25). As Asbee argues, O'Nolan and Niall Sheridan had a pre-occupation with literary theories of writing, often applying the principle of the industrial revolution to literature. Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* pp. 5-6

[138] *The Dalkey Archive* is created from re-shaped material from *The Third Policeman*, just as during the 1960s O'Nolan re-published and re-incorporated earlier articles from 'Cruiskeen Lawn' in his column.

Such a form of *bricolage*, normally associated with avant garde modernist artists, can also be seen in O'Nolan's case as a form of postcolonial aesthetic. O'Nolan does not simply 'write back' against forms of 'Euromodernism', such as Joyce or Eliot's mythological work, but instead exploits the modernist aesthetic practice of mythological *bricolage* to explore the hybrid nature of Irish culture and postcolonial experience.[139] Just as the nineteenth-century author Baudelaire explored forms of cultural crisis due to a lack of social order and a clear identity caused by the rise of modernity, O'Nolan explores the effects of colonial and nationalist forms of modernity on mid-twentieth century Ireland which are caught between the polar dichotomies of tradition and modernity. As Benjamin writes, the *flâneur* is a meticulous observer and recorder of experience in the city. The nineteenth-century *flâneur* observed the manners of bourgeois life, and this makes him the prototype of the modern novelist who focuses on the everyday events of the nation. Buck-Morss notes that the *flâneur* of the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades has been lost to the twentieth-century explosion of a 'myriad of forms' which constitute the *flâneur's* earlier existence.[140] The *flâneur* can have different roles, such as journalist, reporter, caricaturist and storyteller, as he transforms the fleeting and trivial impressions of the urban scene into images and

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[139] See Ramazani, Jahan, 'Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity', *Modernism/modernity, 13:3* (Sept 2006), 445-63. Ramazani argues that, in relation to Caribeean postcolonial writing, postcolonial literature should be not read as simply adversarial to forms of Euromodernism. Instead of displaying an outright rejection for modernism, modernism enabled postcolonial authors to explore the hybrid nature of postcolonial experience in a form of intercultural exchange which crosses borders of time, place and culture (pp. 445-6).

[140] Buck-Morss, Susan, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', *New German Critique: Second Special Issue on Walter Benjamin, 39* (Autumn 1986), 99-140 (p. 105). Gluck writes that 'the process of diffusion and fragmentation was already well under way by the time Baudelaire adopted the *flâneur* as the quintessential symbol of the modern artist. The transformation of Paris into a rationalized and impersonal public space in the course of the 1850s and 1860s was gradually destroying the physical and cultural preconditions of *flanerie*. Haussmann's Paris erased not only the old neighborhoods that had been the characteristic haunts of the *flaneur* but also the dense networks of urban sociability that had formed the social and cultural basis of the enterprise.' Gluck, Mary, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', *Modernism/modernity, 13:1* (2006), 747-64 (p. 755)

narratives that express the essential qualities of modernity.[141]

This thesis applies a version of Baudelaire and Benjamin's images of the *flâneur* to examine O'Nolan's anomalous identity as a writer who expresses the essential qualities of nationalist modernity in Ireland through his varying roles as journalist, dramatist, novelist, and essayist. Baudelaire was preoccupied by the crisis of representation and experience under the modern condition, arguing that the *flâneur* underwent a demise and was reincarnated as the hero of the novel. O'Nolan offers a mediation of the cultural images and reterritorializations of Irish nationalism after the anti-colonial and post-revolutionary period. Gluck argues that there is a family resemblance between the *flâneur* and the novelistic hero as, like his nineteenth-century predecessor, the hero of the novel was a cultural type who embodied the characteristics of the modern condition. For Gluck, this hero was both a textual creation and a creator of a myriad of heterogeneous texts.[142] Gluck notes that because the world of social experience and aesthetic representation had become more fragmented and radical in the twentieth century the hero of the novel developed different ways of representing himself. In relation to O'Nolan's own identity, the author chose to create a symbolic bridge between the realms of social experience and aesthetic representation through his use of pennames. If one of the key themes of postcolonial literature is place and displacement within and between borders and frontiers, O'Nolan's ceaseless invention of different pennames/authors and narratives which are in a state of constant Deleuzean 'becoming' exemplify what Kiberd refers to as O'Nolan's 'obsession with the problem

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[141] Gluck writes that, for Baudelaire, the *flâneur* was the hero of modern life because he makes visible and legible the landscape of modernity that had become invisible when the traditional social order collapsed. She argues that '[b]y linking the question of modernity with the production of urban texts, Baudelaire suggested for the first time that modernity was inconceivable without its representations and that modern culture was not a reflection of reality, but rather, a creative force in its own right that played a central role in mediating between experience and society.' Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 749

[142] ———, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 755

of establishing his own literary identity' due to the impact of Joyce's and the Irish Literary Revival's modernism and political and nationalist chauvinism.[143]

O'Nolan, due to the branding of his work and personas under theoretical 'isms', runs the risk of being sanitised at the expense of his satirical commentary on mid-twentieth century Ireland and Europe. Because he is positioned in relation to Joyce and Beckett as belonging to a 'holy trinity' of Irish writers,[144] criticism loses sight of his antagonistic relationship to modernism and nationalism. As McMullen notes, 'to reduce *At Swim-Two-Birds'* flamboyant intertextuality to a struggle with a single literary father [Joyce] is to miss precisely those qualities that make it a pioneering postmodern text.'[145] Considering O'Nolan portrayed an ambiguous relationship to his own writing and inclusion in the Irish literary canon, an examination of his role as an author will be undertaken through the frameworks of the *flâneur* and the *bricoleur* in case studies of his journalism and novels because, after all, the *flâneur* walks through his urban environment in order to re-assemble and create new correspondences and connections from what he sees in a *bricolage* fashion. To a certain extent, any sense of real self is removed through O'Nolan's use of pennames, as an author-character-reader such as Myles acts as a *flâneuresque* voyeur who makes his reader aware of their reading practices while he flaunts his own fictional identity and the constructed nature of his depictions of his contemporary world.

1.3.3 'Minor' language and form

O'Nolan challenges any notion of the fixity of language and colonial, national,

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[143] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 499.

[144] For example, every edition of *At Swim-Two-Birds* includes a review from Joyce stating that '[t]hat's a real writer, with a true comic spirit', thus locating O'Nolan's novel in direct relation to Joyce. Ironically, as already discussed, O'Nolan was an adamant critic of such connections, and of the Joyce Industry more generally. Hence, in his obituary piece on Brendan Behan, O'Nolan sets Behan away from Joycean comparisons to think about his work in its own right. See O'Brien, Flann, 'Behan, Master of Language', *Sunday Telegraph* 22 Mar 1964

[145] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', p. 62

modern and postcolonial identity in his 'minor' writing. O'Nolan produces a palimpsest of both his authorial role and the literary canon in his texts, both of which are ever evolving and never remain in a stable form. As Lloyd argues, 'minor' literature involves

> the questioning or destruction of the concepts of identity and identification, the rejection of representations of developing autonomy and authenticity, if not the very concept of development itself, and accordingly a profound suspicion of narratives of reconciliation and unification.[146]

If, as Bakhtin argues, official languages try to assert themselves in homogenizing and hierarchical formations, such languages must be decentred and made heterogeneous to stop the development of official ideologies.[147] Lloyd's version of 'minor' literature is disruptive of developmental, canonising narratives which claim authentic verisimilitude to the exclusion of other narratives. Thus, O'Nolan disrupts traditional structures of expression which rely on forms of authentic identification, authorial autonomy and linear progression which reconcile narratives of the Irish nation. As Delaney notes, a 'minor' writer achieves this by transgressing dominant language structures, exaggerating language's internal tensions and amplifying language's assumed signifying practices by taking language beyond the bounds of the readily accessible and naturally understood. Delaney notes that this is a reversal of the vector of content-to-expression as Deleuze and Guattari argue that potential change remains undeclared as long as this vector remains stable. Delaney writes that the '[t]he task of the 'minor' writer, therefore, is to intervene in the established vector of what might be called "major literature" (where control of content allows for a certain control over 'reality'), and to reverse its basis structural flow.' This assists 'minor' writers to escape the determinants

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[146] Lloyd, David, 'Genet's Geneaology: European Minorities and the Ends of the Canon', in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. by JanMohamed, Abdul R. and David Lloyd, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 369-93 (p. 381)

[147] Bakhtin, Mikhail, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Emerson, Caryl and Michael Holquist, ed. by Holquist, Michael, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 259-422 (pp. 271-3)

of dominant discourse, and in a colonial context, a colonized subject could evade the clichés of both imperialistic and nationalistic biased representation. Delaney argues that '[s]uch expression is invested with a potential to "break forms" and "encourage ruptures and new sproutings", and these ruptures, in turn, enable an 'always processional, re-visioning of the social and literary canon.'[148] This idea of processional narratives means that O'Nolan's fluid and unfinished narratives are always in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a state of 'becoming' rather than one of achievement.

This chapter has explored the anomalous position of both Ireland within postcolonial theory and O'Nolan within the Irish and international literary canons in order to posit that O'Nolan, as an ambiguous literary handyman, can be re-configured within the position of an author who is engaged in 'becoming-minor'. Such a movement is characterised by Deleuze and Guattari as existing 'in-between […] constitut[ing] a zone of proximity […] sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other'.[149] As will be explored in chapters two to six, O'Nolan is engaged in palimpsestic re-readings of major discourses: his work is a form of postcolonial resistance which re-reads dominant models of identification from his contemporary world. O'Nolan's 'minor' self-conscious position is a form of agency because one can no longer draw upon a distinct set of binary dichotomies when reading him and his authorial intention. Instead, his work can be defined as being in-between liberal, national and imperial versions of Ireland, just as O'Nolan exists in-between the Irish and English languages, the modernist aesthetic of Joyce and the pastoralism of Gaelic autobiographies, and the genre of the novel and of newspaper column writing.

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[148] Delaney, 'Decolonization and the Minor Writer', p. 3
[149] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Massumi, Brian (Minneapolis, 1987) pp. 291, 293

As the next chapter will discuss, O'Nolan is engaged firstly with deterritorializing major markers of distinctive Irish national identity which were promoted by Irish nationalism in the pre- and post-independence periods. O'Nolan, through his revision of authentic Irish national identity and the Irish and English languages, challenges the rhetorical and political elements of such major discourses. This is ultimately a comment on the effects of Irish state nationalism which prompted a sense of Irish culture as definitively Gaelic. This dissertation will explore the effects of colonialism and nationalism on O'Nolan as a middle class, Irish writer during the mid-twentieth century. This can be seen in the contradictions of identity and inclusion of occluded forms in his writing as played out in his use of personae and language play.[150] His writing is conscious of how people are assimilated into the state and canon formation and attempts to participate in and deterritorialize these formations.

His social background of a white, Catholic, middle class male which matches the homogeneous demographic of post-independence Ireland does not mean that his writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. To embody the major social position of his day does not mean that his writing cannot have 'minor' impulses which challenge his own dominant identity. Ultimately, 'minor' writing is a way of writing and using language rather than a grouping of people or different minority groups. Hence, O'Nolan does not sit well next to more traditionally defined postcolonial writers because his textual practices are so different to the majority of realist postcolonial authors. His 'minor' status questions his modernist belonging and status through the language and postcolonial circumstances of this history, particularly Ireland's anomalous position as both European nation and colony and O'Nolan's few options for resistance but his

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[150] As Brooker notes, '[o]n one hand [Myles] is a critic of overblown rhetoric and nationalist exaggeration, swift to scorn exorbitant claims on behalf of the new state. On the other hand, his work reacts against the sense of stasis and entrapment in that state, with a utopian vein of fantasy.' Brooker, 'Enstopped by Grand Playsaunce: Flann O'Brien's Post-Colonial Lore', p. 23

stylistic elusiveness due the politically conservative period post-1922. O'Nolan refuses to constitute a narrative as productive like major literature. Instead, his narratives lead nowhere because his characters cannot achieve identity due to the texts' structures and the authors' musings. There is a common perpetuation of non-identity and a refusal to ground identity on the recovery of origins and represent the attainment of autonomous subjectivity which is the aim of major literature. As will be explored in chapters two to six, his 'minor' literature depends on prior texts for parody, translation, citation, and intertextuality to achieve this perpetual instability of categories of identification and language.

Chapter 2: Tradition and Modernity: cultural nationalism and Irish language revivalism

It is the name of Myles na gCopaleen, rather than that of Flann O'Brien, for which O'Nolan was most renowned during his life-time.[1] Myles na gCopaleen entered the public realm of journalism due to the initiatives of the editor of the Anglo-Irish newspaper the *Irish Times*.[2] R.M. Smyllie thought it desirable to have an up-to-date, sophisticated Irish language column in the newspaper which would be in contrast to the conservative attitude of the two other leading Irish newspapers of the time.[3] Cronin

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[1] The name 'Myles na gCoplaeen' means 'Myles of the little horses'; the 'g' before the capital 'C' is the required ellipsis which the genitive case in the Irish language demands. Later in his column 'Cruiskeen Lawn', when O'Nolan hoped he would make the persona famous abroad, he dropped the 'g' and wrote as 'Myles na Gopaleen'. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 115-6. Kiberd reads O'Nolan's use of the name Myles na gCopaleen as a form of 'writing back' against the stereotype of the stage Irishman of the Victorian stage through its correct Irish language spelling, and thus views this reversion to the colonial spelling of the name as O'Nolan selling himself in his desire for literary status. See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 512. However, there were economic factors behind O'Nolan's need to become more popular abroad such as financial problems caused by the death of his father and his need to publish more articles in order to support his family, and later, his wife after he retired early from the civil service. Thus, O'Nolan was not the only Irish literary figure who relied on journalism to support his income. For example, Kavanagh wrote under the pseudonym of 'Piers Ploughman' for the *Irish Press* and was a film critic and reporter for the *Catholic Standard*. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 109 for a discussion on Kavanagh.

[2] The Anglo-Irish newspaper the *Irish Times* was founded in 1859 by a retired British army major, Laurence E. Knox, and sold in 1873 to Sir John Arnott, M.P. for Kinsale and a department store owner. John Healy was its editor during the first few decades on the twentieth-century. See Richardson, Caleb, 'Transforming Anglo-Ireland: R.M. Smyllie and the *Irish Times*', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 11:4* (Winter 2007), 17-36 (p. 18) and O'Toole, Fintan, *The Irish Times Book of the Century: 1900-1999* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999) for historical background information on the newspaper.

[3] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 144. Robert Maire 'Bertie' Smyllie, son of a Scottish journalist, and former editor of the conservative unionist newspaper the *Sligo Times*, was editor of the *Irish Times* from 1934 to 1954 as well as one of its writers and political commentators, particularly under the pseudonym of 'Nichevo' in the Saturday column the 'Irishman's Diary'. Richardson argues that Smyllie was a key Anglo-Irish figure who, in the post-independence period, tried to search for a way to integrate the Anglo-Irish Protestant community into the new state. Richardson argues that he 'helped to transform the principal organ of "West Britonism" into one of Ireland's most progressive newspapers', thus integrating the Anglo-Irish into Ireland under the role of valuable critics of the Irish Free State as '[e]ngagement was the only antidote to alienation.' Richardson, 'Transforming Anglo-Ireland: R.M. Smyllie and the *Irish Times*', pp. 17, 31. This can be seen in particular in Smyllie's position as head of the Palace bar set located on Westmoreland Street in Dublin which was across from the *Irish Times* offices. The Palace bar acted as a space for Smyllie to encourage artistic and literary people as varied as Brinsley MacNamara, Liam Redmond, Lynn Doyle, Oliver St. John Gogarty, F.R. Higgins, Patrick Kavanagh, Seamus O'Sullivan, Sean O'Sullivan, John Betjeman, Louis MacNeice, and Cyril Connolly to contribute to Irish life (pp. 21-2). For further analysis of West Britonism and the *Irish Times*, see: De Vere White, Terence, *The Anglo-Irish* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1972) ; Inglis, Brian, *West Briton* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962) ; Fleming, Lionel, *Head or Harp* (London: Barrie and Rockcliff, 1965) ; and Gray, Tony, *Mr. Smyllie, Sir* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan,

notes that the *Irish Times* was traditionally associated with the Church of Ireland Protestant minority within the Irish Free State. Unlike the *Irish Times*, the *Irish Independent* demonstrated the Catholic triumphalism of the dominant class of farmers and ratepayers in provincial towns across Ireland after political independence.[4] Similarly, the *Irish Press* was financed by Eamon de Valera, from small subscriptions from the Fianna Fáil party, and contributed to a dominant chauvinistic attitude celebrating all things 'Irish' to the exclusion of the Free State's minority Protestant community.[5] Smyllie aimed to reduce the *Irish Times*' dependence on its diminishing Protestant readership and make it 'the organ of the more liberal and more intellectual elements in the new state; and to modify its west British outlook accordingly'.[6] He wanted 'to show that [the *Irish Times*] was not against the Irish language but only against the chauvinism and hypocrisy that went with it.'[7]

Smyllie employed O'Nolan to engage a wider Irish readership as Myles na gCopaleen in the column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' in order to attack the chauvinism generated in rival newspapers and encouraged in government policy. O'Neill notes that the *Irish Times* was 'an unlikely home for such an enterprise' for O'Nolan's playful Irish

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1991). For a discussion of Smyllie's intervention in the creation of 'Cruiskeen Lawn' and his role in the Palace Bar, see Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 110-15, 90-1

[4] The *Irish Independent* was founded in 1905, and is traditionally orientated towards Fianna Gael policies. Cronin positions the *Irish Times* as 'a symbol of liberation from the values of one's *Irish Independent*-reading forebears'. Cronin notes that when the novelist Benedict Kiely joined the *Irish Independent* as its leader writer he told Cronin that '[t]here are only two subjects for editorials on this paper, the Red Menace and the Ratepayers' Burden.' Such restrictions of the topics of discussion during Kiely's time as a journalist are in stark contrast to the variety of opinions and themes O'Nolan presents in his columns. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 145, 112.

[5] The *Irish Press* was founded in 1931 as Fianna Fáil's political mouthpiece.

[6] This reduction in the population of Protestants in the Irish Free State was due to factors such as low birth-rate, emigration, and the partition of Northern Ireland in 1921 which caused the Protestant population to dwindle.

[7] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 112. For a useful example of how Myles na gCopaleen exposes this chauvinistic attachment towards Irish culture, see CL, 15 Feb 1943; AW, 94-96: Myles ironically takes on the voice of a insular, chauvinistic nationalist who praises the Irish as 'unspoiled God-fearing' people who are modest, humble agricultural workers who possess 'the best language in the world' and who are not interested in international news on World War Two because the 'wild and morbid degeneracy of the outer world does not concern us'.

language column, particularly as the *Irish Times* 'was still largely Unionist in outlook, though by the Forties it condescended to nod to the new civil order.'[8] In a newspaper which was known for its liberal values in cultural affairs in its feature writing, such as concert and theatre reviews, editorials on cultural matters, and its stance against the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), O'Nolan's column acts as a parody and juxtaposition against not only nationalist chauvinism but also Protestant and liberal values in Ireland. Hence, any study of this column must be read as not only O'Nolan's response to nationalism, but also to the oddity of the position of his column in an artistically-minded newspaper which he often openly attacks because of its 'West British' background.[9]

This chapter will explore how O'Nolan, under various authorial pseudonyms, exposes the significations inherent in the dominant discourse of Irish nationalism as well as liberal challenges to such a discourse. In order to demonstrate this, historical analysis of Irish nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries will be provided to trace O'Nolan's multi-variegated response to its impact on the policies of post-independence Ireland in terms of the revival of the Irish language and cultural traditions. Firstly, I will focus on the cultural impact of nationalists such as Thomas

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[8] O'Neill, Jamie, 'Introduction', in *The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman Including 'The Brother'*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003), pp. xi-xix (p. xiv). Stephen Brown supports O'Neill's view of the newspaper, noting that '[t]he *Irish Times* was from the start and has consistently remained the organ of the Protestant interest in Ireland, its policies being Conservative and Unionist. It steadily opposed all the national movements. It afforded a platform and a rallying cry for all those, Catholics as well as Protestants, whose first allegiance was to England or whose principal preoccupation was the maintenance of the existing order.' Brown, Stephen, *The Press in Ireland: A Survey and a Guide* (New York: Lemma Publishing Corporation, 1971) , p. 34.
[9] Richardson notes the similarities between Smyllie's 'dislike for the more bombastic manifestations of Irish cultural enthusiasm' and Myles' shared opinion on this. He refers to O'Nolan as 'the voice of sophisticated, cynical, cosmopolitan Dublin.' Richardson, 'Transforming Anglo-Ireland: R.M. Smyllie and the *Irish Times*', p. 30. For details on O'Nolan's and Smyllie's often difficult and exploitative relationship which may in part account for his mocking attitude towards the newspaper and its traditional readership, see Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* pp. 499-500 and Curran, Steven, "Could Paddy Leave Off from Copying Just for Five Minutes': Brian O'Nolan and Eire's Beveridge Plan', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, 31:2* (Autumn-Winter 2001), 353-75

Davis and Douglas Hyde before setting out the ambitions of both the Gaelic League and the Irish Literary Revival in terms of language and cultural revival. I argue that these heterogeneous forms of nationalism promoted the dominant tropes of the West of Ireland, the Gaelic peasant and the Irish language as examples of authentic Irishness in order to build and maintain a distinct de-anglicised Irish culture in contrast to the cosmopolitan modernity of Britain, Ireland's former colonizer.[10]

This chapter will examine the position of the bi-lingual writer O'Nolan within his post-independence Irish context in relation to these dominant nationalist and liberal paradigms. Focusing on Myles na gCopaleen's response to the issue of language revivalism in 'Cruiskeen Lawn', I argue that Irish nationalism from the nineteenth-century, which mobilised people under one banner of national unity, became insufficient in the post-independence era for many intellectuals. Nationalism became trapped in what Fanon refers to as a 'counter-identification' stage before and after independence which actively prevents the nation from developing a hybrid, cosmopolitan national and cultural identity.[11] O'Nolan's use of both the Irish and English languages in his column needs to be re-assessed within the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's first tenet of a 'minor' literature in order to demonstrate his deterritorialized exposure of the fixity of identity markers associated with both languages. Just as Deleuze and Guattari argue that Kafka's deterritorialized use of German acts as a creative destabilising force for Prague Jews, O'Nolan's use of language in his column challenges the salvage mentality of cultural revivalism in its attitude to the Irish language, while simultaneously interrupting any belief in an ability to utter authentically in the Irish and English languages through his creative use of

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[10] See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* pp. 251-2 for a discussion on this point.
[11] See Fanon, 'On National Culture',

them. Kafka's deterritorialized Prague German is characterised by its multiple and non-standard accents, gestures and grammar. Equally, O'Nolan's use of English and Irish exposes the significations and identity markers associated with both languages to question notions of collective identification and to develop multiple possible meanings in the languages.

Through an exploration of examples of the use of different languages, accents and dialects in 'Cruiskeen Lawn' and the reaction of the readership to the column's use of Irish, Myles upsets the fixity of identity and power relations created by nationalism's association of the Irish language with the pre-colonial and of the English language with modernity. Both associations fossilise language into cultural and social classifications and place them in binary relation to one another. O'Nolan's column results in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as immanent 'lines of continuous variation' in the semantic dimension of his use of language. As Bogue notes

> [t]he lines of continuous variation within a given social field can be used in two basic ways. They can be constricted, regulated, organized, controlled and disciplined, or they can be set in oscillation, intensified, amplified and ramified. The inculation of a standard, correct, proper language instils a thorough coding of the world according to a dominant order. It also entails a stabilization of inherently unstable elements and a valorization of elements in terms of a hierarchy of norms and deviations.[12]

Unlike Kafka, whose Prague German is characterised by its restricted use of metaphor and symbol, O'Nolan taps into the need for hybrid and humorous forms of language to challenge the dominance of nationalist ideologies through his exaggeration and amplification of the possible meanings of words. By offering a postcolonial 'minor' reading of O'Nolan's critique of Ireland's entry into modernity, it will be demonstrated that O'Nolan and other Irish satiric writers provide a critique of authoritative images of

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[12] Bogue, Ronald, 'Minority, Territory, Music', in *Introduction to the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, ed. by Khalfa, Jean, (London: Continuum, 1999), pp. 114-32 (p. 119)

authentic identification as upheld in language. Hence, for Deleuze and Guattari, both Black English, Hiberno-English and Prague German offer lines of variation which destabilise linguistic regularities and intensify continuous variation whereby a 'minor' writer is 'a foreigner, but in one's own tongue' and is 'bi-lingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language'.[13]

2.1 Nineteenth and early twentieth-century Irish nationalisms: building the nation

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.[14]

Speaking in 1882 at the Sorbonne, Renan defined the concept of nation as a 'chimera', arguing that nations are created out of an investigation and selection of past historical memories and images rather than any sense of a pure ethnic race. In this selection process, certain occlusions occur in cultural memory while other historical events and symbols are brought to the forefront of national consciousness to express a shared community and set of values. Brennan argues that this results in tropes of national belonging and commitment, and so a study of national literature is necessary to understand the nation-centredness of the imperial and postcolonial worlds.[15] Hence, an exploration of the kind of selective images Irish nationalists used to create a positive anti-colonial and national identification during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

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[13] Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* p. 98. Hence, Cheyfitz argues that Jewishness has often been considered a form of non-whiteness, whereby critics like Fanon have made historical links between Jews and Africans in terms of their use of language. See Cheyfitz, Eric, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from the Tempest to Tarzan* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 1991) pp. xii-xii and the first chapter 'The Negro and Language' in Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

[14] Renan, Ernest, 'What Is a Nation?' in *Nation and Narration*, trans. by Thom, Martin, ed. by Bhabha, Homi K., (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 8-22 (p. 19)

[15] Brennan, Timothy, 'The National Longing for Form', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Bhabha, Homi K., (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 44-70 (p. 47)

must be explored to understand O'Nolan's postcolonial response to such formations in his journalism and fiction.[16]

Ireland, which is considered one of the first colonies of the British Empire to have decolonised, consolidated its nation-state formula through a number of different and often competing forms of nationalism which explored the island's distinctive ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity. Flannery notes that analysis of such nation-building relies on a 'postcolonial-modernisation dialectic' which investigates how '[m]odernisation theory cleaves to, and enforces, the crude binarism of tradition and modernity' in a dialectical distinction between imperial centres and colonial margins.[17] In the Irish historical context, this results in the positioning and promotion of a folk peasant character, culture and national language in opposition to the secular modernity of Britain. However, imperialism and nationalism do not simply divide the world into the invaders and the invaded and the modern and pre-modern, and instead engage in a more nuanced and less centralized network of power relations between the metropolitan and the colonised. Bhabha argues that nationalism produces a continuous narrative of national progress and acts as a narcissistic cultural and political form of self-generation. He contrasts this nationalism with the ambivalent tension inherent in nation building: Bhabha, aware of the cultural temporality and transitional social reality of day-to-day life, demonstrates that, despite the desire for a fixed field of meaningful images, symbols, languages and memories associated with the nation, this field is actually in a constant act of re-composition. Bhabha encourages examinations of how the nation is constructed in official rhetoric and calls for the boundaries of nation to be crossed,

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[16] For useful early studies of Irish cultural nationalism, see: MacDonagh, Oliver, and W.F. Mantle, eds., *Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750-1950* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Hutchinson, John, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987)

[17] Flannery, *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia* p. 3

erased, and translated in the process of cultural production to show that the locality of national culture is neither unified nor unitary, and nor can it be seen as 'Other'.[18]

As this section will detail, there are a number of key factors which enabled Irish nationalists to develop a complex sense of Irish national distinctiveness in the colonial period, and which had a legacy for post-independence Ireland's cultural and social policies. Such dominant tropes of Irish nationalism, particularly in relation to the importance of the recovery of the Irish language, include Catholicism, the process of de-anglicization, folklore, and the Irish peasantry. However, as will be demonstrated,

> [t]he modern Irish nationalist movement cannot be seen as continuing from an uninterrupted Gaelic heritage. Instead, one must recognize efforts at a Gaelic revival were not meant just to reinvent or revive a disappearing culture but were part of a systematic effort to remove the influence of the imperial power.

While one must position this revival in a counter-hegemonic relation to colonialism which 'seek[s] to sever their colonial connections while simultaneously celebrating their pre-colonial heritage and traditions', one must also recognize that such anti-colonial movements use many of the same tactics employed by colonial modernity.[19]

2.1.1 The role of Catholicism for Irish national identity

To a certain extent Catholicism 'became a badge of national identity' for the largely rural and Catholic Irish through its regularised rites and practices. As Brown argues, Catholicism offered most Irish people a way to be Irish which set them apart from the rest of the inhabitants of the British Isles, thus meeting the needs of Irish nationalism at a time when the Irish language and Gaelic culture were enduring a protracted decline.[20] Catholicism was associated with the Penal Law oppression of the

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[18] See Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation',
[19] White, 'Modeling the Origin and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland', p. 3
[20] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* pp. 18-9. For analysis of Church-State relations in Ireland, see Keogh, Dermot, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics 1919-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) ; Keogh, Dermot, *Ireland and the Vatican : The Politics and*

eighteenth-century, and was strengthened by nineteenth-century Victorian respectability through popular expressions of piety in Irish provincial life.[21] Even though the Church opposed the political and violent tactics of revolutionary nationalism during the Land War and War of Independence, after political independence the Catholic Church became the national church of the Irish Free State which was part of a wider international and diasporic organisation which excluded the state's Protestant minority.[22]

The culmination of the link between the Irish Catholic Church and the State's nationalist ethos can be seen in de Valera's Bunreacht na hÉireann, the 1937 Irish Constitution. This constitution maintained a strong connection between Church and State, placing emphasis on the importance of protecting the family and the Catholic

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Diplomacy of Church-State Relations, 1922-1960 (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995) ; Coldrey, Barry M., *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988) ; and Whyte, John H., *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1979*. 2nd edn (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980) . For studies of the changing fortunes of the Catholic Church in late twentieth-century Ireland, see Kenny, Mary, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland: A Social, Personal and Cultural History from the Fall of Parnell to the Realm of Mary Robinson* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997) ; Inglis, Tom, *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987) and Fennell, Desmond, ed., *The Changing Face of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: Chapman, 1968)

[21] Sir Horace Plunkett, founder of the Irish cooperative movement, once commented that, in comparison with the piety of other countries, '[i]n no other country probably is religion so dominant an element in the daily life of the people as in Ireland.' Plunkett, Sir Horace, *Ireland in the New Century* (London: John Murray, 1905) , p. 94. Throughout O'Nolan's work, Catholicism was to remain one of the least criticised of national identity markers. While Cronin notes that the outlook of the post-independence governments was 'legalistic and fanatically Catholic' he maintains that O'Nolan had little doubt about the foundations of Catholicism, particularly as '[a] break with Catholicism would involve questions of your very identity, racial, social and historical.' However, O'Nolan questioned his identity in other ways beyond Catholicism. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 47, 49. See O'Brien, Flann, *Myles Away from Dublin*, ed. by Green, Martin (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1990) pp. 202-4; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (MAD, 202-4) for a parody of the supposed piety of Irish Church goers who are more interested in gossip and the exhibition of their Sunday best clothes than in religious rites.

[22] Brown argues that the Church lacked a clear social and cultural vision and, because of this, it did not attract the service of the most creative and imaginative members of society. While Mr. Collopy considers the Christian Brothers 'saintly servants of God', the narrator's brother refers to them as 'maggots' and 'illiterate farmers' sons' who probably 'got their learning at some dirty hedge school' and 'are ruining the young people' of Ireland in *The Hard Life* (THL, 65). However, the Church was an international institution which allowed Ireland a role in the world stage and a sense of belonging to a worldwide religious community. Hence, the role of the Irish diaspora is important in understanding the Irish Catholic Church in the creation of an Irish race which included a nation 'beyond the seas'. Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* pp. 23, 25.

religion.[23] Just as in the nineteenth-century Catholicism was seen as a marker of Irish national identity, the 1937 Constitution was not neutral on the subject of religion.[24] While it recognised the existence of a Christian God, Article 44 distinguishes between a majority and minority Church, and led to a heated debate that the constitution was not Catholic enough because it did not clarify if the Catholic Church was the only one true Church.[25] Equally, the Catholic Church supported cultural isolation and artistic censorship to protect the moral fibre of Irish life from what was considered subversive, alien and immoral.

However, Catholicism did not provide nationalists with a distinctive enough Irish identity. Lloyd argues that because the nationalist movement lacked real political power within the United Kingdom, their form of national expression and distinctiveness relied on cultural rather than political or religious forms, particularly in relation to the Irish language and its folk culture.[26] Lloyd maintains that 'the founding moments of Irish cultural politics' were framed by the Young Ireland movement, the Irish Literary

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[23]The 1937 Irish constitution is a standard example of a liberal-democratic constitution which sets out a stock lists of rights such as freedom of speech and the right of association and protection of minorities.

[24] For example, the opening of the 1937 constitution states that 'We, the people of Éire, Humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, Who sustained our Fathers thought centuries of trial'. In Article 41.1 the constitution states that '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.' Equally, Article 41.3.1 continues that 'The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.' Equally, Article 44.1.1 affirms that 'The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is de to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion' while Article 44.1.2 asserts that 'The State recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens.'

[25] See, Farrell, Brian, ed., *De Valera's Constitution and Ours* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988) and Faughnan, Sean, 'The Jesuits and the Drafting of the Irish Constitution of 1937', *Irish Historical Studies, 26:101* (1988) 79-102 on the role of the Jesuits in the framing of the constitution. The Jesuits wanted the protection of private property in a Christian constitution, and they recognized that the state could not make a statement that the Catholic Church is the one true Church. This was in constrast to Father Cahill who reached a compromise with de Valera by referring to the Church as 'special' in the constitution. See O'Nolan's parodic portrayal of the Jesuits in *The Dalkey Archive*. See MAD (231-4) for George Knowall's satire on the mythic reality of St. Patrick, which he defines as a 'sham', and on the Ancient Irish scholar Professor Binchy's argument that there were two St. Patricks.

[26] Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* p. xi

Renaissance, the immediate postcolonial period of O'Nolan's world, and the anti-colonial struggle in Northern Ireland since the late 1960s.[27] While Lloyd privileges, as Renan warns, certain moments in Irish history, an examination of the first three moments in Irish cultural politics is necessary for an understanding of O'Nolan's 'minor' literature and in particular his use of the Irish and English languages.

2.1.2 De-anglicizing Ireland: from the Young Ireland movement to an 'Irish Ireland'

Unlike the non-sectarian republican movement of Wolfe Tone's the United Irishmen during the 1790s, who were inspired by the civic, democratic and secular principles of the United States (1776) and France (1789), the nationalist ideologies propounded by the Young Irelanders of the 1840s created a sense of Irishness which was not only religiously Catholic but also exclusively distinctive in terms of its language and culture.[28] The Young Ireland movement inaugurated a cultural and sectarian revolution during a period of ideological shift from the late eighteenth-century rhetoric of Tone's enlightenment, republican universalism to a romantic nationalism of the nineteenth-century. This led to the emergence of a self-consciously Irish literature concerned primarily with Irish origins and defining Irish identity historically and psychologically. These literary forms depended on models derived from imperial narratives of cultural development; hence, Kiberd argues that Irish identity formations

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[27] ———, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* p. 3

[28] Pettitt contrasts late eighteenth century Irish republicanism with nineteenth century forms of nationalism, arguing that 'Irish republicanism tended to be more future-orientated, radical and egalitarian than conservative, past-centred romantic nationalism, which developed a narrow, exclusive and xenophobic character at the turn of the century, sometimes known as 'Irish Ireland'.' Pettitt, *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* p. 4. The nineteenth-century is a seminal period in the Irish nationalist struggle which resulted in part from the Act of Union in 1801 which incorporated the island of Ireland in the United Kingdom and under the direct rule of the Westminster parliament. Key historical events included: the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829); the tithe wars in the 1830s; repeal agitation during the 1840s which led to the Young Ireland Rising in 1848; and Robert Emmet's Rebellion in 1803. Interestingly, O'Nolan recalls Ireland's links to French and American letters and models of nationality: the student narrator and his friend Donaghy in *At Swim-Two-Birds* engage in discussion 'in a polished manner, utilizing with frequency words from the French language, discussing the primacy of America and Ireland in contemporary letters and commenting on the inferior work produced by writers of the English nationality' (ASTB, 45).

rely on the use of Manichean binaries of Self (Britain) and Other (Ireland) to describe Irish-English relationships.[29] McKibben maintains that Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland movement positioned the Irish language as a central authorizing element of national distinctiveness and as an object of collective grief due to the rapid decline of the language since the seventeenth-century.[30] While revisionists challenge the idea that the language was 'wretched from [the Irish] in a particular violent or coercive manner',[31] Davis writes in his essay 'Our National Language' that Ireland is only half a nation without a distinctive language of its own and, because of this loss of language due to colonial policy, the Irish nation has an identity crisis. He argued that the forced language changes under colonialism 'rips apart communal identity and intergenerational bonding'.[32] In his renowned poem 'A Nation Once Again', Davis wants to recover a sense of a full Irish nation rather than the half nation he perceives. In

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[29] See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. Matthew Arnold's book study *Celtic Literature* is often considered as upholding this paradigm of Self and Other between Britain and Ireland. In his representation of the binary opposition of the Celt and the Philistine, race is essentialised in order to justify the assimilation of the Celtic colonial subject in the British Empire. Arnold believed that Celts are sentimentalists who have failed to achieve material civilization and have no political maturity. In contrast to this, the English have the energies of progressive industrialism and practicality. Hence, the Celt must act as a complement to the Anglo-Saxon by infusing a sense of mystery and sentiment. See Arnold, Matthew, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1867)

[30] McKibben, '*The Poor Mouth*: A Parody of (Post)Colonial Irish Manhood', p. 97. Davis (1814-45) was born in Mallow, Co. Cork, and studied law at Trinity College, Dublin. He joined Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association and, in 1842, established the *Nation* newspaper where he published his impassioned nationalistic poetry.

[31] Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* p. 205. Unlike many Irish postcolonial theorists, Kennedy positions the reasons for the loss of the Irish language not in terms of colonial policy but solely in terms of the effects of European nation-building, arguing that '[t]he decline of Gaelic in Ireland seems to be part of a wider pattern of language change within the British and Irish Isles – a form of linguistic homogenization driven by the forces of the market, by new literacy requirements, and by closer cultural contact between different localities' (p. 206). He further argues that '[t]he repression of minority languages is closely related to the rise of European nationalisms, specifically the drive to produce linguistically pure national societies' because '[m]any of the nation states of Western Europe were not models of tolerance in relation to minority languages. By contrast, the vicissitudes of the Gaelic language in Ireland owed little to active state policy. The experience of decline worked itself out against the backdrop of British traditions of linguistic *laissez faire*, not those of the more negatively interventionist states of mainland Europe' (p. 208).

[32] Davis, Thomas, 'Our National Language', www.libraryireland.com/articles/OurNationalLanguage, (1845) cited in McKibben, '*The Poor Mouth*: A Parody of (Post)Colonial Irish Manhood', p. 97. Davis writes that '[f]orced language shift assaults its objects, rending them from their history and relocating them in a landscape turned foreign by its arbitrary nomenclature. This is turn violently disrupts their identity and destroys their sense of self, making them, with their country, but "half" (and thus not at all fully) what the should be. Moreover, linguistic imposition makes them passive victims incapable of self-defence, for their "very organs" have become "corrupt" and inadequate for full expression.'

the poem Davis hopes that Ireland will be a nation rather than a province of England, comparing Ireland's relationship to England in the terms of slavery:

> And then I prayed I yet might see
> Our fetters rent in twain,
> And Ireland, long a province, be
> A Nation once again.[33]

In contrast to images of slavery, Davis employs a developmental analogy of his growth from boyhood to manhood to resemble Ireland's necessary progression to nationhood. Equally, he links Ireland's national cause to religion, writing that

> For freedom comes from God's right hand,
> And needs a godly train;
> And righteous men must make our land
> A Nation once again.[34]

Because progress towards national independence in religious and linguistic terms was perceived as the only natural condition for the Irish nation, Irish nationalists who followed the Young Ireland movement attempted to recuperate a continuity of descent and origin to pre-colonial times which was believed to have been interrupted by colonialism. As Smyth argues, 'Irish nationalism after Davis started to believe as authentic the stories it told about its own origins'.[35] Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League positioned the 'real', anti-colonial Ireland as an essentially agricultural, rural

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[33] Davis, Thomas, 'A Nation Once Again', in *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by Kinsella, Thomas, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 305, I.i.5-8. John Mitchell made similar links between the Irish colonial condition and slavery in his writing.

[34] Davis, 'A Nation Once Again', I.iii.5-8. In another poem, 'Lament for the Death of Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill (Owen Roe O'Neil)', Davis further depicts the Irish as a beaten race. In the poem, because O'Neill had been slain by the Cromwellian forces, the Irish are now forced into slavery: 'Sagest in the council was he, kindest in the hall: / Sure we never won a battle – 'twas Owen won them all. / Had he lived, had he lived, our dear country had been free; / But he's dead, but he's dead, and 'tis slaves we'll ever be.' (I.i.1-4) On a stylistic level, Davis structures the poem as a dialogue between two parties who remember O'Neill's tragedy; his use repetitive structures, exclamation marks and rhetorical questions emphasise Ireland's tragedy. Additionally, O'Neill is depicted as 'The rudder of our ship was he – our castle's corner-stone!' (I.v.4) while the Irish are 'Sheep without a shepherd, when the snow shuts out the sky - / Oh! why did you leave us, Owen? why did you die?' (I.vii.1-4). Davis, Thomas, 'Lament for the Death of Eoghan Ruadh O'neill', in *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by Kinsella, Thomas, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 303-4

[35] Smyth, 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', p. 37

community in contrast to the modernity of industralized British culture. Hyde, in his 1892 lecture 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', argues for a genuine Irish culture to halt the process of ceasing 'to be Irish without becoming English'.[36] Hyde declares that Ireland's cultural independence relied on a 'deanglicisation' of its culture and the restoration of cultural self-respect, and which previous nationalist leaders, like Daniel O'Connell, had abandoned Irish civilization while fighting for Irish nationalism. Unlike Arnold who saw Irish culture 'the badge of a beaten race', Hyde argues that 'within the last ninety years we have, with an unparalleled frivolity, deliberately thrown away our birthright and anglicized ourselves'.[37] To counter this anglicisation, Hyde argues that the true, essential Irish reality is the Gaelic one deriving from ancient Ireland.

The Gaelic League was established by Hyde in 1893 in an attempt to counteract

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[36] See Hyde, Douglas, 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', in *Language, Lore and Lyrics Essays and Lectures*, ed. by Ó Conaire, Breandán, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), pp. 153-70 (p. 153). Hyde continues in his lecture that Ireland is a 'half-way house' which has 'lost notes of nationality' due to the adoption of English names, topographical names, the language, dress, and sports (pp. 154, 53). Hyde's lecture was delivered on 25 November 1892 to the National Literary Society in Dublin and published in 1893. Hyde, a Protestant from County Roscommon and the Irish Free State's first President, lectured O'Nolan in Irish at University College Dublin. As a language enthusiast, Hyde once stated that 'I dream in Irish'. Coffey, Diarmuid, *Douglas Hyde: President of Ireland* (Dublin, 1938) , p. 18. However, as Cronin notes, O'Nolan, like his contemporaries, displayed contempt for Hyde and the language revival moment. O'Nolan claimed, for example, that his tutor Agnes O'Farrelly and Hyde spoke Irish ''inaccurately and badly''. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 53-4 and Myles na Gopaleen's obituary to Hyde (CL, 13 Aug 1959). However, despite O'Nolan's criticism of Hyde's Irish, Hyde was a prolific writer in Irish and collector of folklore as well as a language activist. He was a member of Trinity College Dublin's Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language as well as the Young Ireland Society; he published poems in Irish under the name of 'An Craoibhín Aoibhinn', and published songs and folktales in Irish and in translation in Hyde, Douglas, *Leabhar Sgéaluigheachta, Cruinnighthe Agus Curtha Le Chéile* (Dublin, 1889) ; Hyde, Douglas, *Love Songs of Connacht: Abhráin Grádh Chúige Connacht* ed. by Ó hAodha, Micheal (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969 (1893)) and Hyde, Douglas, *Beside the Fire: A Collection of Irish Gaelic Folk Stories*. ed. by Nutt, Alfred Trübner (London: D. Nutt, 1890) . Hence, Kiberd argues that Hyde in his lecture 'anticipated post-colonial theory by saying that it is not the same thing to be English as to be anglicized, and that those who were anglicized were very often caught in patterns of psychological extremism.' Shaw Sailer, Susan, 'Translating Tradition: An Interview with Declan Kiberd', *Jouvert, 4:1* (1999). In this interview Kiberd refers to the 'fretful and fearful' contract between English and Irish unionists, and the need for unionists to recognize that their ancestors once spoke Irish which 'could be a priceless possession for them' to understand 'how deep are the reserves of the culture that's available to them', as Hyde achieved throughout his career.

[37] Hyde, 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', p. 157. Thus, Hyde places blame on O'Connell for not keeping the traditions of Gaelic culture alive during his campaign to achieve Catholic emancipation (p. 158).

how Ireland has been assimilated into English-speaking modernity, and to re-assimilate Irish citizens into their Gaelic culture through music, sport, dancing, and above all, the revival of the Irish language.[38] Kiberd presents the Gaelic League as a modernizing force within Irish cultural politics: rather than viewing the League as simply upholding binary distinctions between tradition and modernity, and rural and urban life, Kiberd notes how many members

> opted for a both/and philosophy rather than the either/or binarism of imperial theory. The Gaelic League did indeed wish to revive Irish as a prelude to a recovered national pride and economic prosperity, but its methods – mass democratic action, workers' education, mingling of the sexes on a basis of equality at free classes and summer schools – were anything but conservative.[39]

However, while Kiberd offers a positive postcolonial image of the Gaelic League's modernizing and liberatory effects on Ireland, this is counter-acted by infamous advocates of the de-anglicisation of Ireland, such as D.P. Moran.[40] Longley refers to Moran as the 'champion of 'Irish Ireland' and the Irish language, and foe to mongrelism' in his 'philosophy of cultural separatism' between the English and Irish.[41] Moran believed that Ireland would lose its cultural and racial essence unless the country

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[38] For studies of the Gaelic League's cultural work, see Cronin, Mike, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Identity since 1884* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999); Mandle, *The G.A.A. And Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924* (London: Christopher Helm, 1897). In his lecture, Hyde views Ireland's culture as an assimilatory force which incorporates outside cultural influences, such as Viking and Norman invasions and culture which came to Ireland between the seventh and twelfth centuries and became 'more Hibernian that the Hibernians themselves' (p. 156). This assimilatory myth of Irishness is set in contrast to more contemporary historical experiences. He writes that '[i]n two points only was the continuity of the Irishism of Ireland damaged. First, in the north-east of Ulster, where the Gaelic race was expelled and the land planted with aliens, whom our dear mother Erin, assimilative as she is, has hitherto found it difficult to absorb, and the ownership of the land, eight-ninths of which belongs to people' who lived abroad (p. 157). Hyde's assimilative reasoning is an example of what Brown refers to as a process where 'major social changes in the distant past are themselves assimilated in a sentimental metaphor […] but that the more recent complications of Irish history do not admit of such simple resolution', as in North-East Ireland's unionism. See Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 46 for a discussion on Hyde's assimilatory viewpoint.

[39] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 1334

[40] D.P. Moran was editor of the nationalist newspaper the *Leader*. For studies on Moran's political influence, see McCartney, Donal, 'Hyde, D.P. Moran and Irish Ireland', in *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*, ed. by Martin, F.X., (Dublin: Methuen 1967); Maume, Patrick, *D.P. Moran* (Dublin: Historical Association of Ireland, 1995)

[41] Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* p. 17

Gaelicized. In his book *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, Moran argues that '[t]he foundations of Ireland is the Gael, and the Gael must be the element that absorbs. On no other basis can an Irish nation be reared that would not topple over by the force of the very ridicule that it would beget.'[42] Hence, the critical problem with the conservative 'Irish Ireland' version of nationalism was that it imagined an assimilatory, coherent, romantic past to the exclusion of other forms of Irish modernity.

The Gael for Moran is the figure who must absorb rather than be absorbed by modernity, and so the peasant for the Catholic middle-class of Ireland

> functioned as a particularly important autochthonous myth, the source of all authentic life. The peasants symbolized colonial dissent: Because they were physically rooted in Irish soil, they established irrefutable property rights and economic claims to Ireland against the English colonizer.[43]

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[42] Moran, D.P., *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2006 (1905)) p. 37. Moran maintained that to be truly Irish is to cultivate a masculine culture 'making the people sober, moderate, masculine and thereby paving the way for industrial advancement and economic reform' (p. 93). Similarly, Eoin MacNeill espoused the cause of national freedom so that the Irish can live in their own Gaelic, Catholic way. He wrote that '[i]f I want national freedom for my people, it is in order that they may live in their own way a life which is their own, that they may preserve and develop their own nationality, their own distinctive species of civilization.' MacNeill, Eoin, 'Irish Education Policy', *Irish Statesman,* (17 Oct 1925) p. 168. O'Nolan, in his fiction, offers parodies of such extreme nationalist figures. For example, the uncle in *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Mr. Collopy in *The Hard Life* exemplify 'Irish Ireland' views of the Irish nation and culture. Mr. Collopy refers to the importance of native Gaelic speakers and the Gaelic sport hurling which he describes, like Moran, as 'a fine manly game' (THL, 12). Equally, Mr. Collopy supports Michael Cusack's 'Gaelic code', arguing for '[t]he native games for the native people. By dad and I see young thullabawns of fellows got out in baggy drawers playing this new golf out beyond on the Bull Island.' If Mr. Collopy works within the dichotomy of Gaelic and foreign sports as markers of national manliness and identity, then his friend Mr. Hanafin is critical of the colonial mimicry of 'the fashionable jackeen in Dublin [...] They'd wear nightshirts if they seen the British military playing polo in nightshirts above in the park.' (THL, 13). Ultimately, Mr. Collopy's discussions on nationalism act as a parody of the dinner scene in *A Portrait of the Artist* where Parnell and Home Rule are discussed as the young protagonists, like Stephen Daedalus, listen on.

[43] Hirsch, Edward, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', *PMLA, 106:5* (Oct 1991), 1116-33 (p. 1125). In 1935, Aodh de Blácam from the 'Irish Ireland' movement commented on how the peasant is Ireland's 'saviour' from the effects of modernity: 'We see the European urban civilization going down to-day in corruption of body and mind, in merciless warfare, and in unbelief [...] Only "green" Europe, the peasant lands behind the big cities, promises to live on after the ruin…' de Blácam, Aodh 'The Age-Lasting Peasant', *The Capuchin Annual* 1935 p. 257 cited in Taaffe, Carol, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008) p. 105. Michael Davitt, founder of the Land League in 1879, also encouraged this viewpoint that the Irish peasant was the embodiment of colonial dissent in his or her rights to the land of Ireland. Davitt, after Catholic emancipation (1829), made property rights the key political issue during the mid to late nineteenth-century for the Irish peasant who was conceived as a victim of imperialism, unfair evictions and absentee landlordism. See Davitt, Michael, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (New York: Harper,

Hence, Patrick Pearse called for Gaelic artists to get in touch with Old Irish literature, as preserved in folk traditions and manuscripts, alongside the aesthetics of contemporary European literature, in order to symbolically represent the Irish peasantry and their struggle.[44] Pearse's programme for an independent Ireland envisaged an economic, social and cultural flowering as a necessary effect of national freedom. As Daniel Corkery argued in the post-independence period, tradition was to act as

> *the* essential cultural agent. The tradition of the Irish people is to be understood and experienced with intimacy only in the Irish language. It would be impossible that it could be so come upon in the English language. One might as well expect to come intimately upon Indian tradition in the same language.[45]

In the next section, I will explore how Irish language folklore and cultural traditions were re-cuperated to express an essentialised Irish speaking peasant identity which acted as a model for national culture.

2.1.3 Folklore and the Irish Literary Revival: the figure of the peasant

This need to repossess Ireland's cultural heritage is particularly evident in the importance placed on the role of folklore in cultural production at the turn of the twentieth-century. Markey offers an analysis of what constitutes Irish folklore and what its relationship is to Anglo-Irish literature, particularly in how Irish writers in English employ folk traditions.[46] Markey considers folklore as a cultural product which is

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1904) ; Palmer, Norman Dunbar, *The Irish Land League Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940)

[44] Pearse, P.H., 'About Literature', *An Claidheamh Soluis* 26 May 1906, p. 6. For a discussion of *An Claidheamh Soluis* and the earlier *Gaelic Journal* by the Gaelic Union as well as the Ossanic Society, the Royal Irish Academy (1782) and the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, see MAD (34-5). George Knowall wrote a short piece on both journals, which he claims to have on his bookshelf, and how these societies aimed to preserve the Irish language. Equally, Myles na gCopaleen is particularly fond of quoting passages from *An Claidheamh Soluis*. See CL, 8 Feb 1941.

[45] Corkery, Daniel, *The Fortunes of the Irish Language (Imeactaí Na Teanga Gaeilge)*, *Irish Life and Culture 9* (Dublin: The Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland by C.J. Fallon, 1954) pp. 13-4; emphasis in original.

[46] The term 'folklore' is relatively modern. Markey notes that the term was not coined until 1846 by the English antiquary William John Thoms (pseudonym Ambrose Merton) to encompass the manners, customs, ballads, superstitions and proverbs of rural people. Markey, Anne, 'The Discovery of Irish Folklore', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 10:4* (Winter 2006), 21-43 (p. 21). For useful studies on the relationship between Anglo-Irish literature and Irish folklore, see Mercier, *The Irish Comic*

always marked by the need to recover and record its cultural value as its oral records disappear due to the development of modernity.[47] The Irish language was seen as the embodiment of Ireland's racial soul, with folklore and the peasant who tells it positioned as the antithesis of Irish and European modernity.[48] Markey notes that this led to a concentration 'on narrative traditions, and particularly on the collection and classification of oral narratives from Irish-speaking areas.'[49] Equally, Ó Giolláin maintains that this resulted in 'the Gaelicisation of Irish folklore' as the Irish language was linked to Irish folklore: hence, the revival of the Irish language was associated with the preservation of dying folkloric traditions.[50] If the collection of folklore within the Irish language had official nationalist support, folklore becomes a dominant discourse within the pre and post-independence periods as a cultural marker of Irish identity and nation-building through the collection of folklore as a national resource as proof of

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Tradition; Kinahan, Frank, *Folklore and Occultism* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988) ; Kiberd, Declan, *Irish Classics* (London: Granta Books, 2001) ; and Thuente, Mary Helen, *W.B. Yeats and Irish Folklore* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980)

[47] Diarmuid Ó Giolláin notes that ''Folklore' appeared as it was disappearing, it was discovered as it was being lost, and it was recovered as it ceased to be'. Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000) p. 8

[48] Markey notes that nineteenth-century collectors of folklore, such as Thomas Crofton Croker, Patrick Kennedy, Sir William Wilde and Lady Francesca Wilde 'Speranza', and Douglas Hyde, 'represented their material as originating from the rural poor.' Markey, 'The Discovery of Irish Folklore', p. 25. Ó Giolláin offers a useful summary of Anglo-Irish antiquarians who brought Irish folklore to the attention of the Irish Literary Renaissance. These included General Charles Vallancey (1721-1812) who was interested in ethnology; Charlotte Brooke (1740?-93) who linked the Anglo-Irish reader to the Gaelic traditions she recorded from local Irish speakers in Brooke, Charlotte, *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (Dublin: George Brown, 1789) ; Edward Bunting (1773-1843) who collected folk music; Thomas Crofton Croker (1798-1854) who was interested in oral tales which he collected in Croker, Thomas Crofton, *Researches in the South of Ireland* (London, 1824) ; and Robert MacAdam (1808-95) who collected Gaeltacht folklore. See also Yeats, W.B., *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (London: Picador, 1973 (1888)) and Yeats, W.B., *Irish Fairy Tales* (London, 1892) where Yeats details the genres of folktale, legend and myth.

[49] Markey, 'The Discovery of Irish Folklore', p. 22. Such folklore was classified in terms of narrative motif and tale type.

[50] Ó Giolláin, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* pp. 114-41. Hence members of Hyde's Gaelic League helped to found the Folklore of Ireland Society (An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann) in 1927. Also, the Cumann na nGaedhael government awarded a small grant to fund the foundation of the Irish Folklore Institute in 1930. Markey notes that the Folklore Commission's focus on small, rural communities matched up to de Valera's vision of Irish society with the Catholic Gaeltacht representing the Irish nation. Markey, 'The Discovery of Irish Folklore', p. 23. See Ó Crualaoich, Gearóid, 'The Primacy of Form: A 'Folk Ideology' in De Valéra's Politics', in *De Valéra and His Times*, ed. by Murphy, John A. and J.P. O'Connell, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1986), pp. 47-61 for a discussion on this issue.

national depth.[51]

Ironically, English was to remain the dominant language of the nationalist case despite the attempts to record Irish language traditions and customs and to deanglicise the island.[52] It was through the means of English that Ireland was invented and debated: the Irish Literary Revival attempted to build a national literature in a Hiberno-English linguistic form rather than in Irish in order to generate a national audience and culture.[53] In order to reverse negative colonial and Victorian stereotyping of the Irish, the Irish Literary Revival focused on the figure of the Irish speaking peasant as a spiritual and living embodiment of the Celtic imagination. Rather than confirming Irish racial stereotyping, revivalists writers wanted to, as Gregory put it, prove that 'Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism.'[54] If the peasant was seen as an unchanging, ancient and aesthetic ideal who possessed a wealth of folkloric and imaginative wealth, he was the opposite to the industrialisation and commercialism which was prevalent in Britain, and

[51] Ó Giolláin, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* p. 63. His study of different world nationalisms argues that folklore is recovered in countries whose histories have been ruptured historically: folklore thus acts as a legitimizing and liberating framework which allows ordinary people to participate in national building. However, the use of the folktale can hide the bourgeois desire to secure hegemonic representations for small nations (pp. 75-6). Ó Giolláin gives the examples of Brazil, Sweden and Finland as small, colonised nations who use folklore as a means to de-provincialise themselves and provide a basis for a national culture (pp. 64-5).

[52] As Benedict Anderson notes, '[p]rint language is what invents nationalism'. Hence, ironically, through the use of English language print media Irish nationalists helped to promote the English language in Ireland rather than discouraging it. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* p.122. Smyth notes that Samuel Ferguson, Yeats, Hyde and Synge inhabit 'confused and confusing position[s]' as Irish, Protestant, nationalists who justify Irish literature in English so that Ireland could assert itself in the modern world in the English language. Smyth, 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', p. 36

[53] Yeats desired to achieve a rapport with the Irish masses like O'Connell and Parnell, and so he argued that this is only possible through the use of the English language which the masses speak, rather than Irish: 'Does not the greatest poetry always require a people to listen to it?' Yeats, W.B., *Ideas of Good and Evil* (London, 1903) p. 337

[54] Gregory, Lady Augusta, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (New York & London: Gerrards Cross Smythe, 1972 (1914)) p.20. Yeats discovered the myths and legends of the Irish heroic age in O'Grady's *History of Ireland* (1878-80), and was inspired by John O'Leary and the Young Ireland movement.

thus offered Ireland a model to develop a distinct racial identity.[55] Equally, if the rural

countryside of Ireland was seen as containing an unchanging peasant culture, the Irish

Literary Revival tried to create an indigenous historical past which would link their

present day circumstances to past models of Irish rather than English experience. Hirsch

notes that Protestant intellectuals

> had no trouble in preserving the rural archetype as pagan and primitive rather
> than as fundamentally Catholic. By mystifying an ancient, unchanging folk life,
> removed from the harsh realities of land agitation and social conflict in the
> countryside, they could treat the peasant as a romantic emblem of a deep,
> cultural, pastoral, and significantly anticommerical (or nonmaterialistic) Irish
> life.[56]

This involved an imagining of the rural landscape of western Ireland, in contrast to

English cities, as a space free from commerce, modernity and materialism.[57] If country

life was characterised by 'its orality, organicism, and closeness to nature', one might

read the Irish Literary Revival's configuring of the peasant as a response to modernity's

sterile and self-conscious world of capitalist individuality.[58] Yeats believed that the

natural popular traditions of country folk lack discriminating intelligence and so needed

to be molded by the pen of the artist, thus creating a hierarchy between the literary artist

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[55] See Williams, Raymond, *The Country and the City* (London: Cahtto & Windus, 1973) on the dichotomization of urban and rural life whereby the naturalness of folk culture is contrasted with the mechanical, material and industrial metropolis. Richard Rankin Russell notes that '[t]he western Gaeltacht served as an effective counterweight to the urban life in Dublin', which places Irish speakers such as Behan and O'Nolan in an interesting position in relation to the language because they live in urban Dublin. Rankin Russell, Richard, 'Brendan Behan's Lament for Gaelic Ireland: *The Quare Fellow*', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 6:1* (Spring 2002), 73-93 (p. 73) As Hirsch notes, by turning to the oral and popular traditions of folklore, writers like Behan and O'Nolan could escape their town living in 'this quest for "rootedness"', however what they produce is very different to that of the Irish Literary Revival. Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1123

[56] Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1122. Unlike the Irish Literary Revival, the Land League's propaganda did not spiritualise the peasants by dematerialising them as anti-commercial people. Instead the League connected the peasant to rights of property and production in economic terms (p. 1125).

[57] William Carleton attacks the notion that Irish scenery is sublime and instead presents a less romanticised and more harrowing landscape, such as in his story 'The Poor Scholar' which depicts farmers suffering on the land.

[58] Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1122

and the subject he or she represents. [59]

Within Irish Studies, the Irish Literary Revival's use of Hiberno-English has resulted in much disagreement over the effect it has had on representations of the Irish peasantry. While Longley argues that the effect of Synge's Hiberno-English was to romanticise and sentimentalise its speakers whereby 'Synge went a bit far in the matter of idiomatic vitamin-injections', Kiberd argues that '[m]any artists, most notably Synge, have sought to bridge that schism by injecting toxins of Gaelic syntax and imagery into their writing. In lesser writers, this can give rise to the factitious eloquence that is now so despised.'[60] Such a polarised reading of the Revival's portrayal of the peasant as an emblem of national identity is exemplified in the conflicting reaction to Synge's play *The Playboy of the Western World*. While the Irish Literary Revival claimed to have broken away from previous representations of traditional Irish life and had 'taken their types and scenes from Irish life itself', this claim to true representation and authenticity was challenged by conservative nationalists.[61] D.P. Moran objected to the Irish Literary Revival's union of Irish literary traditions and the English language, arguing that

> you cannot rise to dignity or poetry on 'begors' and 'bedads'. There is
> something essentially mean about the corrupt English of the Irish peasant,
> particularly when put into cold print; it passes the power of man to write
> literature in it.[62]

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[59] Hence, in his poem 'The Municipal Gallery Re-visited', Yeats depicts the shared ideologies the Irish Literary Revival authors as authors whose mission it is to represent the Irish peasantry: 'John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought / All that we did, all that we said or sang / Must come from contact with the soil, from that / Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong. / We three alone in modern times had brought / Everything down to that sole test again, / Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.' Yeats, W.B., 'The Municipal Gallery Re-Visited (1937)', in *Poems*, ed. by Albright, Daniel, (London: Everyman, 1990), pp. 366-8

[60] Longley, Edna, in *Field Day Anthology*, (Derry: Field Day, 1991) p. 651; Kiberd, Declan, in *Field Day Anthology*, ed. by Deane, Seamus, (Derry: Field Day, 1991)

[61] 1906 pamphlet *Irish Plays*; cited in Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1125

[62] Moran, *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, cited in Jackson, and Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism', p. 74

If Moran criticized the Irish Literary Revival for its focus on peasant dialects as a stylistic device, Moran had no flexibility in choices of linguistic representation for the Irish in his campaign to de-Anglicise the nation. Unlike Moran, O'Nolan participates in all three languages, that is Irish, standard English and Hiberno-English, as well as languages such as French and German, which are all salted with parody and expose the national significations inherent in the languages. O'Nolan's use of language in his work is engaged in what Lloyd refers to as the real concern of postcolonial analysis of Irish nationalism. O'Nolan's work can be examined in terms of 'the gradual transformation of a counter-hegemonic concept within an oppositional nationalism into a hegemonic concept within a new nation state', whereby Irish cultural politics was viewed in terms of the historical achievement of territorial nationhood and a distinct national culture.[63] In the post-independence period, the state apparatus left vacant by the withdrawal of the colonial forces in Ireland resulted in new forms of political and cultural hierarchies in the Irish Free State which occluded other forms of identity.

2.2 National insufficiency: the need for new ways of representing Ireland

The immediate post-independence period of the 1920s and 1930s is considered by both postcolonial and revisionist Irish critics to be an essentially conservative time which continued the traditions of the more inward-looking form of 'Irish Ireland' nationalism to develop a 'highly prescriptive sense of Irish identity'.[64] Deane argues

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[63] Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* pp. 3, 8
[64] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 51. During the 1920s there was a need for a sound, conservative administration in a time of uncertainty due to civil unrest caused by the War of Independence and Civil War. In particular, the Cumann na nGaedhael government had to establish an unarmed police force to replace the Royal Irish Constabulary, to manage the affairs of state, to protect democratic institutions and to establish the legitimacy of the government in the face of republicanism's anger over the partition of Northern Ireland. For up-to-date surveys of histories of independent Ireland, see Keogh, Dermot, *Twentieth-Century Ireland : Nation and State* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994) ; Fanning, Ronan, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Helicon, 1983) ; Townsend, Charles, *Ireland: The 20th Century* (London: Arnold, 1999)

that this period was engaged in a classic 'neo-colonial plight' which took 'the customary form of a battle between provincialism and cosmopolitanism, inwardness and outgoingness, native traditions and foreign importations.'[65] Foster argues that 'what matters most about the atmosphere and mentality of twenty-six county Ireland in the 1920s is that the dominant preoccupation of the regime was self-definition against Britain – cultural and political. Other priorities were consciously demoted.'[66] The nationalist myth of an 'Irish Ireland', based on conservative Catholicism, which offered pre-independent Ireland an alternative to the monologic rule of British imperialism, became in turn hegemonic once it lost its oppositional function after independence was gained. As Deane notes, in 'attempt[ing] to create a version of history for themselves in which their intrinsic essence has always manifested itself' the Irish produced 'readings of the past that are as monolithic as that which they are trying to supplant'.[67] Thus, Brown compares the revolutionary possibilities and ideals of pre-independence literary and cultural politics with post-revolution disillusionment. He surmises that after independence there was a lack of social, economic and cultural ambition due to the implementation of conservative, deterministic and repressive legislation. He notes that the immediate years of the Irish Free State, born out of the Constitution of the Irish Free State Act in 1922, inherited stagnant economic conditions due to a lack of industrialisation, few native industries, insufficient infrastructure and the general global economic slump of the 1920s and 1930s.[68]

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[65] Deane, Seamus, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (London: Hutchinson, 1986) p. 203

[66] Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* p. 516. As Cronin notes, even those who wished to challenge the Catholic, puritanical morality of the new bourgeois state where in an ambiguous position as they were also the inheritors and defenders of this state after independence. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 48

[67] Deane, 'Introduction', p. 9

[68] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* pp. 4-5. Brown notes that the 'economic nationalism of the pre-Revolutionary period gave way to a staid conservatism that did little to alter the economic landscape.' (p. 6) This led to a policy of economic protectionism which resulted in a lack of productive industry and the perpetuation of pre-revolutionary unresolved social problems such as slum housing tenements and overcrowding in cities, high unemployment, limited social welfare and mass

As Brown argues, the social and cultural conservatism of post-independence Ireland is a result of the country's homogeneous social composition due to the annexation of Northern Ireland with its large Presbyterian and Episcopalian Anglo-Irish population and industrialisation. This created an Irish Free State which 'no longer demanded such imaginatively comprehensive visions' to include the Anglo-Irish due to its social composition of small and medium sized farms and the profound continuity of social patterning in rural areas since the late nineteenth-century which gave the post-independence period a sense of continuation despite the revolution.[69] Brown notes that there were two social groupings in modern Ireland, the farmers and the tradesmen, who influenced the political, social and cultural formation of the independent state. He characterises them has having 'economic prudence' alongside 'their necessarily puritanical, repressive sexual mores and nationalistic conservatism, encouraged by a priesthood and hierarchy drawn considerably from their number'.[70]

Thus, De Valera's Fianna Fáil government promoted a highly puritanical

emigration and depopulation in rural areas. Brown believes that this is because 'at independence there was no self-confident national bourgeoisie with control over substantial wealth, and little chance that such a social class might develop, meant that the kinds of experiment revolution sometimes generates simply did not take place.' (p. 7) It was not until the election of Sean Lemass' government in 1959 that Ireland's economy began to improve, mainly due to tariffs on imports being dropped and the encouragement of international business investment as well as Ireland's entry into the E.E.C. in 1973. See MAD (163-5) for Knowall's rant against the successive post-independence governments' economic policy which relied heavily on building agriculture at the expense of industrialization. Knowall argues, unlike the nationalists of his day, that 'agriculture is alien and un-Irish. Cultivating the soil was never part of Irish heritage.' Hence, he refers to farming as 'a slave occupation' which results in high emigration due to the lack of manufacturing jobs available in Ireland.

[69] ———, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 8. This unbroken social order included continuing martial abstemiousness, high emigration and a desire for economic security after the Land War of the 1880s due to the economic and social realities of post-famine Irish farming life which created a population 'disinclined to contemplate any change other than the political change which independence represented.' (p. 9) This resulted in a lack of social roles for children who did not inherit the land and were forced to emigrate, or to move to towns or join the clergy. Brown stresses the 'familism' of Irish countryside life in the 1930s in its strict gendered division of the labour force, with men engaged in raising cattle, sheep and pigs while women were in the domestic house engaging in daily chores such as dairying and milking (pp. 13-4).

[70] ———, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 16. Brown notes that the Irish Catholic Church directed Irish life in narrow channels of a Jansenistic puritanism which restrained sexuality for economic reasons. This lead to an organised religious experience to communalise and regularise religious practice through societies, organisations, confraternities and sodalities, and with the mass production of religious medals, holy pictures, beads and scapulars.

version of Irish national identity between the 1930s and 1950s which was set in contrast to Britain's secularised modernity.[71] Whyte notes that because of this there was a high degree of Irish social and cultural conservatism in the implementation of the Censorship of Films Act (1923), the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), The Public Dance Halls Act (1935), The Criminal Law Amendment Act (1935), the 1925 motion to make divorce legislation impossible in order to preserve Christian values, and the 1933 budget which put a duty on imported newspapers to protect public morality from the British Press and sensational foreign literature.[72] This resulted in the over-determination of Irish identification within categories of progression and regression and tradition and modernity, with intellectuals between the 1920s and 1960s working within these dichotomies to offer viable and ethical alternative models for Ireland.

2.2.1 Myles na gCopaleen and the Irish language revival

If the post-independence period relied on a number of images of national

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[71] For useful surveys of the impact of de Valera on post-independence politics and culture, see O'Carroll, John P., and John A. Murphy, eds., *De Valera and His Times* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1983) and Doherty, Gabriel, and Dermot Keogh, *De Valera's Irelands* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2003)

[72] See Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1979* for a detailed analysis of this. For discussions on the impact of this cultural and sexual censorship, see Hug, Chrystel, *The Politics of Sexual Morality in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) ; McAvoy, Sandra L., 'The Regulation of Sexuality in the Irish Free State, 1929-1935', in *Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940*, ed. by Jones, Greta and Elizabeth Malcolm, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999); Adams, Michael, *Censorship: The Irish Experience* (London: Sceptor Books, 1968) and Carlson, Julia, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship & the Irish Writer* (London: Routledge, 1990) As McMullen argues, 'censorship became a mechanism for guarding the borders of the nation – and the boundaries of national identity – from both internal and external challenge. Moral purity became the marker of national purity – itself defined as "racial purity"' McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', p. 65. Hence, in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the student narrator repeats these national dichotomies of sexual and moral behaviour as he observes the students in his university. He positions the nuns and young postulants in relation to their modesty because 'their eyes [were] upon the floor and their fresh young faces dimmed in the twilight of their hoods' against the horseplay of the other students (ASTB, 45). Hence, Trellis designs his character Furriskey's life as one of a 'mission of debauchery' in his book to warn against the nature of sinful acts. Furriskey's 'life was to be devoted without distraction to the attainment of his empirical lusts' through the 'ravishing and destruction of the fair sex.' (ASTB, p. 52, 51) See MAD (125-7) for a discussion on the censorship of bad language and Joyce's *Ulysses* by George Knowall. For further readings of O'Nolan use of language in terms of the law, see Brooker's analysis of O'Nolan's language from a law and literature perspective who argues that O'Nolan's attention to linguistic nuance meant he was drawn to the language of bureaucracy. Brooker demonstrates how O'Nolan offers parodies of legal procedures, focusing on questions of language and censorship and his opinion on Irish sovereignty and the 1937 Constitution. Brooker, Joseph, 'Enstopped by Grand Playsaunce: Flann O'Brien's Post-Colonial Lore', *Law and Literature, 31:1* (March 2004), 15-37

essence which were activated in state and government policy, O'Nolan's postcolonial column writing and use of language problematises this naturalising hegemony. O'Nolan was aware that, as had happened before political independence, the language revival became a safe space to espouse nationalist policy and continue the promises of the Irish revolution.[73] As Brown points out, after 1922 all teachers had to have a knowledge of Irish, preparatory boarding schools were established to prepare young people for careers in the teaching profession which would emphasise the language, school inspectors had to study Irish, and Irish was made compulsory in scholarships in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates in secondary schools.[74] While the nationalist governments of Cumann na nGaedhael and Fianna Fáil set in place a Catholic nationalist state which was enshrined in law and cultural and social practice, their language revivalist policy from the 1920s onwards was largely unsuccessful because it was not conducted with the same idealism as early Gaelic League activity.[75] As Ryan notes more generally about

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[73] Eoin MacNeill, the state's first Minster of Education, encouraged a policy to have Irish taught to all pupils in National Schools and to exclude teachers who lacked a sound grasp of the language. The first Dáil in 1919 after the Sinn Féin success in the 1918 elections created a Ministry of Irish. Both the government and the Gaelic League were pledged to Gaelicise the education system. See MacNeill, 'Irish Education Policy', p. 379. MacNeill understood that the West of Ireland needed to be supported economically to ensure the survival of the language: hence, he promoted the need for a viable economic and social policy for the Irish language. Brown describes such an Irish-focused educational policy as a form of 'draconian measures' as other subjects were eliminated or downgraded from the school programme. Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 41. See MAD (34) for George Knowall's reconsidersation of this Irish language policy from the perspective of the 1960s. Knowall writes that it is impossible to ever Gaelicise the nation by regaining the Irish language through teaching it. Instead, he argues that the Irish learnt at school will never be a 'true Irish' as it will always remain an 'acquired language' because 'Irish is a very difficult language, totally alien to the European mould.' Equally, O'Nolan comments on the role of education as a way to socially advance in his novel *The Hard Life*. Mr. Collopy views education as a tool to build the young men of the Irish nation, stating that Manus's entry into education is 'the first rung of the ladder to learning and achievement, and on yonder pinnacle beckons the lone star.' (THL, 16) However, both Manus and the student narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds* reject conventional forms of education because such an education has become a form in indoctrination, particularly as when Finbarr enters Synge Street School he gets to know "the leather" from the Christian Brothers (THL, 20). O'Nolan exposes the absurdity of the Irish educational system in *At Swim-Two-Birds* whereby Brinsley's university education is paid for by a state grant to enable 'necessitous boys of promising intellect to enjoy the benefits of University learning', a benefit which Brinsley and his friends abuse when they use his grant money to buy alcohol (ASTB, 45).

[74] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 39. Brown also notes that parents in the new state felt it only right that their children should learn the language in schools (p. 48).

[75] As Daniel Corkery admantly argued in his call for the foundation of a harmonized cultural system based on the Irish language, history, law and literature, '[t]o say tradition is to say language'.

the post-independence period,

> [a] state, any state, cannot proclaim a spectral or millenarian relationship to history; it cannot enact a sudden, magical, divine intervention that would transform the existing order, which like the rebels of 1916 would forego mundane compromises and transform colonial dullness into exhilarating freedom.[76]

Thus, O'Nolan's Irish language column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' demonstrates the failure of the national revolution to achieve Hyde's dream of a de-anglicised Ireland. Hence, Myles openly questions the compulsory nature of education through the medium of Irish which produces a generation illiterate in both languages (BM, 284-5).

The post-1922 period was characterized by widespread cynicism and apathy towards the language revival movement and as Cronin puts it, '[t]he Irish people do not take kindly to compulsion' to learn the language 'and they have a keen eye for all forms of venality and jobbery.' Cronin writes that the Irish language became 'the preserve of the careerist and the job hunter' and was associated with the puritanical morals of Catholic nationalism, for example, in the nationalist belief that the Irish youth were corrupted by foreign influences and so the Irish language would defend notions of chastity and purity.[77] If Irish nationalists viewed the Irish language and its literature as a

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Corkery, *The Fortunes of the Irish Language (Imeactaí Na Teanga Gaeilge)* p. 14. While the 1937 Constitution enshrined the Irish language as the official language of the Irish Free State, there were basic practical problems in its revival such as the the differences in Irish language dialectics across the island, the fact that the Gaelic and Roman script were used differently in each area, and the continuing depressed economic conditions of Irish speaking districts which resulted in high emigration by native Irish speakers.

[76] Ryan, Ray, 'Introduction: State and Nation: The Republic of Ireland, 1949-99', in *Writing in the Irish Republic: Literature, Culture, Politics, 1949-99*, ed. by Ryan, Ray, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) pp. 1-16 (p. 4)

[77] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 122. Kavanagh would agree with this point, arguing that 'Jobbery, snobbery and corruption' are the only reasons why Irish people learn Irish to appear 'most noisely patriotic'. Kavanagh, Patrick, 'Ireland Has Gone West', *Irish Times* 9 Nov 1939 Hence, it was common for civil servants and RTÉ employees to use the Irish forms of their names for promotion while politicians began speeches with a few token words in Irish. Hence, Myles, in mockery of the translation of English language names into Irish by the national bourgeois, translates the names of global celebrities into Irish, such as Cary Grant who becomes Ciarán Mac Deontair and Charlie Chaplin who becomes Searlar na gCapaillín, and thus a possible relation to Myles na gCopaleen (CL, 11 Mar 1941). For a further example, see CL, 27 Mar 1941. See also Knowall's commentary on the historical habit of Gaelicising and Anglicising names in Ireland (MAD, 42-5).

repository of pious and chivalric values which would encourage Catholic moral behaviour, Myles's use of this language alongside English is a 'minor' challenge to the cultural associations of the language through his exposure of not only the foundational categories of Irish identity through its association with the Irish language and peasant culture, but also the development of the stagnant cultural environment where the Irish language has become fossilised.[78]

On 4 October 1940 O'Nolan's first article of his instantly successful Irish and English language column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' appeared on the leader page of the *Irish Times*. 'Crúiscín Lán' or 'Cruiskeen Lawn', which is often translated as 'little brimming jug', began its career mostly in Irish three times a week and went daily from September 1941.[79] From October 1943 it alternated between Irish and English, before mostly adopting English from early 1944 onwards, a language transition which will be explained later in this chapter. By 10 March 1944 Irish had disappeared from the column apart from the odd article.[80] O'Nolan wrote this column between 1940 and 1966 under the pseudonym 'Myles na gCopaleen', which was later changed in spelling to 'Myles na Gopaleen'. The column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' is 'a small masterpiece of prevarication and obliquity' which is characterised by its existence between many languages, political positions, and codes of national and international discourse. O'Nolan's use of both the Irish and English languages in the column is characterised by what Cronin refers to as O'Nolan's 'ironic stancelessness, the refusal to adopt any real

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[78] Niall Sheridan, O'Nolan's friend, in the monthly review *Ireland Today* (July 1938), wrote that the language revival movement was characterized by humorless bigotry: 'All those who cherish Irish for the culture it enshrined are being gradually antagonized by the methods of the revivalists. The intolerance and bigotry displayed by its leaders have alienated all those to whom the language is not a trade.'

[79] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 112. Also see Dolan, Terence Patrick, ed., *A Dictionary of Hiberno-English* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004) for a similar translation of 'Cruiskeen Lawn'.

[80] See Taaffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* p. 114 for further details on the column's formation during the 1940s. For reprints of some of these Irish language articles, see BM (262-85).

side in any argument'.[81]

By the 1940s the language revival movement was half a century old. During this period when O'Nolan began to write his sardonic journalism full-time, the failure of revivalism was becoming self-evident.[82] With a lack of faith in Irish language revival increasing, even within the ranks of revivalists, opinion in the 1940s concluded that 'the association of the language with the depopulating districts on the west coast, indeed with rural Ireland, was unhelpful.'[83] Because Irish was associated with rural poverty, deprivation, and a semi-artificial folk culture, many urban Irish people demanded the right to espouse the Irish language in a modern, urban fashion, and to satirise the Gael, as O'Nolan does throughout his Irish language novel *An Béal Bocht* and in his column. Hence, Myles ironically comments that he supports de Valera's provision of half a million pounds a year in his economic budget to enable the preservation of the language in the Gaeltacht. Myles caustically writes that 'I may be a wild Paddy but I take the view that the free expenditure of public money on a cultural pursuit is one of the few boasts this country can make.' Myles calculates that two thousand pounds a day is spent on the language revival, which he exposes as a waste of money considering the number of native speakers was dwindling rather than increasing (BM, 281-4). Thus, from the 1940s there was a minor renaissance in urban based language organizations to not only

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[81] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 113. McMullen also argues that O'Nolan, in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, is engaged in self-irony. She writes that the text, through its exploration of the various systems of languages which construct notions of Irishness, result in 'postmodern doubleness' which locates 'the paradoxical "self-irony" that Terry Eagleton has argued is vital to any nationalist perspective that seeks to avoid reproducing the totalizing impulses it has struggled to abolish'. McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', p.66 and Eagleton, Terry, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, ed. by Eagleton, Terry, Fredric Jameson and Edward W. Said, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 23-42

[82] The Irish government and language revivalists had hoped that the Gaeltacht populations would increase, and that schools would expand the people's knowledge of Irish to reverse the decline of the language. However, emigration from Irish speaking areas increased due to the continuing social deprivation in those areas. See Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* pp. 178-9 and Davis, John, ed., *Rural Change in Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1999)

[83] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 180

revive Irish through the production of mass media forms like books, magazines and newspapers, but to also diversify the way the language is used beyond its rural signification.[84] Due to the continuing anxiety about whether the government was really serious about the revival of the language, such organizations were a fresh initiative in the language movement.[85]

Revivalists during the 1940s were re-thinking the rural significations associated with the national language. O'Nolan's attitude seems to be in agreement with such criticism of earlier revival policy: as Taffee notes, O'Nolan felt that while, on the one hand, 'the Irish language was a good and necessary thing for Irish people', on the other hand, 'the political purposes it was often encouraged to serve […] were dangerous and destructive.'[86] To a large extent O'Nolan's opinions on the state of the language movement mirrored Yeats's earlier warnings that, by making the language part of the official apparatus of state functions, Irish people would grow to resent it. Yeats, as a member of the Irish Senate, stated in 1923, in relation to the use of Irish during the daily prayer in the Senate, that

> I wish to make a very emphatic protest against the histrionics which have crept into the whole Gaelic movement. People pretend to know a thing that they do

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[84] See ———, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* pp. 76-80, 182-3 for a useful survey on the 1940s urban Irish language movement, which included organizations like Glún na Buaidhe and Ailtirí na hAiséirí, the periodical *Inniu* (*Today,* 1943) whose editor was O'Nolan's brother Ciarán, and the journals *Comhar* (1942), the Gaelic League's *Feasta* (1948), *Éire*, and *An Glór*, which offered publishing opportunities to young Irish writers. Equally a publishing initative, Sairséal agus Dill, got underway, as well as a book club An Club Leabhar (1938) which made Irish language material available to a larger readership. Also, in 1943 the National Gaelic Congress (Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaelige) was formed, which was followed by Gael Linn in 1953. Instead of desiring linguistic exchange through de-anglicization these revivalists affected what was possible: protection of the Irish language as an element of national life. Leaders of these urban movements included Seán Ó Ríordáin and Máirtín Ó Díreáin, both of whom believed that Irish-language writers could extend their remit beyond writing in Irish or on Irish topics.

[85] See CL, 18 Dec 1940 for an example of Myles's critique of the Gaelic League's failure to promote and preserve the language: Myles writes that 'I doubt whether the Gaelic League is serious about the Irish language and I'm afraid that the Irish language is not serious about the League. They're making fun of each other…' cited in Taaffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* pp. 228-9

[86] ———, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* p. 96

not know and which they have not the smallest intention of ever learning […] I think this method of histrionics, and going through a childish performance of something we do not know, and which we did not intend to learn, will ultimately lead to a reaction against the language.[87]

Like Yeats, O'Nolan recognises the absurdity of the use of a minority language for state purposes: while he understands that the disappearance of Irish would be a tragedy for Irish culture, he objects to the language being used as a bastion for purity and nationhood by exclusivist and xenophobic nationalists who promote it for their own agendas. O'Nolan berates Kavanagh's indifference to the state of the Irish language but recognises that the revival of it is now impossible. Myles writes that

[a]ny notion of reviving Irish as the universal language of the country is manifestly impossible and ridiculous but the continued awareness here of the Gaelic norm of word and thought is vital to the preservation of our peculiar and admired methods of handling English.[88]

For O'Nolan, Irish would have to survive as a second language and a necessary cultural catalyst for creativity in language usage, and this explains his move from writing 'Cruiskeen Lawn' largely in Irish to largely in English by the mid-1940s. It is his production of a peculiar 'minor' use of both languages in their influence on one another which he explores in his journalism in a deterritorializing fashion.

2.2.2 Controversy and criticism: deterritorializing cliché

From its genesis, the column generated political controversy through O'Nolan's use of the Irish language and Irish-related matters within the wider context of the *Irish Times'* policy towards the language revival, modern Irish language writing and the use of satire to criticise revivalism. Rather than offering a standard, major use of Irish, the 'minor' texts O'Nolan produces in Irish work within the frameworks of Irish language

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[87] Yeats, W.B., 'The Irish Language, 14 November 1923: Senate Speech on the Irish Government's Promotion of the Irish Language in Many Contexts, Including the Motion in the Senate That the Daily Prayer Be Said in Irish and English',

[88] na gCopaleen, Myles, 'Letters to the Editor', *Kavanagh's Weekly,* (14 June 1952), 5

revivalism, particularly through his use of pseudonymous letters which fuel debate on

his use of satiric Irish in his column. Hence, while Irish was established as the state's

major language through its revival policy, Myles's use of Irish, as Kiely notes, drove

'[t]he more rigid, old-fashioned Gaelic revivalists […] up the walls by his mockery – in

Gaelic and in a rare mixture of Gaelic and English – of their idiosyncrasies. Yet the

very style of his mockery was one good proof that a revival had taken place.'[89] Within

the first few weeks of the column, readers sent in letters of complaint accusing Myles

na gCopaleen and the editor of the *Irish Times* of attempting to sabotage the Irish

language revival.[90] This was due to Myles's use of Pidgin and grammatically incorrect

Irish alongside a more orthodox Irish in Gaelic script on a variety of unrelated comic

and surreal topics.[91]

However, as Cronin suggests, O'Nolan may have even invented some of these

letters of complaint to fuel this controversy and provoke discussion on his column in a

form of auto-criticism. In an editorial letter from an Anglo-Irish 'West-Briton-

Nationalist', the writer complains that 'I do not understand what worthy motive can

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[89] Kiely, Benedict, 'An Ear for Dublin Talk', *New York Times* 17 Nov 1968, p. 32 cited in Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 186. Hence, Myles describes his Irish language articles to his monoglot English language reader thus: '[t]hose who cannot read Irish may take some consolation from the fact that this is the sort of skunk-stench scald-bosh that appears occasionally in Irish on these pages.' CL, 25 Oct 1940

[90] For example, Jack O'Neill from Limerick wrote to the editor of the *Irish Times* that the column would be of interest if it 'were on sensible topics and written by someone obviously not embittered.' O'Neill continues that '[f]un and humour are to be welcomed in such a column, but there is no fun in hitting below the belt.' O'Neill, Jack, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* Oct 18 1940, p. 3. Hence, Alec Newman, who wrote for the column the 'Irishman's Diary' under the pseudonym 'Quidnunc' for the *Irish Times*, objected to O'Nolan's column's position on the editorial page, and so '[l]ater the column was moved to a safe distance on another page.' O'Nolan, Kevin, 'Preface', in *Further Cuttings from Cruiskeen Lawn*, ed. by O'Nolan, Kevin, (London: Grafton Books, 1989), pp. 11-2 (p. 12). Hence, Jackson defines the Irish used in 'Cruiskeen Lawn' as 'scurrilous, highly inventive, and almost untranslatable. Nothing like it had ever been perpetrated in the language.' Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 9

[91] In the column, the character Taidgin Slánabaile acts as a revivalist buffoon who speaks in Pidgin Irish, which is represented in phonetic translation, to the frustation of Myles's voice which is represented as 'Mise' in orthodox Irish in Gaelic script. For examples, see CL, 25 Feb 1941, CL 13 Mar 1941 and CL, 18 Mar 1941. Taaffe notes that 'Cruiskeen Lawn' was published in Gaelic type apart from Taidhghín's Pidgin Irish. The Corkadorky series of tales were published in Roman type. Taaffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* p. 101

inspire your "skits" on the Gaelic language and its student […] It sounds very much like fouling one's own nest […] I have heard many adverse comments on Irish. But you are spewing on it'.[92] This letter resulted in a number of responses from "Scolog", Seainin na n-Asal, and P.M.BH, to name but of few, who pick up on and continue West-Briton-Nationalist's debate, and mirror the earlier letters O'Nolan and his friends sent to the *Irish Times* during the late 1930s.[93] O'Nolan is producing multiple pseudonyms demonstrating both Anglo-Irish and nationalist opinions in editorial commentaries. His column achieves what another mock commentator Oscar Love from Blackrock claims to be a new truth; that 'the Irish have not discovered that nonsense is a new sense', and

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[92] O'Nolan, if he did write this editorial, is ever playful in the production of the complainant's identity. "A West-Briton-Nationalist" from Ballyhaunis in County Mayo displays a contradictory identity who assures the reader as the end of the letter that 'I am not a member of the Gaelic League or a Republican, but a very Conservative Irishman' despite his revivalist attitude. O'Nolan employs this identity to mock Anglo-Irish figures who claim to love the Irish language but who do not want its modern day promotion and development. Hence, this writer claims to have relatives who were students of Gaelic and yet fails to see that the column is a worthy example of a modern form of Irish language writing. West-Briton-Nationalist, A, 'Letters to the Editor: "Cruiskeen Lawn"', *Irish Times* Oct 17 1940, p. 3

[93] "Scolog" from Killiney in County Dublin replies to West-Briton-Nationalist stating that the column is 'surprising, excellent, and, by now, indespensible' and disregards the previous writer's opinions through open mockery of his choice of language and grammar. "Scolog", 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 18 Oct 1940, p. 3. This results in West-Briton-Nationalist, now from Dublin, replying to "Scolog" in cantankerous fashion arguing against the use of satire in Myles's column because 'I do not think the Gaelic movement is sufficiently strong to stand satire. It is like mocking a child trying to learn to walk in order to improve its gait.' West-Briton-Nationalist mockingly agrees with real contributor Jack O'Neill that the column is embittered and that 'there is no love of the Irish language' in the articles because of its satire: 'I am persuaded that the, perhaps unconscious, motive must be, therefore, to destroy.' West-Briton-Nationalist, A, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 19 Oct 1940, p. 9 If 'Neither the dying tongue nor one struggling for life is a subject for irony' for West-Briton-Nationalist, Seainin na n-Asal replies to West-Briton-Nationalist accusing him of misunderstanding the nature of the "skits". He writes that 'They are not "skits" on the language or on its students, but a rebellion in satire against the awful "tripe" which is dished out day after day in news sheets all over the country in "the Irish".' He objects to the 'Gaelic-here-there-and-everywhere minority. These are the articles which really cause mental spewing in rational Gaelic-speaking circles' and he wants 'light articles in good idiomatic Gaelic. "Myles na gCopaleen" is giving them to us. We want to smile in these hard times. Why emphasise the melancholy Riders-to-the-Sea, Gaelic twilight aspect? What about our far-famed Irish humour? Let us laugh, even if at ourselves, sometimes.' n-Asal, Seainin na, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* Oct 18 1904, p. 3. Equally, P.M.BH. of Drumcondra offers another digressive response to West-Briton-Nationalist and claims to be at a loss to the editor's policy on the Irish language which 'either cannot and will not deal with the question honestly', thus accusing Myles of 'pettiness' and positioning his column as an example of the anti-Irish stance of the newspaper. Most comically, P.M.BH. promotes Flann O'Brien, stating that 'Yesterday, to be sure, you printed a fine article by Flann O'Brien. I am sure you do not attempt to deceive yourself that such magnanimity can acquit you of all the meanness similar to the above, in which you persist.' He then accuses the editor and paper of fearing the living tongue and celebrating old and middle Irish; he argues that Irish must be given its due place and honour in the paper characterised by 'petty maliciousness'. P.M.BH., 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* Oct 19 1940, p. 9

that there is a need for ironic humour in modern Irish because '[t]he patriot has ever been devoid of humour' and '[t]he decay of humour in Eire is largely due to the spread of patriotism, for the patriot cannot appreciate his neighbours, but he worships himself.'[94] Humour in the form of ironic satire is used by Myles to attack such nationalist chauvinism, and this offers a fresh contrast to other more solemn contemporary uses of the language.

Therefore, any understanding of O'Nolan's column and political opinion must be historically contextualised in relation to contemporary debates on cultural nationalism, modernity and language revivalism within a postcolonial and 'minor' literary framework. The success of O'Nolan's column lies in his complex, disrespectful attitudes to matters concerning Irish nationalism, the language revival movement and both the liberal resentment and cynicism as well as nationalist solemnity and hypocrisy surrounding these topics. O'Nolan's comic style offers a sense of relief and resistance within such debates. O'Nolan, under his many guises, positioned his column as a responsive force to the current politics of the day. There were also many positive editorial commentaries to the *Irish Times* during the first month of the column's existence.[95] For example, Cóilín Ó Cuanaigh from the Gaelic League headquarters on Parnell Square in Dublin congratulates the newspaper on the new feature defining it as a

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[94] Love, Oscar, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* Oct 18 1940, p. 3
[95] Ó Cuanaigh, Cóilín, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* Oct 17 1940, p. 3; "P.M." 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* Oct 17 1940, p. 3. Other examples of positive commentary on the value of the column and its use of Irish include Eamonn an Chnuic from County Leitrim who congratulates the paper on the comic column which '[f]ar from poking fun at our native tongue, Myles has ably demonstrated its elasticity and adaptability.' an Chnuic, Eamonn, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 19 Oct 1940, p. 9. Equally, P.H. hAodha praises Myles's column because it provokes comment and debate unlike previous Irish language journalism and maintains that this is sufficient defence for the column. hAodha, P.O., 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 22 Oct 1940, p. 6. F.P. Funnell of Ballsbridge sees the column as encouraging the spread of Irish rather than resisting it 'to throw off the trappings of infancy, and give us something related to the world around us that intelligent adults may read with interest.' Like "P.M.", he wants Irish to advance from sub-standard Irish or school text books to more adult forms of literary expression because '[t]he language cannot last unless it expresses virile thought' and so writers need to 'put Life into it' in a political sense. Funnell, F.P., 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 22 Oct 1940, p. 6

possible 'Gaelic Stephen Leacock' which emits 'actual chuckles of delight'. He argues

that the column is 'a long-felt want' from earlier forms of sub-standard Gaelic

journalism in other newspapers. "P.M." from Wicklow, possibly one of O'Nolan's

many pseudonyms, repeats this praise of the column, arguing that '[i]t is refreshing to

see an Irish article in a newspaper that does not confine itself to bewailing the progress

of the language or to baby talk.' If the column provided the Irish revival with a modern,

satiric and inventive use of the Irish language which should be considered a 'minor'

form of the Irish language, this use of the language is also defined by what P.M.BH.

refers to as the indecipherable nature of his use of Irish which he refers to as 'insane

babbling' made by the 'splenic ravings of this humbug'.[96]

However, these 'ravings', both in Irish and English, are characterised by

O'Nolan's desire to avoid fetishizing the national language and instead reveal the

clichéd and limiting nature of the use of these languages through their associations with

national ideologies. Myles writes that he 'spend[s] innumerable brain-hours every day

trying to remember and record clichés' (CL, 17 Aug 1942).[97] Myles defines a cliché as

> a phrase that has become fossilised, its component words deprived of their
> intrinsic light and meaning by incessant usage. Thus it appears that clichés
> reflect somewhat the frequency of the incidence of the same situations in life. If
> this be so, a sociological commentary could be compiled from these items of
> mortified language.

If the 'gun-history of modern Ireland' is defined by 'the inflexible terminology

attaching to it', it is Myles's goal to offer a political commentary on this rigid use of

major language through the development of the 'Myles na gCopaleen Cathechism of

Cliché' (BM, 227).[98] Myles states that he objects to cliché and aims to 'shoot [his]

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[96] P.M.BH., 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 31 Oct 1940, p. 6
[97] Reprinted in O'Brien, Flann, *At War*, ed. by Jackson, John Wyse (Sante Fe: Dalkey Archive Press, 1999) p. 73; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (AW, 73).
[98] For re-printed examples of this Cathechism, see BM (201-27).

mouth off, whatever the consequences may be' at all forms of cliché in '356 tri-weekly parts' (BM, 201, 202). His Cathechism promises to be '[a] unique compendium of all that is nauseating in contemporary writing' and a 'harrowing survey of sub-literature' (BM, 202). Through a question and answer format, Myles reveals the infinite degree of cliché used in all levels of Irish national life through the use of headings such as 'MORE OF IT' (BM, 202, 204).

Myles satirically comments on the Gaelic League's desire to de-anglicise the Irish nation. Myles provides his 'Simple Lessons in Irish' series which reveals how the Irish language is dichotomised within a binary opposition of tradition and modernity. Considering the government's fear of the modernising influences of more contemporary culture, Myles exposes national paranoia when he notes that there is no J, W, W, X, Y and Z in the Irish alphabet, and so a word like 'jazz' can be read as three-quarters foreign. In a parody of Hyde's de-anglicisation project, Myles concludes that because there are fewer letters in the Irish alphabet the spread of Irish in England will be slower than expected (CL, 26 Oct 1940). Equally, he exposes the chauvinistic pride attached to the Irish language within academic and nationalist institutions. Myles comments that a lady lecturing on Irish argued that English speakers use 400 words on average while Irish speakers employ 4,000 words. Myles, of course, disagrees with this statement, and exaggerates its chauvinism by arguing that the ratio should be 400:400,000 because, he reasons, barely a single word in Irish has a simple meaning. This hyperbolic over-estimation of the endless possible meanings of Irish words demonstrates Myles's 'minor' linguistic policy which aims to intensify and amplify the assumed national significations inherent in the language. As Myles argues, there are 'endless shades of cognate meaning' in the language which produces a 'spectrum of graduated ambiguity' whereby a singular word expresses two contradictory concepts simultaneously as well

as a 'plethora of intermediate concepts that have no bearing on either.' If Myles produces a number of digressive and deterritorialized meanings in language, he aims to produce an endlessly processional use of language which refuses to rely on cliché (CL, 11 Jan 1941; BM, 278-9). In particular, this occurs through Myles's favoured tactic of attacking the Irish lexicographer Fr. Dinneen on his translation of Irish words into English to show his reader what they really mean (BM, 276-8). Myles exposes how key Irish terms have political associations within Dinneen's Irish-English translation: Myles enjoys re-defining words in the manner of a dictionary, providing an Irish word and then an English phrase to expose its cultural association. For example, the phrase 'An t-Iartar' which is translated by Myles as 'the West of Ireland' is set beside the word 'Iartóir' which is satirically translated as 'a West of Ireland man, an applicant for a grant, a chancer' (CL, Nov 1 1940).[99] Thus, Myles takes a word that interests him and follows it through to all its deterritorialized meanings and implications, in part for the sake of comic value, but also to offer a political exposure of the ideologies behind Fr. Dinneen's revivalist translation project. As the next section will discuss, O'Nolan's inventive use of both the English and Irish languages aims to deterritorialize the significations inherent in both languages in his production of a hybrid linguistic form.

2.2.3 Linguistic hybridity and 'Gaelic ingenuity' in 'Cruiskeen Lawn'

If Irish nationalists during the immediate post-independence period actively encouraged a singular version of Irish identity through distinctive cultural markers, this

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[99] For further examples of his comic Irish-English translations, see CL, 12 Nov 1940; CL, 26 Nov 1940; CL, 24 Dec 1940, and of standard English and colloquial English, see CL, 16 Jan 1943; AW, 65-6. For an example of Myles's 'war against a certain apostrophe' due to its incorrect use in other newspapers articles, see CL, 21 Mar 1944; AW, 121. Knowall continues Myles's obsession with etymological definitions of words and their multiple, unstable significations. See MAD (169-71) for a discussion of American slang in film and MAD (208-10) for an examination of English words which have a different meaning depending upon the geographical location in which they are employed, resulting in Knowall's statement that 'every man is entitled to make his own English'. For a useful over-view of Myles's use of Irish in 'Cruiskeen Lawn' see Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 113-5

leads us to a consideration of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the inventive quality of 'minor' language. In relation to Kafka's use of German, the philosophers argue that the mixture of Yiddish, Czech and German in his work 'allow[s] Kafka the possibility of invention.'[100] This produces a form of linguistic hybridity in O'Nolan's work, both within each major language's codes and when the languages merge and influence one another. Lloyd defines hybridity as 'a process of cultural mixing and juxtaposition in which the traditional is combined and inflected with the modern or the native with the Western.'[101] In relation to O'Nolan's use of the official language of Ireland, Irish, and the dominant spoken language, English, this results in his juxtaposition of a number of national codes which are associated with both languages within the dichotomy of tradition and modernity. O'Nolan both exposes the significations inherent in the English and Irish languages through his ambivalent, 'in-between' form of both languages, with Irish often acting as a catalyst for the presentation of a range of heterogeneous accents, intonations and variations of speakers and language in his English language column writing.

Myles na gCopaleen, from Santry, when writing an editorial letter to *Kavanagh's Weekly* on the policy of Irish language revivalism, argues that *Kavanagh's Weekly* 'does itself no service in publishing repeated attacks in the policy of teaching the Irish language in the schools.'[102] Myles argues that

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[100] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 20-1

[101] Lloyd, *Ireland after History* p. 46. In *The Dalkey Archive*, the name of De Selby's house acts as an example of such a form of linguistic hybridity which is employed in the narrative for the sake of comedy: De Selby combined the word mór (big) and the word lawn for the name of his house which he refers to as '[a] hybrid, of course, but what matter?'. However, Teague McGettigan paints the name on the gate as 'LAWNMOWER' (TDA, 10).

[102] The short-lived paper *Kavanagh's Weekly* began in 1952 and lasted for thirteen issues. In this paper Kavanagh aimed to demonstrate the insular political nature of the de Valera administration. As Peter Kavanagh notes, Patrick Kavanagh worked within the dichotomy of official national Ireland and the world of international Art, and so 'Patrick had not yet shaken off the dangerous notion of Ireland as a spiritual entity. Hence you will find a certain anger at the state of national affairs.' See Kavanagh, Peter,

> Irish is a precise, elegant and cultivated language, with a most unusual and
> curious literature. Your attitude appears to arise from plain ignorance of it, and
> you get yourself into further trouble by confusing the study of it with the buck-
> lepping antics of the Gaelic League type of moron.

Myles, by setting up a contrast between the how Irish language is promoted by state

nationalism and the potential, unrealised cultivation of its rich literary heritage, further

argues that one does not abstain from champagne because prostitutes drink it, and so

one should not 'ignore a branch of literature and human knowledge' which is contained

in the Irish language.[103] O'Nolan wants the Irish language to continue as it 'supplies

that unknown quantity in us that enables us to transform the English language and this

seems to hold of people who know little or no Irish, like Joyce'.[104] With this comment

in mind, an examination of how Irish helps O'Nolan to develop a deterritorialized

version of English needs to be undertaken. Myles argues that Irish would have to

survive as a second language and a necessary cultural catalyst for creativity in language

usage in English. However, he understands that the disappearance of Irish would be a

tragedy as Myles insists that Irish was a more sophisticated means to communication

than English which fitted the ambiguities and dichotomies of the Irish mind.

The first article of 'Cruiskeen Lawn' is a classic example of how O'Nolan

achieves his deterritorializing attitude to the English language and international politics,

as well as the Irish language revival, through his use of heterogeneous materials in a

bricolage structure. The first column on 4 October 1940 was not written by Myles na

gCopaleen, but 'From a Correspondent' called 'An Broc'.[105] The article responds to an

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'Introduction', in *Kavanagh's Weekly: A Journal of Literature and Politics*, ed. by Kavanagh, Peter, (The Curragh, Co. Kildare: The Goldsmith Press, 1981)

[103] na gCopaleen, 'Letters to the Editor', See MAD (35) for a discussion by Knowall on the existence of Irish words in the everyday speech of the English language in Ireland.

[104] cited in Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 238

[105] 'An Broc' means 'The Badger' in English. The first article is reprinted in O'Brien, Flann, *Further Cuttings from Cruiskeen Lawn*. ed. by O'Nolan, Kevin (London: Paladin, 1989) pp. 12-4; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (FC, 12-4).

editorial in the *Irish Times* from 28 September 1940 which is concerned with the futility of the Irish Free-State government's efforts to extend the use of the Irish language in its language revivalist policies.[106] 'An Broc' quotes a passage from this editorial and responds to it by providing a 'bilingual joke' related to its subject matters.[107] The first article, like the column as a whole, is positioned within a hybrid textual space and uses forms of hybridized language. It is important to note how O'Nolan's articles are textually located within the paper in relation to other war-time and Irish-related articles, and how O'Nolan responds to these events throughout his various articles.[108] The first article appeared on the leader page opposite stories about World War Two, and responds to an editorial concerning the influx of war terminology from the English language and the effect this is having on the de-anglicization mission of government policy.[109] O'Nolan responds to the editorial's statement that the government must now realise that the Irish language cannot be resurrected to replace the use of English in order to de-anglicize the country. The editorial writer gives an example of the current

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[106] Such government policies included making Irish compulsory in school and for entrance into public office, the use of Irish in parliament, in the law, in the armed forces and on road signs, and the promotion of holidaying in the Gaeltacht and sending children to live there in order to learn the language.

[107] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 113. 'An Broc' quotes an editorial from 28 September 1940: 'Surely the Government has realised by this time that it is very far from an easy task to eliminate and extend the use of the Irish language [*sic*] in place of English. The task would be hard enough in normal years, unless conversations could be limited to requests for food and drink and other expressions of the elementary wants of life, but at such a time as the present, which children all over the world are trying to keep pace with an influx of new words as a result of the war news bulletins, it becomes well-nigh impossible. Parents who confine the family meal-time discussions to conversations in Irish must find it very difficult to explain such words as air-raid warden, incendiary bomb, non-aggression pact, de-contamination, and Molotoff bread-basket. Has Gaelic ingenuity, for that matter, stretched so far as to provide a really expressive and indigenous equivalent for the well-know 'Axis'?' (FC, 13)

[108] 'Cruiskeen Lawn' was generally positioned beside features like the 'Irishman's Diary' by Quidnunc and 'The London Letter', or opposite the main news page. O'Nolan even included arrows in his column if he was responding to particular articles in the newspaper on a particular day.

[109] Such war news stories included reports on daylight bombings of suburban London by Germans, the machine gunning of a train in the British midlands, R.A.F. raids over Hamburg, Neville Chamberlain leaving public office after his resignation from the office of Lord President of the Council, and the Germans' apology for the bombing of a creamery in County Wexford in South-East Ireland which killed three girls. World War Two was referred to as the 'Emergency' period in the Irish Free State. For studies of Irish neutrality during the 'Emergency', see Wills, Clare, *That Neutral Ireland: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007) ; and Nolan, Kevin B., and T. Desmond Williams, eds., *Ireland in the War Years and after, 1939-51* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1969)

context of World War Two with the influx of new English language war vocabulary and implies that the Irish language, rather than adapting to modernity and the current war in Europe, is promoted in an insular manner, limiting its conversations to topics on food and drink. He asks '[h]as Gaelic ingenuity, for that matter, stretched so far as to provide a really expressive and indigenous equivalent for the well-known 'Axis'?'. The editorial writer suggests that if the Irish language is to have any future it must be made contemporary.

In response to this statement, 'An Broc' imagines 'the stormy philological breakfasts that obtain in the households of the Gael' focusing on the possible Irish word for 'Molotoff bread-basket', which was a type of Soviet droppable bomb dispenser that combined a large high-explosive charge with a cluster of incendiary bombs and was used on Finnish cities during World War Two. The first article contains a comic dialogue in Irish, focusing on the language of food and drink, between a mother and son at meal time over this issue. As he reads the *Irish Times* over breakfast, the son, Shawn Beg, refuses to eat his porridge and demands that his mother tell him the Irish for the war term 'Molotoff bread-basket'. Shawn Beg says

> Ní dóigh liom go bhfuil aon Ghaeidhilg ar '*Molotoff bread-basket*'. Ní'l sa Ghaeidhilg seo acht sean chanamhain ghagach. Cad chuige nach dtig linn Béarla a labhairt sa teach seo?

> I don't think there is an Irish word for '*Molotoff bread-basket*'. There is nothing in Irish but old proverbs. How come we don't speak English in this house?[110]

His mother responds to his question by hitting him, thus mirroring the impact of the Soviet bombs and demonstrating that there is an equivalent for the word in physical humour. She replies 'Bhéarfad-sa *Molotoff bread-basket* duit, a thaisce, a aingilín bhig léigheanta.'/ 'I'll give you a Molotoff bread-basket, my precious, my little learned

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[110] My translation.

angel.'[111]

This article demonstrates how O'Nolan counters the editorial's charge that there is a lack of 'Gaelic ingenuity' in the Irish language through his use of humorous, hybridized English and Irish literary languages and forms. Structurally, the short article contains many linguistic forms and narrative digressions, including a short dialogue between the mother and son which parodies Irish Literary Renaissance dramas, a comic dictionary definition, and the use of Irish proverbs. This *bricolage* style, through its use of multiple raw materials at his disposal, deterritorializes how both the Irish and English languages are used to describe contemporary Ireland, and opens up new ways of using these languages within different formats and in relation to each other. For example, he ironically employs a clever parody in the last line which incorporates the Irish seanfhocail or proverb 'Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí', which translates as 'Praise youth and it will flourish', with the war-phrase 'Molotoff' to produce a linguistic amalgamation '*Mol an OGPU agus toicfaidh said*.'[112] Hence, if a language is always set in variation from its standard forms, O'Nolan produces a hybrid linguistic form which decodes through its diversity the fixed significations and associations inherent in both the Irish and English languages to the point of meaningless, comic absurdity. Hence, as a reader once commented on Myles's column, 'I don't pretend always to

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[111] Kevin O'Nolan's translation (FC, 14).

[112] For other articles on the Youth Drive 'Mol an Óige' see CL, 19 Oct 1940. Jacquin notes more generally that O'Nolan's use of language and linguistic devices is noted for its tricks and pranks it plays upon its reader for our entertainment. His use of Irish and English includes malapropisms, misprints, anagrams, riddles, enigmas, conundrums, question and answer exercises, puns and uttering words which bear no relation to each other. See Jacquin, 'Flann O'Brien's Savage Mirth', pp. 2-3 for a fuller discussion of this. For examples of Myles's use of puns in his 'Keats and Chapman' sequences which rely on the pleasure of a verbal game which ends in a pun, see O'Brien, Flann, *The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman Including 'the Brother'*. ed. by O'Neill, Jamie (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2005) , pp. 1-114. hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (VL, 1-114).

understand what he is driving at, but his piquant nonsense is delightful reading.'[113]

As this chapter has discussed, O'Nolan demonstrates a complex relationship to nationalism and colonialism's array of distinctive markers of Irish identity. Through a focus on O'Nolan's use of language in relation to the failure of the Irish language revival in the post-independence period, it has been shown that, as a reader of the *Irish Times* once wrote, Myles has 'done more to demonstrate the actual living force of the Gaelic language than any society, institution or Government has done', thus positioning the nationalist revival policy of implementing the death of the language while Myles breaths new life into it.[114] His column demonstrates how the national language is not static and can instead be re-composed and made hybrid through a number of different styles and formats to counter the fossilisation of Irish and English within a colonially inherited dichotomy. As Jackson and Maley argue, '[t]he triple play facing any Irish author is whether to aspire to standard English, follow the lead of Anglo-Irish authors and adopt and 'Irish English' or 'Hiberno-English' idiom, or turn away from English altogether and write in Irish.'[115] O'Nolan engages in all three options, and eventually leaves Irish behind in order to make himself more marketable and current in the changing Irish linguistic environment. 'Minor' literature is produced within major language and seeks to deterritorialize the formative elements of the major language: the Irish language has become a major language within the context of the cultural politics of the post-independence period and is a language O'Nolan must decode through his

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[113] McC. Dix, Una, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 7 Feb 1941, p. 6. Similarly Myles once commented that Corkmen speak a 'mysterious language' which is 'not Irish and certainly not English' (BM, 283).

[114] na Maoil Righthe, Capaillin, 'Letters to the Editor: Cruiskeen Lawn', *Irish Times* 3 Feb 1941, p. 6

[115] Jackson, and Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism', p. 74. Similarly, Jackson and Maley note that '[i]n Scotland a comparable three-way split exists through English, Scots and Gaelic, but with more accommodation and interaction.' p. 74

textual strategies alongside English. Just like Kafka's 'Prague German' which disrupts the national, collective language of German, O'Nolan de-familiarizes the nationalist promotion of the language and makes Irish open to creative deformations that uncover the hidden signifiers behind the power relations of language revivalism. His use of language creates a *bricolage* tautology where diverse ideas, cultural references, texts and styles enter into a relation with one another and where no pure, absolute form of authentic speech is produced both from O'Nolan's pseudonymous authors and official state ideologies.

The next chapter will continue my exploration of how O'Nolan deterritorializes notions of 'Irish Ireland' promoted by pre and post-independence nationalist discourses in his Irish language novel *An Béal Bocht* through his hyperbolic, parodic style and use of the Irish language. Lloyd calls for the need to understand historically the emergence of a particular matrix of qualities according to which Irish canonical works are defined which exclude non-authentic 'minor' literature.[116] As will be discussed in the next chapter, while O'Nolan is incorporated within the Irish canon, he parodies the various canonical qualities of Gaelic auto-biographies and literary traditions. His parody of Irish language texts reverses the biases and clichés of both imperialism and nationalism by calling into question the hegemony of the central cultural values promoted by these canonical texts, particularly in relation to their form of 'poor mouthing' and mourning the loss of Gaelic Ireland. After all, a 'minor' writer works within established traditions within a literary canon to negotiate a discursive space to resist the cultural assumptions that belong to this canon.

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[116] Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* p. 3

Chapter 3: The *bricoleur* at work: Gaelic identity in *An Béal Bocht*

On 3 December 1941, under the pseudonym of the editor Myles na gCopaleen, O'Nolan's only Irish language novel *An Béal Bocht* (*The Poor Mouth*) was published.[1] The novel is set in the fictional Gaeltacht area of Corca Dorcha (Corkadoragha), which Myles refers to in his mock editorial as 'a distinctive place and the people who live there are without compare'.[2] The novel is a merciless satire on the conventions of a number of authoritative literary and cultural texts which claim to depict the Irish peasantry authentically. O'Nolan achieves this through the ironic story of the western peasant Bónapárt Ó Cúnasa's (Bonaparte O'Coonassa) life from his birth, through his adventures in the Gaeltacht area known as the Rosses and his tragic marriage, to his eventual imprisonment due to a miscarriage of justice. As discussed in chapter two, within varying forms of Irish nationalism an association was maintained between the Irish language, rural poverty and the image of the western seaboard Gaeltacht area. The novel's sub-title 'Drochscéal ar an drochshaol curtha in eagar le', which translates as 'A bad story about the hard life', emphasises the hyperbolic nature of the novel's amplification of such an association in its satire of the valorization of the West of Ireland as a pre-colonial, pre-modern and un-anglicized area whose poverty, folk culture, and rural landscape are celebrated by dominant nationalism as a form of

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[1] The text was translated as *The Poor Mouth* by Patrick C. Power in 1973. See O'Brien, Flann, *The Poor Mouth: A Bad Story About The Hard Life*, Power, Patrick C. (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973) . The phrase 'to poor mouth' describes the tactic of a person who makes a great show of poverty to wring sympathy and support from on-lookers. There was no English language translation of the novel available during O'Nolan's lifetime. To this extent, the text must be read within the context of the Irish language revival as an in-joke for those who could read the Irish language, rather than as a text which was widely available to the English speaking world. All translations of the novel used in this dissertation originate from Power's translation.

[2] O'Brien, Flann, *The Poor Mouth: A Bad Story About The Hard Life*, Power, Patrick C. (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973) p. 7; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (TPM, 7)

authentic Gaelic existence.[3]

Some early nationalist reviewers of the parodic novel accused Myles of offering a patronising representation of the Gaeltacht.[4] However, this conflicting reception of the text was O'Nolan's intention: before the novel's publication, O'Nolan wrote to his publisher that '[i]f the book doesn't provoke a row with the Die-Hards I will have to whip one up by showers of pseudonymous letters to the papers', just as he had done in 1940 when he commenced 'Cruiskeen Lawn'.[5] O'Nolan envisioned the text as a playfully serious travesty of a whole range of literary and cultural representations of the Irish peasant from the Victorian, Irish Literary Revival and post-independence periods. As a travesty, the text attacks these various modes of representation of the Gaelic peasant's condition, from the autobiographies of the Gaelic peasants of the Blasket Islands to the stereotyped representations of the Irish peasant on the Victorian stage. As Cronin notes, the text is a 'form of literary inversion' rather than a straightforward thesis on the condition of the peasant.[6] Myles has multiple targets, from the middle-class Dubliner who visits the Gaeltacht on holiday to experience a perceived sense of

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[3] O'Nolan's misery memoir novel *The Hard Life* also has a sub-title 'An Exegesis of Squalor' and similarly meditates on issues relating to poverty, this time in an urban, economic and cultural sense. The novel is a farce on urban Dublin at the turn of the twentieth-century which focuses on various themes of squalor, such as alcoholism, bodily functions, crime, illicit sex, unemployment and illness. In particular, as Bolton notes, Mr. Collopy's uses the words pishogues, crawthumpers, pig farmers and tinkers to describe the children Finbarr and Manus in the novel because his 'word choice serves to remind the children of their uneducated, rustic, lower-class, and superstitious roots.' Bolton, 'Comedies of Failure: O'Brien's *The Hard Life* and Moore's *the Emperor of Ice Cream*', p. 124.

[4] See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 128-30 for a short survey of early reviews of the novel. Unfavorable reviews included one by Richard Foley's for the *Irish Library Bulletin* and a review in the *Bell* in February 1942. However, in contrast to this, Frank O'Connor praised the book and wrote to the editor of the *Irish Times* asking for a biography of Myles na gCopaleen in Corca Dorcha. See *Irish Times*, 3 Mar 1942.

[5] A letter from O'Nolan to Pádraig Ó Canainn 28 Nov 1941, cited in ———, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 128. Myles also wrote that 'I am rather pleased with the reception given to my book, *An Béal Bocht*. It is gratifying to know that an important work of literature receives in this country the recognition that is its due.' He refers to it as 'fine stuff' and that when choosing between buying this book over another one should '[r]efuse all substitutes. Every genuine copy bears the name, "Myles na gCopaleen"', a name which is anything but genuine due to its pseudonymous nature alongside the imitative style of his novel (CL, 12 Dec 1941; AW, 43-4).

[6] ———, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 125

authentic Irish culture, to the endless representative praise of Gaelic culture which can be found in editorial prefaces by translators of Blasket Island autobiographies. The novel can be viewed as a 'minor' text which relies on the intertextual subversion of these major, authentic representations, all of which remain inadequate to offer a faithful depiction of the peasantry which does not romanticise or stereotype them.

As a multi-faceted amalgamation of such major discourses, the novel, and O'Nolan's writing practice more generally, must be regarded as a form of *bricolage*.[7] Considering O'Nolan wrote under a multitude of personalities, one can view *bricolage* as an example of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the 'characteristic mode of production of a schizophrenic producer'.[8] Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his study of primitive thought *The Savage Mind* (1962), argues that a *bricoleur* is 'someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman.'[9] If the *bricoleur* is a mischievous odd jobs man who engages in adapting 'a heterogeneous repertoire' from previous constructions and destructions, Lévi-Strauss maintains that the *bricoleur* can perform a large number of diverse tasks and 'he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project.'[10] Unlike an engineer whose creative strategy, for Lévi-Strauss, is rational, direct and purposeful, a *bricoleur* makes do with the heterogeneous materials he has on offer to produce a new structure. As Surgi Speck argues, in relation to Sterne's *Tristram Shady*, the *bricoleur* engages in zig-zag 'strategies of indirection used to overcome

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[7] See MAD (18-21) for an image of George Knowall as a *bricoleur* author studying a range of Anglo-Irish, English and Greek literature in his library which he writes an article about.

[8] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Hurley, Robert, Helen R. Lane and Mark Seem (London and New York: Continuum, 2004) pp. 7-8

[9] Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *The Savage Mind (La Pensée Sauvage)*, *The Nature of Human Society Series* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) pp. 16-7. Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908) taught philosophy, sociology, anthropology and ethnology, and traced the origins of the word *bricoler*, referring to games such as hunting, billiards, riding and shooting which are characterised by their divergences, such as when balls rebound, dogs stray, and horses swerve from their direct course to avoid obstacles (p. 16).

[10] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (La Pensée Sauvage)* p. 17

problems that cannot be addressed by ordinary and more direct means.'[11] In Sterne's text, the *bricoleur* is not in search of narrative cohesion and meaning and is instead engaged in a re-ordering of materials which never reach a closed purpose. Such a description of this form of textual production can be defined as a 'minor' literary practice if the materials used belong within the major canon.

Myles, as *bricoleur* author, builds his parody from a disparate range of representations of the western peasant through his imitation of specific works of literature and writing styles to ridicule their characteristic features and claims to authenticity. This form of imitation is characterised by Myles's use of repetition, and his derision of the manners, attitudes and ways of speaking of the figure of the Irish peasant in colonial and national discourses. Hence, his *bricolage* parody can be considered a 'minor' literary tactic which dissolves the fixed linguistic systems and cultural authority of the major canon. As Lloyd argues, in order for us to produce 'an adequate theory of minor literature it is necessary to analyze historically the politics of culture.'[12] Lloyd sees marginal, non-canonical forms as valuable sites of resistance and as vital moments of hybridity in Ireland which 'refuse the homogeneity of 'style' required for national citizenship'. Lloyd argues that this is 'effectively a matter of verisimilitude: which narrative of 'Irishness' comes to seem self-evident, normative, truthful' because control of narrative is vital for the state's legitimate frameworks.[13]

Within the context of the post-independence period of the Irish Free State, there was a need to deterritorialize the dominant significations of the 'state language' of

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[11] Surgi Speck, Paul, 'Bricolage, Analogies and Hinges: Order in the Recombinant Universe Of "Tristram Shady"', *South Central Review, 2:4* (Winter 1985), 64-82 (p. 64). Surgi-Speck defines Sterne's *bricolage* as a 'spirited, playful, creative and irreverent attitude' through his 'habit of purposeful indirection' (p. 65). See Sterne, Laurence, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London: Everyman's Library, 1991)

[12] Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* p. 5

[13] ———, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* pp. 5-6

nationalist discourse as expressed through the English and Irish languages and through canonical literary texts translated and published by state-sponsored organisations. In the light of this need to question claims to pastoral verisimilitude in such canonical literature, this chapter will firstly examine why O'Nolan chose the name of Myles na gCopaleen as the pseudonym of his journalism, Irish language novel, and drama. Through an examination of Victorian representations of the character of Myles, O'Nolan elaborates upon colonial, Anglo-Irish and nationalist representations of the Irish to position Myles as a textual thief and a *bricoleur* figure who is made out of an assorted panoply of different cultural and verbal representations from a number of colonial and nationalist texts which are emulated and derided. O'Nolan adopts this pseudonym to link how the Irish were stereotyped in the colonial period with how this stereotype has been reversed and celebrated in the post-colonial period of his contemporary Ireland. He produces an historical and literary parody of this process through this pen-name in order to deterritorialize this continuing neo-colonial cultural image of the idealised stage Irishman and western Gael.

O'Crohan's Irish-language autobiography, and Flower's English translation and preface act as the hypotext which O'Nolan models his hypertext *An Béal Bocht* upon. Because of this, I will secondly examine Myles's role as 'the Editor' of the text who self-reflexively draws attention to the editorial mediations outsiders make to assert the faithfulness of literary work on Gaelic topics. Through an examination of Myles's two prefaces to *An Béal Bocht* alongside some of Myles's journalism on the publication on the text and other paratextual elements of *An Béal Bocht*, I will establish how Myles parodies claims to anthropological authenticity to reveal how dominant discourses classify the Gael and his or her culture. Thirdly, I will focus on how Myles constructs his hero Bonaparte within these parodied discourses, focusing on representations of

stereotypical identifications and the use of clichéd Irish language and folklore. *An Béal Bocht* is an expositive political parody, rather than a pastiche, of representations of the western peasant through O'Nolan's pick pocket style which borrows creatively from other sources.[14] While O'Nolan pieces together fragments of earlier literary texts into a collage structure, his imitations of earlier texts are always conducted with a sense of political critical distance around the issue of verisimilitude. This is demonstrated in the text due to the comic-tragic situation of Bonaparte's identity which is constructed around a number of clichés from Gaelic texts. Bonaparte acts as a symbol for the post-independence Irish nation which, in its form of ultimate Irishness, presents a view of the Irish nation as absurd in its desire to deanglicise the nation.[15] If the Irish speaking peasant acted as the 'messiah' which would 'restore the ancient civilization', O'Nolan's multiple authorial voices are a satanic and satiric presence which challenge such forms of cultural essentialism.[16]

3.1 The genealogy of Myles na gCopaleen and the Irish peasant

> Caliban to Prospero: You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (*The Tempest*)[17]

An examination of the roots of the pseudonym Myles na gCopaleen can reveal the *bricolage* energy and political critique behind O'Nolan's choice of pen-name. The name Myles na gCopaleen is an intertextual borrowing and amalgamation of a number of literary and cultural sources which O'Nolan utilises for his own devices. The name originates from the tradition of ethnic stereotyping of the Irish which was common

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[14] Jacquin identifies O'Nolan as a self-satisfied satiric writer who is able to re-produce the stylistic features of any one discourse in order to offer culturally-orientated pastiches and parodies on, for example, Irish mythological sagas, Gaelic autobiographies and Irish accents. Jacquin, 'Flann O'Brien's Savage Mirth', p. 4

[15] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 130

[16] McCaffrey, 'Trends in Post-Revolutionary Irish Literature', p. 26

[17] Shakespeare, William, 'The Tempest', in *Collected Works of William Shakespeare*, (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1994), pp. 1-28 (I.ii.362-4, p. 8)

during the mid to late nineteenth-century in Britain. Hirsch comments that a typical feature of 'the English comic weeklies and on the music-hall stage was the Irish peasant, "Paddy", a comic, quaint, drunken Irish buffoon'.[18] Due to increased post-famine immigration into Britain, the often violent agrarian revolts in the Irish countryside against landlordism, and the rise of the Fenian movement in the 1860s, the Irish citizen was characterised as 'a subhuman figure, a "white Negro" portrayed in *Punch* as a primitive Frankenstein or peasant Caliban.'[19] O'Nolan was well aware of this form of ethnic stereotyping: writing in the early 1960s as George Knowall, O'Nolan exposes how the Irish were situated in a dichotomised relationship with British identity not just in Victorian times but also during the twentieth century (MAD, 140-2). Knowall comments that the stereotypes of Irish flaws upheld by the British are 'delusions'. These preconceptions of the Irish include the belief that the Irish are British, or more to the point English, rather than their own separate nationality, and that the Irish love to engage in mindless fighting, are always drunk, keep pigs in their

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[18] Interestingly, Walter notes that nineteenth-century '[d]epictions of Irish people in both Ireland and England were almost exclusively male images' of depraved and sub-human figures whereby ''Paddies' and 'Micks' subsume both genders, but are overtly male in stereotype.' Walter offers a study of how the Irish female has been stereotyped in relation to these dominant male images, both in colonial and more contemporary terms, particularly in relation to the perpetuation of earlier colonial stereotypes during the Northern Irish 'Troubles'. Walter, Bronwen, 'Gendered Irishness in Britain: Changing Constructions', in *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity*, ed. by Graham, Colin and Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 77-98 (pp. 78, 85)

[19] Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1119. Such cartoon images of the Irish were drawn by Sir John Tenniel between the 1860s and 1880s in *Punch*. The Irish were positioned at a lower level in Darwinian evolutionary racialisation of the physical body alongside African people. For example, Charles Kingsley, while traveling in Ireland in 1860, wrote that 'I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful.' cited in Lyons, F.S.L., *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1830-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979) p. 12. This ethnic stereotyping acted as a justification for the 'civilizing' force of imperial rule in Ireland through its model of racial development and social improvement. See Redfield, J.W., *Comparative Physiognomy* (London: Grenville, 1852) p. 78 for a similar description of the Irish, this time as dogs rather than apes. For a similar examination of how Africans were compared to monkeys on the Darwinian evolutionary scale, see Newell, Stephanie, *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 24-45. Equally, Kiberd's work makes links between the Négritude movement and the Irish Literary Revival as a form of postcolonial revisionism of such racialisation. See Kiberd, Declan, 'White Skins, Black Masks: Celticism and *Négritude* (1996)', in *The Irish Writer and the World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 133-45

houses, and eat potatoes.[20] Knowall further comments that the Irish are associated with

gambling, dishonesty, filth and superstition, and, in relation to the migrant Irish in

Britain, are strikers and communists who cause industrial unrest. Knowall comically

concludes that the 'Irishman is important' because of the wide variety of national

stereotypes placed on him (MAD, 142).[21]

Knowall's analysis of the ethnic stereotyping of the Irish is similar to later

critical research on this dominant form of racialisation, particularly L.P. Curtis' book

studies.[22] Within the context of this negative racialisation of the Irish from a British

Victorian perspective, O'Nolan's re-creation of Myles reclaims and deterritorializes this

peasant stereotype by exaggerating and acting within the significations inherent in such

a perspective. As Kiberd has already explored, O'Nolan rescues Myles from his

stereotypical role as Victorian stage buffoon by making him articulate in his own native

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[20] As Cronin argues, O'Nolan was against racist views and doctrines of ethnic purity and so he 'kept a lookout for their local manifestations in the guise of Gaelicism.' Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 69. Like Knowall, MacLaughlin argues that anti-Irish racism and nationalism in Britain attempts to subsume ethnic difference in the U.K. under one singular British heading: MacLaughlin places an importance on English newspapers and periodicals which treated the Irish as an inferior race or 'white negro'. He argues that '[i]n conceiving of development as an organic and evolutionary process, the Victorians demonized the Irish and placed them at the hostile end of the continuum running from 'tradition' to 'modernity'.' MacLaughlin, Jim, "Pestilence on Their Backs, Famine in Their Stomachs': The Racial Construction of Irishness and the Irish in Victorian Britain', in *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity*, ed. by Graham, Colin and Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 50-76 (pp. 53, 55). See also Knowall's article on the arrival of the potato to Ireland as he argues that the potato is 'an ingredient of Irish history' (MAD, 75-8).
[21] Knowall's list is similar to Walter's list of Irish stereotypes in her study. Walter, 'Gendered Irishness in Britain: Changing Constructions', p. 85. Knowall does not limit his discussion to Ireland. He questions the white-domination of the Belgian Congo and why non-white people are categorised as 'coloured people': ultimately, Knowall is aware of forms of othering in colonial discourse (MAD, 56-60).
[22] See Curtis, L. Perry, Jr, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Connecticut: University of Bridgeport, 1968) and Curtis, L. Perry, Jr, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971) for detailed documentation on this ethnic stereotyping by the British. Curtis traces the growth between 1860 and 1880 of monstrous imagery of the Irish in the British press due to the political unrest in Ireland which undermined the Union. Curtis argues that in the Victorian magazine *Punch* 'the difference between the plump and robust personification of John Bull and the wretched figure of lean and bony Pat' was set out in order to develop oppositional national identities whereby the Irish were always seen as inferior. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* pp. 1, 95-6. Haslam extends Curtis' analysis of the binary dichotomies of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic identity to identify how Curtis examines British images of the Irish and Ireland as a child-like unruly son and a feminine adult sister to an Athena-like Britannia. See Haslam, Richard, "a Race Bashed in the Face': Imagining Ireland as a Damaged Child', *Jouvert, 4:1* (1999), on-line at http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4il/hasla.htm

Irish language, and, I would argue by extension, the English language as the Irish speak it.[23] Hence, one can see O'Nolan's adoption of the character-author as a challenge to the imperial cultural predisposition which assumes that, on a rational and empirical basis, the subjugation of the colonised is a necessity. Like Caliban, who by learning Prospero's language is able to curse his oppressor, Myles learns the language of racial stereotyping and turns it against his colonial and neo-colonial tyrants by writing his own newspaper column and Irish language novel from his perspective.

However, the persona of Myles na gCopaleen is not simply a direct form of 'writing back' to colonial images of the Irish to produce alternative serviceable archetypes for postcolonial Irish identity. Because O'Nolan is aware of how nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish and colonial images of the Irish have been replaced by a more positive stage Gael by state nationalism, his column and Irish language novel demonstrate that nationalist modernity and its image of the Gael is simply a perpetuation of earlier colonial, Victorian and diasporic stereotyping. One can trace the creation of the buffoon character of Myles na Copaleen through a study of Gerald Griffin's popular nineteenth-century novel *The Collegians* (1829) and Dion Boucicault's adaptation of Griffin's novel for the Victorian, American and Irish stage in his play *The Colleen Bawn* (1860). The next section will examine how O'Nolan is textually aware of both Griffin's and Boucicault's portraits of Myles and the Irish

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[23] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* pp. 497-8. Kiberd argues that Myles's previous exaggerated language on the Victorian stage now becomes a method to attack his targets; hence language empowers him. For example, O'Nolan mocks Boucicault's fabricated brogue, through the use of words such as 'diversions' and 'adventures' in na gCopaleen, Myles, *An Béal Bocht, Nó, an Milleánach: Droch-Sgéal Ar an Droch-Shaoghal*. 2nd edn (Corcaigh: Preas Mercier Teoranta, 1942) p. 9; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (ABB, 9), which amuse English on-lookers but which are pedantically explained to the Irish in footnotes as they may not have encountered this representation of themselves before (p. 498). See Salisbury, Laura, 'Laughing Matters: The Comic Timing of Irish Joking', in *Comedy, Fantasy and Colonialism*, ed. by Harper, Graeme, (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 158-74 (p. 158) for further discussion of the role of the stage Irishman as comic foil to British identity in terms of his dim-witted and subservient behaviour. Equally, see Eagleton, Terry, *Crazy John and the Bishop: And Other Essays on Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press in association with Field Day, 1998) pp. 68-139 on the image of the good natured colonial Gael.

peasantry in his column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' and *An Béal Bocht*. Hence, Myles, when he come to edit Bonaparte's Gaelic autobiography, acts as a textual *bricoleur* thief who makes his reader consciously aware of earlier colonial images of the stage Irishman and their perpetuation in nationalist discourses in the postcolonial period.

3.1.1 Nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish representations of Myles

Unlike the majority of Anglo-Irish authors who wrote in English with a British audience and publisher in mind during the nineteenth century, O'Nolan's column and Irish language novel were initially written for other Irish language speakers and for a Dublin audience.[24] However, O'Nolan is aware that many Anglo-Irish authors who wrote for a middle class Anglo-Irish and British audience needed to negotiate this cultural and social stereotyping of the Irish in Victorian newspapers and on the stage, just as he has to re-negotiate contemporary cultural images inherent in the Irish language. Like O'Nolan, Carleton objected to images of the stage Irishman: aware that 'the Irishman has been hitherto uniformly associated with the idea of something unusually ridiculous, and that scarcely anything in the shape of language was supposed to proceed from his lips but an absurd *congeries* of brogue and blunder', Carleton demonstrates that the Irish were portrayed in 'ludicrous light' and in 'gross and overcharged caricature' for the British mind.[25] Because of this, nineteenth-century

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[24] This is in contrast to nineteenth-century Irish author William Carleton's complaint that the Irish do not have their own national literature and publishing industry, which forces them to write for an outside audience on unequal terms. Carleton writes that Edgeworth, the Banims Brothers, Griffin, Lover, Lever, Lady Morgan, and Mrs Hall are all 'lofty and powerful exponents of the national heart and intellect' who were 'setting right the character of Ireland and her people'. He complains that '[o]ur men and women of genius uniformly carried their talents to the English market, whilst we laboured at home under all the dark privations of a literary famine ', thus comparing the Irish writer to an absentee landlord who 'drained the country of its intellectual wealth'. Carleton, William, 'Auto-Biographical Introduction (1846)', in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, ed. by Hayley, Barbara, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990), pp. i-xxiv (pp. iv, v)

[25] Carleton, 'Auto-Biographical Introduction (1846)', p. i; emphasis in original. Carleton continues that the stage Irishman is 'drawn as a broad grotesque blunderer, every sentence he speaks involving a bull, and every act the result of headlong folly, or cool but unstudied effrontery.' Hence, the stage Irishman plays the role of 'the buffoon of the piece, uttering language which, wherever it may have been found, was at all events never heard in Ireland'. Such blunderers include Captain O'Cutters, Captain O'Blunders, Dennis Bulgrudderies and Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Equally, Carleton sees the Irish association

Anglo-Irish authors needed to develop a more positive version of the native Irish and to distinguish between various types of Irish people in their literary productions in the novel and dramatic forms. Griffin and Boucicault attempted to revise Victorian ethnic stereotyping through their presentation of the character Myles, and many of the energies of this attempt can be seen in O'Nolan's own version of Myles. As literary adaptors of such stereotyping, Griffin and Boucicault re-imagine the Irish peasantry and stage buffoon in a more positive manner.

In Griffin's three volume novel, Myles na gCopaleen is depicted as a semi-heroic figure who is part outlaw and part picturesque peasant storyteller.[26] John Cronin describes *The Collegians* as a tale of despairing love, hideous violence and guilty passion set in the troubled political space and historical time of early nineteenth-century Ireland. Based on actual events, the melodramatic and Gothic novel involves the entire structure of Irish society from the Anglo-Irish upper class down to the native Irish peasants, as represented by Myles and the heroine of the novel Eily O'Connor. Cronin argues that Griffin, like the Banim Brothers before him, worked hard to counter the hackneyed stereotype of the Irishman that would have been familiar to English readers.[27] Instead, he offers an idealised portrait of the mountaineer and horse dealer

with linguistic bulls as 'national slander upon his intellect' (p. ii). Carleton writes that he endeavours 'to prepare the minds of his readers – especially those of the English and Scotch – for understanding more clearly their general character, habits of thought, and modes of feeling, as they exist and are depicted in the subsequent volumes. This is a task which the author undertakes more for the sake of his country than himself; and his rejoices that the demand for the present edition puts it in his power to aid in removing many absurd prejudices which have existed for time immemorial against his countryman' (p. i). This is in contrast to O'Nolan who does not aim to present a more authentic portrait of the peasantry, but a deterritorialization of this desire to re-represent.

[26] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 116. Gerald Griffin (1803-1840) was an Anglo-Irish romantic novelist. His novel was also adapted by Benedict in his light opera *The Lily of Killarney*.

[27] Cronin, John, 'Introduction', in *The Collegians*, ed. by Cronin, John, (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1992), pp. vii-x (p. vii, ix). The novel is based on a celebrated murder case. In July 1819 a body of a young woman, Ellen Hanley, was washed ashore at Moneypoint on the River Shannon. John Scanlan, a son from a county family, and his hunchback boatman Stephen Sullivan, were brought to trial and hanged for the murder of Hanley. Famously, Scanlan was represented by the lawyer Daniel O'Connell. Scanlan and Sullivan instigated the murder because Scanlan had married the peasant Hanley and decided to kill her due to the potential hostility his family would have towards the marriage. See Morash, Chris, 'The

Myles. In chapter nine of the novel entitled 'How Myles Murphy is Heard on Behalf of His Ponies', Myles Murphy of Killarney, or 'Myles-na-Coppulleen' as he is named by Mr Cregan, appears before the Anglo-Irish characters because he wants his impounded ponies to be released due to their trespassing on Miss Chute's land. As Myles enters the room, his physique is described in romanticised terms. As an 'uncommissioned master of horse',

> [h]is figure was at once strikingly majestic and prepossessing, and the natural ease and dignity with which he entered the room might almost have become a peer of the realm, coming to solicit the *interest* of the family for an electioneering candidate. A broad and sunny forehead, light and wavy hair, a blue cheerful eye, a nose that in Persia might have won him a throne, healthful cheeks, a mouth that was full of character, and a well knit and almost gigantic person, constituted his external claims to attention.

Griffin's idyllic portrait positions Myles in regal terms which cause the Anglo-Irish to give out an 'involuntary murmur of admiration'. A sense of dignified presence is given to the Irish peasant because he could be mistaken for an electioneering candidate, or a person from classical Persia. He is 'lofty and confident' and wears 'a complete suit of brown frieze, with a gay coloured cotton handkerchief around his neck, blue worsted stockings, and brogues carefully greased, while he held in his right hand an immaculate felt hat' and a 'straight handled whip and a wooden rattle' which he uses to collect his ponies. However, it is this very giganticism and colourful detail which makes Griffin's description of Myles problematic.

In the text, Myles is always described from the perspective of the Anglo-Irish characters, and by extension, the British readership's colonial eye, such as when the lawyer Mr Kyrle Daly, in legalistic language, describes him as an electioneering

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Remains of Ellen Hanley: Theatre, Commodification and Irish Identity in the Nineteenth Century', in *That Island Never Found: Essays for Terence Brown*, ed. by Allen, Nicholas and Eve Patten, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 19-32 for an account of Griffin and Boucicault use of the historical incident in their work.

candidate, or when the heroine Miss Anne Chute represents him as a courtier. Before he enters the 'court', the clatter of his heavy, trademark brogues is heard.[28] He is described as 'an honest boy' which positions him in a child-like subservient role to the Anglo-Irish, and Mr Cregan welcomes the diversion of Myles pleading for his ponies due to his famous ability to speak and great natural courtesy. Mr Cregan says that it would be like 'a play' watching Myles convince them of his need for the ponies and that the company would learn 'a lesson in the art of pleading'.[29] Mrs Chute, with 'tolerating condescension' argues that mountaineers are amusing creatures, particularly as Mr Cregan sees him as a genuine mountaineer whose art of language is something to be studied like an anthropological subject.[30] Equally, Dr Leake 'pronounce[s] him a true Gadelian' and Kyrle Daly refers to him as '[a] perfect Ulysess'.[31] Mr Cregan invites Myles to plead his case for his ponies both as a form of amusement and as an anthropological and legalistic study in how to plead for his Anglo-Irish guests. Myles secures 'the ear of the court' and beseeches convincingly for his ponies, however, all this is done as a comic interlude to the otherwise dramatic tension contained in the plotline of *The Collegians*.[32] Myles acts out this subservient role, complete with comic linguistic blunders, as he refers to the Anglo-Irish as his superiors. When the servant Pat Falvey urges some instructions towards Myles on how to address the Anglo-Irish, Myles replies in a 'complaining accent […] "A' lay me alone, you foolish boy; do you

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[28] Griffin, Gerald, *The Collegians*. ed. by Cronin, John (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1992 (1829)) , p. 54; emphasis in original.

[29] Mr Cregan comments that '"Twill be as good as a play to hear him and the steward *pro* and *con*. Kyrle Daly, here, who is intended for the bar, will be our assessor to decide on the points of law. I can tell you, Kyrle, that Myles will give you a lesson in the art of pleading that may be of use to you on Circuit at one time or another."' Griffin, *The Collegians* p. 53; emphasis in original.

[30] Mr Cregan comments to Captain Gibson that Myles is "a genuine mountaineer […] with a cabin two thousand feet above the level of the sea. If you are in the country next week, and will come down and see use at the Lakes, along with our friends here, I promise to shew you as sturdy a race of mountaineers as any in Europe." ———, *The Collegians* p. 53

[31] ———, *The Collegians* pp. 54, 56

[32] ———, *The Collegians* p. 56

think did I ever speak to *quollity* in my life before?"'[33] Myles is then mocked in the narrative for his comic 'gift of the gab' as he justifies his connection to Mr Cregan by tracing an elaborate family connection to him, as Miss Chute comments that "'[h]e has made out three relations in the company already […] could any courtier make interest more skilfully?"'[34]

Myles remains an anthropological, comic and sentimental character in Griffin's deterritorialized revision of the stage Irishman: Boucicault's adaptation of the hypotext for the stage runs the risk of perpetuating such a stereotype even as he tries to offer a fairer representation of the Irish peasant.[35] In relation to his popular Victorian play *The Colleen Bawn* (1860),[36] many commentators assert that Boucicault broadened Griffin's depiction of Myles into a more hyperbolic and sentimentalised image of Irishness in the figure of the comic stage Irishman for the amusement of the English Victorian audience.[37] In *The Colleen Bawn*, the character of Myles is seen as performing stereotypical Irish activities and embodies a colonial representation of Gaelic personality. For example, in the play he is a blundering but wily Irish figure who, by shooting the murderer Danny Mann accidentally, saves the heroine Eily O'Connor's life.[38] Myles's roles include that of a liar, convict, horse-thief and poteen-distiller

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[33] ———, *The Collegians* p. 54; emphasis in original. Equally, Myles refuses to begin conversation because "'[t]isn't manners to speak first before quollity'".

[34] ———, *The Collegians* p. 55. At the end of the scene Myles also makes the steward Dan Dawley into a relation and is surprised that Dawley would go against his own relation (p. 56).

[35] Born as Dionysus Lardner Boursiquot, Dion Boucicault (1820-1890) was an Anglo-Irish playwright. For useful surverys of Boucicault's life and work, see Hogan, Robert, *Dion Boucicault* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969)

[36] The full title of the play is *The Colleen Bawn, or The Brides of Garryowen*, 'A Domestic Drama'. In his title page he notes that it is based on Griffin's novel (p. 191). Like other productions by Boucicault, his theatre was renowned for its importance of character, action, sentiment, high energy and theatricality and stage devices. His drama has pace and flair in his dialogue and develops vivid comic roles and farcical scenes such as love triangles, absurd plots, use of comic dialogue, misunderstandings, dialogue for cross-purposes and a comedy of the collision of opposites within the social spectrum. Boucicault, Dion, 'The Colleen Bawn', in *Selected Plays of Dion Boucicault*, ed. by Parkin, Andrew, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987 (1860)), pp. 191-253

[37] See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 497

[38] *The Shaughraun* (The Vagabond; 1874) has a similar incident which leads to the avoidance of the death of the heroine through a blunder by the comic Irishman. Boucicault, Dion, 'The Shaughran', in

throughout the play.[39] Kiberd maintains that Myles was a creation for the English stage

for English audiences 'to shower affection on this brainless but loyal fictional character'

as an Irish buffoon who blunders his way through bulls and malapropisms in the

foreignness of the English language.[40] However, Parkin counters this argument,

maintaining that Boucicault remodelled the stage Irishman to make him more realistic,

transforming him from a foolish, drunken butt into a clever, courageous, resourceful

being. Parkin writes that Boucicault developed 'a new kind of comedy expressing real

affection for Ireland and those Irish untainted by Victorian materialism and snobbery'.[41]

Of note, however, is that both *The Colleen Bawn* and *The Shaughraun* opened

for Irish-American audiences in New York, before transferring to London and then to

Ireland.[42] This gives the 'Irish plays' of Boucicault's drama another dimension to

consider alongside his politics. Boucicault's depiction of Myles needs to be re-thought

within the context of Boucicault's own positioning and politics: as in his play *Robert*

Selected Plays of Dion Boucicault, ed. by Parkin, Andrew, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), pp. 257-329

[39] Orvell and Powell refer to Boucicault's Myles is 'an outsider in the play, a vagabond who distills his own whisky, an incorrigible horse thief, yet withal he is self-sacrificing, merry and clownish, and finally the heroic rescuer and protector of the much abused heroine.' In the play, Myles has a love of whiskey and sings the popular ballad 'Cruiskeen Lawn.' Similarly, the Citizen in *Ulysses* has a cruiskeen lawn. Orvell, Miles, and David Powell, 'Myles Na Gopaleen: Mystic, Horse-Doctor, Hackney Journalist and Ideological Catalyst', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 10:2* (Summer 1975), 44-72 (p. 52)

[40] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 497. However, unlike the Myles of the Victorian stage, O'Nolan's Myles is very capable at mastering the English language. Thus, O'Nolan rescues Myles from his bulls and malapropisms.

[41] Parkin, Andrew, 'Introduction', in *Selected Plays of Dion Boucicault* ed. by Parkin, Andrew, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), pp. 7-23 (p. 20). Parkin argues that Boucicault used these characters to add to the minor role Myles played in *The Collegians* in his play (p. 20). Other examples of affectionate treatments of the Irish by the Anglo-Irish include Samuel Lover's treatment of Rory O'More in ballad and novel form, and Samuel Lever's Tipperary Joe from the novel *Jack Hinton*. Rory O'More is also a source for Boucicault's play *Arrah-na-Pogue* (1864) which is more political that the *The Colleen Bawn*. It recalls the 1798 rising and a version of the popular ballad 'The Wearing of the Green' which openly attacks British rule.

[42] *The Colleen Bawn* opened on the 29 March 1869 in New York at Keene's Theatre. It was Boucicault's first triumph of his Irish themed plays. The play went to London on 10 September 1860 for 278 performances and then Dublin in Spring 1861. Equally, *The Shaughraun* opened on the 14 November 1874 at Wallack's in New York, followed by more success in September 1874 in London. Parkin, 'Introduction', p. 12. Boucicault played Myles-na-Coppaleen and Conn the Shaughran on stage in their first performances in New York, while his wife Agnes Robertson performed as Eily O'Connor, the fair-haired girl from the title.

Emmet (1884), Boucicault explores the theme of race and nationhood and kept in mind the transatlantic Irish and the problems facing nineteenth-century Ireland under British rule.[43] Boucicault is engaged in a complex, political negotiation between colonial and national representations of the Irish. For example, Mr Corrigan, the magistrate of the area in *The Colleen Bawn*, is set up as a hateful middleman much associated with the Land War. Before Corrigan enters the stage, Mrs Cregan says that 'I hate this man; he was my husband's agent, or what the people here call a middle-man – vulgarly polite, and impudently obsequious.'[44] If Corrigan is the villain of the piece for the Irish-American nationalist audience who would have been victimised by such people, Myles is the comic hero.

Myles na Coppaleen is portrayed as having multiple, deceptive roles in the play, and this is something that O'Nolan continues in his perpetuation of Myles's role in his journalism, novel and drama. Myles enters the play with a keg on his shoulder, singing at the hour before sunrise in the Gap of Dunloe when he encounters Corrigan the middleman. Before the audience is introduced to Myles, Corrigan refers to him as 'that poaching scoundrel – that horse stealer, Myles-na-Coppaleen. Here he comes with a keg of illicit whiskey, as bould as Nebuckadezzar.'[45] Myles is associated with illicit activity: his use of language in relation to Corrigan's questioning of him dramatises his deceptive behaviour and sets him up as the comic foil in the melodrama. On a textual level, Myles's use of English is presented onomatopoeically as he offers cheeky, comic

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[43] Boucicault, Dion, 'Robert Emmet', in *Selected Plays of Dion Boucicault*, ed. by Parkin, Andrew, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), pp. 331-97, Parkin, 'Introduction', p. 19.

[44] Boucicault, 'The Colleen Bawn', I.i. p. 195. Equally, Hardress refers to him as 'Genus squireen – a half sir, and a whole scoundrel' and Anne Chute replies that 'I know – a potatoe on a silver plate: I'll leave you to peel him.'

[45] ———, 'The Colleen Bawn', I.ii p. 202. Like Myles, the Old-Grey-Fellow in *An Béal Bocht* is a poacher and a thief of other people's worldly goods on his trip to the Rosses and of his neighbour's pig. Tragically, the Old-Grey-Fellow steals from other peasants, thus repeating the cycle of poverty in the text. As Bonaparte comments, '[n]ight and day there was constant thieving in progress in the parish – paupers impoverishing each other – but no one stole a pig except the Old-Fellow. Of course, it was not joy which flooded his heart when he found another person playing his own tune.' (TPM, 38)

answers to Corrigan's questions over whether it is himself or not, and his claim that he is not carrying a whiskey keg but his mother's boulster from her feather bed.[46] It is Corrigan who represents Myles to the audience in negative terms, and so the audience looks on Myles favourably in comparison to Corrigan who claims 'I am not the mane creature you imagine!' and 'I am not that blackguard I've been represented.'[47] Corrigan attempts to buy Myles's allegiance in his plot against the Cregan family by offering him a farm with pigs and cattle if he finds out who lives in the cottage at Muckross Head. However, Myles outwits Corrigan as he pretends to not know that Eily O'Connor lives at the cottage, even though he is going to her cottage to deliver whiskey to Fr Tom.

However, despite Boucicault's positioning of Myles in the play, the problem remains that his Irish peasants Shaun the Post, Conn the Shaughran and Myles-na-Coppaleen all remain comic, loyal clowns and free-spirited rascals who function as the spirit of comedy and malapropic speech in the plays. However, the deceptive and comic nature of Myles means that he is an ideal figure for O'Nolan to employ as a pseudonym to explore the significations inherent in earlier Anglo-Irish and colonial representations of the Irish peasantry. Just as Boucicault re-wrote Griffin's novel, the *bricoleur* O'Nolan playfully engages with these literary raw materials for exploitative and satiric ends in his post-colonial environment. As will be discussed in the next section, O'Nolan's deterritorialization of images of the Irish peasantry was part of a larger anti-pastoral stance by mid-twentieth century Irish authors, and so his employment of the pseudonym re-enacts the earlier energies of the character's deceptive, illicit and comic

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[46] Boucicault represents peasant Hiberno-English speech in onomatopoeic misspellings to convey their dialect and accent. Parkin provides a glossary of the Irish expressions which are Anglicised in *The Colleen Bawn* and *The Shaughraun*, and notes that 'Boucicault's spellings of the Irish words are rough attempts, sometimes plainly wrong, to give a phonetic rendering of these expressions for the benefit of actors and readers.' Parkin, 'Introduction', p. 23. All the Irish characters in these plays use a certain level of Irish-language vocabulary, and this usually expresses their romanticism towards a version of the Irish language and their own authentic identity. However, the Cregans, Daly and Miss Chute all speak in a standard English grammar to signify their higher status.

[47] Boucicault, 'The Colleen Bawn', I.ii. p. 203

nature to produce a very different result.

3.1.2 The counter-revival: anti-pastoralism

Nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish fiction and colonial images of the Irish are not the only sources which make up the *bricolage* structure of Myles's identity and his novel *An Béal Bocht*. Both the textual creation of Myles na gCopaleen and the Irish language novel reflect O'Nolan's critique of the Irish Literary Renaissance's celebratory reflection of the Irish peasantry and the nationalist promotion of Gaelic auto-biographies as authentic accounts of Gaelic culture. Cronin argues that O'Nolan's Irish language novel is a meditation on 'how romantics, conservationists and racialists can combine to stultify and degrade the objects of their enthusiasm.'[48] To counter this stultification of Irish peasant identity into a narrow set of identity markers, O'Nolan's use of parody, repetition and what Kristeva refers to as intertextuality or 'a permutation of texts' creates a hyperbolic, comic western landscape and image of the Gaelic peasant to demonstrate how colonial and nationalist discourses signify an authentic sense of Irishness.[49] Because Taaffe refers to this mosaic text as 'a patchwork of Yeatsian, de Valerian, and Victorian images of the Gael' and 'a chimera', both O'Nolan's character-author Myles na gCopaleen and the protagonist of *An Béal Bocht* are formed from this practice of *bricolage*.[50] As a *bricoleur*, O'Nolan adopts and adapts materials which come in handy whereby any one material does not simply have one particular usage, and can be recycled accordingly depending on the nature of the text.

As Graham has argued, Irish culture has an ability to reapply and reshape itself

[48] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 125
[49] Kristeva, Julia, 'The Bounded Text (1969)', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Gora, Thomas, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 36-63 (p. 36)
[50] Taaffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* p. 101. As Kristeva argues, 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations' which are transformed within a given text. Kristeva, 'The Bounded Text (1969)', p. 66

according to differing markets and audiences over historical time; this results in a process of recontextualising readings of the past at various historical moments. Graham argues that '[t]he persistence of authenticity in Irish culture is best seen, then, as a series of claims, a desire for validation. There can be no doubt that this persistence arises from the cultural crises of colonialism and its de-authenticating of the colonized.' Hence, the Irish created an authentic peasant identity to re-establish themselves. In the postcolonial period these authenticities are 'rife for deconstruction' due to their fixed identitarian significations.[51] O'Nolan's deconstructive work is part of a larger counter-revivalism and anti-pastoralism which characterised mid-twentieth century Irish writing. The 1940s and 1950s led to what can be called a counter-revival tradition of anti-pastoral and marginalized works on the Irish peasant and his or her association with the language and the rhetoric of romanticism, with writers like Kavanagh and O'Nolan as its leading players.[52] The Irish Literary Revival's use of accented Irish-English 'comes to be associated not with negotiation or subversion of the standard, but with a patronizing effort at compromise'. To a certain extent, O'Nolan, like other middle class Catholics in mid-twentieth century Ireland, 'associated the peasant with a strong and debilitating sense of cultural inferiority' and so offered a critique of the imagined peasant of the Anglo-Irish and nationalist traditions.[53]

However, unlike O'Nolan, these anti-pastoral critics offered through a realist style clear political and social analyses. Kavanagh, O'Faolain, O'Connor and O'Flaherty provided empirical rather than romantic social criticism on both urban and

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[51] Graham, Colin, "...Maybe That's Just Blarney': Irish Culture and the Persistence of Authenticity', in *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity*, ed. by Graham, Colin and Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 7-28 (pp. 25, 26)

[52] Other anti-pastoral texts include Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*, James Simmons's 'Peasant Quality' and Michael Longley's 'Mayo Monologues'.

[53] Jackson, and Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism', p. 74; Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1123

rural experience in their journalistic and literary writings. In his autobiography, Kavanagh writes that the 'so-called Irish Literary Movement which purported to be Irish and racy of the Celtic soil was a thorough going English-bred lie'.[54] Kavanagh wished to challenge the colonial reversal and continuation of images of Irishness by the Literary Revival, and instead produce a more realistic version of the Irish peasant in his prose and poetry. Kavanagh, basing his work in his own childhood and adulthood in the parish of Inniskeen in County Monaghan, deals with the themes of despair and deprivation through the everyman, archetypal figure of Patrick Maguire.[55] Kavanagh's bleak account of rural life in his long poem *The Great Hunger* (1942) offers a record of the diminished experience of the farmer Maguire.[56] In a reply to the idealism of Corkery's view that the embodiment of national life is the rural peasant, the depiction of Maguire's life is one of entrapment due to the forces of Land, Mother and Church.[57] Kavanagh writes in reaction to such peasant iconography which has been upheld by the Irish Literary Revival and Gaelic League nationalism:

> The world looks on
> And talks of the peasant:

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[54] Kavanagh, Patrick, *Self Portrait. [with Portraits.]* (Dublin, 1964) p. 9

[55] Kavanagh was the son of a shoemaker in Inniskeen, Country Monaghan. Hirsch describes Kavanagh 'as a Northern Irish parish writer who was often condescended to as a "peasant" poet during his years in Dublin' due to the pastoral images of his early poetry collection *Ploughman and Other Poems* (1936). Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1128

[56] Kavanagh developed his ethnographic poetics in his rural novel *Tarry Flynn* (1948), and his two books of poetry *A Soul for Sale* (1947) and *Come Dance with Kitty Stobling* (1960). Just as O'Nolan's work has been overshadowed by Joyce, Kavanagh's work is overshadowed by Yeats's romantic aesthetic. Hirsch writes that '[s]eldom considered important abroad, Kavanagh's work provided a useful and necessary alternative opening for Irish poets at home' especially for Northern Irish poets like Philip Hobsbaum, Heaney, Simmons, Mahon, and Longley. ———, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1129

[57] These are Corkery's troika of forces which he argues must be reflected in an Irish national literature. Delaney writes that Corkery has a reputation as an exponent of new national literature within the confines of 'Nationalism, Religion, and the Land' which is often seen as an exclusivist argument for the Irish Free State. However, Delaney re-positions Corkery as a 'minor' writer who embodies the moment when the 'minor' becomes the major desire within a culture due to the attainment of political independence. This, for Delaney, is read within the context of Deleuze and Guattari's argument that there was a 'lack of invention' and a need to re-make power at this moment of independence to avoid Corkery's reterritorialization of identity. See Delaney, Paul, 'Becoming National: Daniel Corkery and the Reterritorialized Subject', in *Critical Ireland: New Essays in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Gilles, Alan A. and Aaron Kelly, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 41-8 (pp. 41, 47-8) and Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 24, 33, 86

> The peasant has no worries;
> In his little lyrical fields
> […]
> *There* is the source from which all cultures rise,
> And all religions,
> *There* is the pool in which the poet dips
> And the musician.
> Without the peasant base civilization must die,
> Unless the clay is in the mouth the singer's singing is useless.
> The travellers touch the roots of the grass and feel renewed
> When they grasp the steering wheels again.
> The peasant is the unspoiled child of Prophecy,
> The peasant is all virtues – let us salute him without irony – [58]

The carefree peasant is positioned as emblematic of a pre-modern and unspoilt Irish civilization outside of modernity which is the source for romantic nationalist writing and cultural renewal. These forces negate Maguire's energy as he experiences a form of sexual and emotional starvation and economic oppression associated with famine and a sense of desolation of a rural existence.

Kavanagh's aesthetic revision of national iconography associated with the Irish peasantry is in direct contrast to O'Nolan's *bricolage* exposure of the valorisation of earlier colonial imagery of the Irish peasant in the post-independence period. Hence, as Bhabha notes, because Deleuze and Guattari argue that 'minor' literature works from within the literary and cultural canon,

> then that *within* signifies the minority as setting out from the internal liminality of the major, from its blurred and breached borderlines. To act from within is close to my sense of acting in the midst of things. It is an interstitial movement of writing.[59]

O'Nolan's journalism and *An Béal Bocht* functions within Bhabha's concept of 'interstitial' writing which engages in the paradox of nationalist modernity in its attempts to preserve a Gaelic culture at the moment when this language and culture

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[58] Kavanagh, Patrick, 'The Great Hunger', in *Selected Poems*, ed. by Quinn, Antoinette, (London: Penguin, 2000) (xiii, p. 85); emphasis in original.
[59] Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', pp. 440-1

were dying out. O'Nolan, as Myles na gCopaleen, read Synge's attempt to depict the

peasant authentically as a presentation of 'amusing clowns'. Myles writes that there is

> nothing in the whole galaxy of fake [which] is comparable with Synge […]
> Playing up to the foreigner, putting up the witty celtic act, doing the erratic but
> lovable playboy, pretending to be morose and obsessed and thoughtful – all that
> is wearing so thin that we must put it aside soon in shame as one puts aside a
> threadbare suit' (CL, 28 Aug 1942; BM, 234).

Myles directly challenges the verisimilitude of this romantic and idealistic version of

the peasant, especially because he objects to

> when the counterfeit bauble [of the Irish Literary Revival] began to be admired
> outside Ireland by reason of its oddity and 'charm' […] And now the curse has
> come upon us, because I have personally met in the streets of Ireland persons
> who are clearly out of Synge's plays. (BM, 235)[60]

Myles implies that the production of peasant-themed drama on the Abbey stage has led

to a simulacrum of experience, whereby theatrical representations of the Irish peasantry

become the basis of contemporary Irish nationality. Myles continues his critique of this

fixed system of representation, stating that this 'comic ghoul [the peasant] with his

wakes and mugs of porter should be destroyed finally and forever' (BM, 234).[61]

Synge's dramatic canon and colonial depictions of the stage Irishman come

under scrutiny due to what Myles perceives as its comic misrepresentation of the Irish.

Myles objects to when outsiders come to view these representations of the Irish as

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[60] This is not a new allegation against Synge's use of peasant dialect: Kiberd notes that St. John Ervine made 'the notorious allegation that John Millington Synge was 'a faker of peasant speech'. Synge's dialect was, he claimed, 'contrived literary stuff, entirely unrepresentative of peasant speech'.' While O'Nolan would concur with this, like Ervine, he misreads Synge's intentions. Kiberd argues that Synge 'relied very greatly on the striking words and phrases which he collected in notebooks during his sojourns in the west of Ireland'. It was not his intention to provide a naturalistic depiction of the peasantry: 'His language is a heightened version of natural peasant speech. This heightening is achieved by emphasizing those aspects of peasant dialect which have their source in Gaelic speech and syntax.' Kiberd argues that Synge's plays are acts of translations of Western Irish speech whereby 'he allowed the islanders to speak directly for themselves.' Kiberd, Declan, 'J.M. Synge: 'a Faker of Peasant Speech'?' *The Review of English Studies, 30:117* (Feb 1979), 59-63 (pp. 59, 60, 61)

[61] Myles argues that the creation of such 'comic ghouls' began in the nineteenth-century with the writings of Lover and Lever, thus referring to Synge's work as the 'virus isolated and recognisable' (BM, 234). He further states that Synge presented his audience 'with the utmost solemnity amusing clowns talking a sub-language of their own and bade us take them very seriously.' (BM, 235)

authentic: hence, rather than offering a truer and more faithful representation of the Irish peasant's condition, like Kavanagh, O'Nolan, under his university pseudonym Brother Barnabas in the U.C.D. student magazine *Comhthrom Féinne*, offers *bricolage* parodies of both Yeats and Synge and their work to deterritorialize their majoritarian status within the canon of Anglo-Irish literature.[62] O'Nolan began to write during the early 1930s, producing the university magazine *Comhthrom Féinne* and then a periodical *Blather* in collaboration with his friends.[63] In *Comhthrom Féinne*, O'Nolan, as Brother Barnabas, parodies Synge as the playwright Samuel Hall. Hall produces a piece called 'The bog of Allen' which shows an awareness for all the set-pieces and motifs of Synge's work, but without an appreciation of the poetic beauty and theatricality of Synge's writing (CF, 5, 3 Mar 1933).[64] Brother Barnabas offers a hyperbolic, exaggerated version of Synge's drama alongside mock criticism of the play 'The bog of Allen' which taps into the themes of melancholic entrapment and the harshness of the Gaelic life which are prevalent in Synge's plays. The narrator of the piece writes that Hall's play is for the readers' 'diversion, edification and moral exaltation'. If the peasant was set up as a moral beacon in an anglicised modern world, Brother Barnabas's version of the peasant is a mocking deterritorialization of such an image. Brother Barnabas depicts Hall writing the play in ten minutes plus an addition of

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[62] Cronin argues that O'Nolan was hostile to Synge and Yeats's aesthetic. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 58

[63] See ———, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 54-8 and 72-3 for short surveys of O'Nolan's involvement and use of pseudonyms in the student magazine *Comhthrom Féinne* and the periodical *Blather*. Cronin argues that *Comhthrom Féinne* acted as a rival magazine to U.C.D.'s *National Student*. Equally, *Blather*, which lasted for just five issues between 1934 and 1935, was modelled on the English periodical *Razzle* to produce an anti-political stance in opposition to other journals at the time through its imaginative and literary humour.

[64] Reprinted in O'Brien, Flann, *Myles before Myles: A Selection of the Earlier Writings of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by Jackson, John Wyse (London: Grafton, 1988) pp. 40-3; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (MBM, 40-3). For a further example of O'Nolan's parodies of 'would-be dramatists', see CL, 9 Jan 1945; AW, 153-5, where Myles offers a list of 'definitive *dramatis personae*' Abbey playwrights could borrow from in their work 'to write a successful play.' This article reflects on the constructed nature of character types and action used in Abbey plays, a similar argument O'Nolan explores in relation to how to construct a novel in *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

'five novels, a book of sermons on Temperance, an almanac and a pamphlet on Anti-vivisection.' He describes Hall's play as 'a wholesome Irish play, racy to the soil […] written in the real traditional style, and a masterpiece of characterisation and pregnant dialogue.' He quotes George Bernard Shaw who 'made his usual witty remark that '[i]t bears the Hallmark of genius'' in order to provide spoof praise of the artistic ingenuity in the play (MBM, 40).

While O'Nolan misses the subtleties and challenges inherent in Synge's drama, Brother Barnabas makes his reader aware of the character types of peasant drama, as 'Mr Hall apologised for his inability to introduce Blind Phelim fiddling at the cross-roads.' The characters of Hall's play are Allen Bogg, a farmer, his wife Maggie and a Bog-trotter. The scene from 'The bog of Allen' has a typical setting, time frame and action to many of Synge's plays. The play is set in a kitchen in a cottage in a bog region 'miles from dry land' and the view from the house is of the bog which is described as a 'a brown monotone'. The floor is made of green moss and the cottage has a roaring fire, a sow, a cow, materials made of Irish poplin, bag-pipes, a rusty iron pike for use in insurrections, such as the 1798 rebellion, and leprechauns in a cupboard. The character of Maggie is sitting spinning at the opening of Hall's play,[65] and she is dressed in green 'as the Wearin' o' the Green is a strict rule in the house.'[66] (MBM, 41) The language the characters use in the play parodies the Hiberno-English used in Abbey plays, including words such as 'Whisht!' and 'Ochone'. Brother Barnabas highlights the

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[65] In Synge's plays, women are often seen spinning on stage.

[66] Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries folk songs (love-songs, laments, political party-songs, satires, religious incantations, maledictions, and comic narratives) were popular both in Irish and English. In the songs performed in English there was often a distinctive element in the use of language which was due to the translation from Irish. 'The Wearin' o' the Green' demonstrates this. It is a political lament over the barring of the Irish from wearing their national colour, hence Maggie, as an 'Irish Ireland' figure, must wear it all the time to demonstrate her authentic identity: 'Oh, Paddy dear! and did ye hear the news that's goin' round? / The shamrock is forbid by law to grow on Irish ground! / No more St. Patrick's day we'll keep; his colour can't be seen, / For there's a cruel law ag'in' the Wearin' of' the Green.' Anon, 'The Wearin' O' the Green', in *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by Kinsella, Thomas, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 257 (I.1-4)

artificial nature of such use of language as Maggie cannot understand Allen's Hiberno-English, such as the word 'phleas' to represent fleas (MBM, 42). Because of this Allen has to give the correct standard English pronunciation of the word so she can understand, and ironically comments later that the Bog-trotter 'speaks the bog-Irish well, him.'

The characters embody the melancholy inherent in such plays, with the farmer Allen groaning over the hard life of a farmer stating that

> 'Tis a hard life, surely. As soon as you plough a furrow it fills with water, an' you have to go bailin' it out, an' as soon as you bail out the water, the sides of the furrow fall back agin, an' be the time that's done your plough is half disappeared into the bog, an' be the time you've dug your plough out, you're up to your knees in the bog yourself (MBM, 41-2).

Even though the characters maintain that such hardships are worth it to enjoy the rich purple of the Celtic Twilight which falls over the bog, this sentimental view is undercut as the cottage slowly sinks into the bog. This sense of entrapment is displayed as the cottage, with the three characters inside, slowly sinks into the bog as the characters endlessly repeat Hiberno-English phrases over and over again. This causes Maggie to call for an end to such a representation:

> Maggie: Musha
> Allen: Surely
> Maggie: Wisha
> Allen: Begorrah
> Maggie: (her soul flooded with poetry) Anish, now, musha.
> Allen: Surely. (long pause) Aye…Musha
> Maggie: Begorrah
> Allen: Surely. Aye, indeed, Musha.
> Maggie: Ochone!
> Allen: Begorrah!
> Maggie: Bedadda!
> Allen: Deriva!
> Maggie: Surely. Wisha. Whisht!! (MBM, 42-3)

If the representation of these characters is nothing more than a list of Hiberno-English words from Abbey and Victorian plays, O'Nolan was also critical of more contemporary Irish artists who continued to treat the Irish peasant as an anthropological and linguistic specimen. For example, as Myles, he criticised Frank O'Connor's book *Irish Miles* (CL, 7 July 1947; FC, 106-8).[67] In this article, Myles challenges O'Connor's role as interpreter of the definitive customs of the Irish peasantry, accusing O'Connor of de-individualizing and classifying the peasantry as he observes them. He represents O'Connor through a derogatory image in his form of a book review as 'Mr O'Connor cycled about the country in shorts accompanied by ladies with French names, also on bicycles and clad in jodhpurs. It's one way of seeing the country, I suppose, through it seems to have more merit as an all-out plan *for being seen*.' (FC, 106-7; emphasis in original) By portraying O'Connor in pompous and European terms he mocks his method in recording his interactions with the peasantry in his book. Myles maintains that '[i]f you want to see really clearly, you must yourself be invisible, otherwise you are altering the sum of what you want to see by the addition of yourself.' He attacks the value of O'Connor's observations of the Irish country people, depicting him as obtrusive 'in shorts on a bicycle laden with cookery equipment, accompanied by French female cyclists in equestrian rig, with himself getting 'bad falls' in rainstorms owing to moisture on his glasses – nobody but small boys or Englishmen can do that and get away with it.' By associating O'Connor with Europeans and British people who had previously traversed Ireland studying the peasantry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Myles is implying a continuing colonial gaze in Ireland which perpetuates stereotypes about the peasantry.

Myles writes that O'Connor has

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[67] See O'Connor, Frank, *Irish Miles* (London: Hogarth, 1988 (1947))

a clinical attitude. He tries to suggest that his relationship with these people is that of a scientist examining his specimens. Personally I am by no means so persuaded. I think the specimens have analytic powers at least as good as Mr O'Connor's but functioning much more efficiently, since the specimens are at home in their own kitchen, dressed soberly according to their station, quite at ease and with judgment unimpaired by superciliousness (FC, 107).

If O'Connor's 'egocentric writing' is characterised by its 'incompleteness' and 'literary deficiency', Myles calls for the peasants to represent their own interaction with O'Connor by wondering what they said when he left them. This would result in an absurdist situation whereby '[c]ountry folk turn out to be repentant National B.A.s who have reverted to pleasant rustic indolence but who 'write a bit'. One of them records visit of literary tourists, appearance thereof, attempts to steer conversation in certain channels […] Results: laughs for all.' (FC, 108) Myles goes on to bemoan the 'absence of this sort of complementary literature' as he calls for a balanced representation to avoid the like of O'Connor's work which he considers 'personal and partisan'.

3.2 *An Béal Bocht*: western identity and folklore

However, Myles, in his own book on the Irish peasantry, does not offer the balanced representation he calls for when he critiques O'Connor's study. Instead, as O'Nolan characterised *An Béal Bocht,* the novel is 'an enormous jeer at the Gaelic morons with their bicycle-clips and handball medals, but in language and style […] an ironical copy of a really fine autobiographical book'.[68] The autobiographical book O'Nolan refers to is Tomás O'Crohan's Gaelic autobiography *The Islandman*.[69] In his journalism as Myles, O'Nolan wrote that *The Islandman* disturbed him so much that he

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[68] cited in Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 235

[69] O'Crohan, Tomás (Tómas Ó Criomhthainn), *The Islandman (an Toileánach)*, Flower, Robin. ed. by Flower, Robin (Dublin and Cork: Talbot Press, 1934 (1929)) This indebtedness to O'Crohan's text is evident from the covers of both books. The original cover of O'Crohan's text depicts a silhouette of a noble fisherman striding upright with his fishing implements while a group of men carry currachs in the background on their way to work. In contrast to this, in a cover of *An Béal Bocht* Sean O'Sullivan's deterritorialized illustration of this noble Gael depicts a bent, famished peasant holding one small piece of fish as the rain thunders down upon him.

put it away; it was 'a thing not to be seen or thought about and certainly not to be discussed with strangers'. He argued that 'its impact was explosive. In one week I wrote a parody of it called *An Béal Bocht*.' (CL, 3 Jan 1957) Myles continues that

> I had scarcely put down this great book - *An tOileánach* – until I was engaged on a companion volume of parody and jeer. There, if you like, is the test of great writing – that one considerable work should provoke another. It is held that the *Aeneid* provoked the *Commedia*. (CL, 9 Dec 1965)[70]

As this section will explore, *An Béal Bocht* is marked by its hypertexuality, which Genette defines as 'any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted'.[71] However, Genette refuses to constitute the relationship between texts B and A in terms of their canonical authority and interdependence; instead he argues that there is a possibility of infinite categorisation of text B which its reader could make depending on the reader's knowledge of Text A alongside his or her other cultural associations. As Dillon argues, this form of hypertextuality which O'Nolan engages within invites us to offer radical palimpsestuous readings his texts.[72] Thus, O'Nolan is engaged in an

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[70] Similarly, Myles enjoys translating quotations from O'Crohan's text into English; see BM (275-6). Myles used his column to brag about and advertise his book prior to and after its publication just as he used pseudonymous letters to fuel controversy over the use of Irish in his column. For example, he said that the publishing firm Browne and Nolan wrote to him to ask for the privilege of publishing *An Béal Bocht*. He leaked out extracts from their reader's report of the text, such as: 'I can safely assert that in an experience of sixty years this is quite the craziest piece of Irish I have ever met. What most surprises me is the self-assurance of its author – a man who demonstrates twenty times on every page that he is the veriest tyro in the Irish language. For want of knowledge he cannot begin, or continue or finish a sentence properly. Constructions such as he writes have never before been seen in Irish, and one earnestly hopes that nothing of the kind will ever be repeated. The late Stephen McKenna at one time proposed to write a book:
HOW TO WRITE IRISH
By
ONE WHO CAN'T
and here, I am convinced, we have an author who could take up his project with every hope of success.' (CL, 25 Oct 1950). Thus, Myles builds a hyperbolic mythology surrounding the book's reception.
[71] Genette, Gérard, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Doubinsky, Claude and Channa Newman (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997 (1982)) p. 5. Genette maintains that Text B does not speak about Text A in terms of commentary; because of this there is no obvious citing through the hypertexual techniques of parody, travesty, pastiche, caricature, forgery, and transposition. Thus, Genette avoids placing emphasis on the origin, influence, and filiation of any one text to argue that all works are 'hypertextual' and so 'there is no literary work that does not evoke (to some extent and according to how it is read) some other literary text' (p. 9).
[72] Dillon, Sarah, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007) pp. 90-1

intertextual relationship with not only O'Crohan's text, but also a number of cultural associations which results in a multi-dimensional parody of a variety of discourses.[73]

Prior to the publication of his parodic novel, Myles, in his journalism, responded to the collection of folklore and supernatural tales by folklore societies, literary artists and antiquarians by offering folkloric parodies called the 'Tales of Corkadorky' from February 1941.[74] Characters in these early tales acted as precursors to the characters in *An Béal Bocht*, and included Téig na Gorta, who, like Sitric O'Sanassa, is so hungry that he tries to sleep all the time to escape his hunger pains, and Éamon a' Chnuic, who, like Bonaparte, is so miserable in the harsh western seaboard climate that he swaps houses with the devil and goes to live in hell.[75] One can see these early parodies as examples of O'Nolan's position as 'an accomplished, idiosyncratic stylist of the language who characteristically used his linguistic skills to parody and unmask previous portraits of peasant life.'[76] In *An Béal Bocht* O'Nolan amplifies the signification process and literary techniques and descriptions in texts about authentic Gaels whereby the periphery of the west of Ireland can no longer be invested with a sense of hope to recover an authentic Irish culture which has not been changed by the advent of English-speaking modernity. O'Nolan raises the issue of why the Blasket Islanders speak and how the Gaels are represented through the mediation of publishers and editors

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[73] As Power, the translator of *An Béal Bocht*, notes, '[t]he principal difficulty attending the translation of this work has been due to Myles's parodying the style of certain Gaelic authors such as Máire (Séamus Ó Grianna) from the Rosses in County Donegal and Tomás Ó Criomhthainn from the Great Blasket Island in County Kerry.' Power, Patrick C., 'Preface', in *The Poor Mouth*, Power, Patrick C., ed. by Power, Patrick C., (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973) p. 6. Equally, Ó Brolcháin notes that O'Nolan used a wide variety of sources but his main targets where Gaelic autobiographies such as *Scéal Hiudai Sheainín* and *An tOileánach*. Ó Brolcháin, 'Comparatively Untapped Sources', p. 9

[74] Corkadorky is a pun on the Gaelic speaking region Corca Dhuibhne in Co. Kerry which includes the Blasket Islands. Ó Conaire claims that the style of the 'Tales of Corkadorky' is based on Éamon Ó Tuathail's *Sgéalta Mhuintir Luinigh*. See Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge: Lamhleabhar Ar Shaothar Gaeilge Bhrian Ó Nualláin* p. 122 and Ó Tuathail, Éamon, *Sgéalta Mhuintir Luinigh* (Dublin: Irish Folklore Institute, 1993)

[75] For examples of the 'Tales of Corkadorky series', see CL, 1 Mar 1941; CL, 22 Mar 1941.

[76] Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', pp. 1127-8

sponsored by the government. The next section will explore the hypertextual quality of *An Béal Bocht*, which exposes the majoritarian promotion of the anthropological, scientific and folkloric elements of Gaelic autobiographies as historical evidence of authentic national identity. Taffee writes that '[a]uthentic Irishness (that of the *fíor-Ghael*) was arguably conceived as a foreign quality in twentieth-century Ireland, an unattainable thing exiled to the most remote corners of the country.'[77] To this extent, Myles, in his role as a derisive editor of Bonaparte's autobiography, exposes how paratextual elements relating to Gaelic autobiographies desire to achieve a sense of verisimilitude which is ultimately denied by O'Nolan.

3.2.1 Myles na gCopaleen: editor, folklorist, and parodist

> For there is nothing in life so uncomfortable as being a peep-show – a museum piece.[78]

Myles na gCopaleen, who presents himself as the greatest scholar in Irish (CL, 8 Feb 1941), wrote *An Béal Bocht* not to, as Brown has argued, satirize the original Blasket Island autobiographical texts, but their

> translation and the cultural and social assumptions that underlay the complacent regard in which such works were held by people who had neither a developed knowledge of the Irish language itself not an understanding of the actualities of the Gaelic past they so sedulously venerated.[79]

While it is agreed that O'Nolan held O'Crohan's text in reverence, he offers a satire of the genre of the Gaelic autobiography which is used to promote the revivalist image of the authentic Gael through their nationalist reversals of negative colonial stereotypes which O'Nolan attacked, alongside the cultural protectionism of the 'Irish Ireland'

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[77] Taffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* p. 103; emphasis in original.
[78] Kavanagh, 'Ireland Has Gone West',
[79] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 181. In his preface to his translation of the text, Power notes that O'Nolan 'was an accomplished Gaelic scholar and handles Gaelic in this work in a masterly but also in a rather idiosyncratic manner'; Power, 'Preface', p. 5

movement which attempted to preserve the Irish Gael and his environment from contamination from the Anglicised world.[80] Through the paratextual elements of the novel, such as its title, subtitle, prefaces and pseudonym, O'Nolan exposes how Gaelic autobiographies were politically and culturally positioned during the post-independence period.[81] In particular, Myles, in his fictional editorship of Bonaparte's autobiography, shows that signs and concepts from other Gaelic autobiographies do not relate exclusively to themselves but can be substituted and reread depending on the signification of the author. Lévi-Strauss maintains that a *bricoleur* is engaged in a dialogue with the tools and materials as he reconsiders them for his own purposes. For Lévi-Strauss, the *bricoleur* 'interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to materialize but which will ultimately differ.'[82] Through O'Nolan's exposure of the significations of nationalist and colonial discourses on the peasant, the author highlights how Ireland's nationalist modernity has been formed in the post-independence period. As Kennelly argues, Myles has a deep knowledge of Irish literary tradition and the Irish language, and is 'a savage moralist with a hatred of hypocrisy' that pertains to the nationalist claim to this heritage.[83]

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[80] Myles commented that O'Crohan 'wrote in Irish what I seriously say is among the most important life-stories of this century, mainly for its account, isolation, the savagery of island life, the gallantry of the islanders, but, above all, for the astonishing precision and beauty of the Irish itself' (CL, 26 Nov 1962). This praise of O'Crohan's text is typical of the respectful reception of his work. For example, Cruise O'Brien paints a picture of O'Crohan's autobiography borne out of a picture of hardship alongside one of joy and dignity as a remarkable record of peasant island life. See Cruise O'Brien, Máire, 'On *an Toileánach*', in *The Pleasures of Gaelic Literature*, ed. by Jordan, John, (Dublin: Mercier Press in colloboration with Radio Telefis Eireann, 1977), pp. 25-38

[81] Genette writes that paratextual elements of any text may include their titles, subtitles, intertitles, prefaces, postfaces, notices, forwards, and pseudonyms. These elements, for Genette, have a 'less explicit and more distant relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken within the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its *paratext*'. Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* p. 3; emphasis in original.

[82] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (La Pensée Sauvage)* p. 18

[83] Kennelly, Brendan, 'On *An Béal Bocht*', in *The Pleasures of Gaelic Literature*, ed. by Jordan, John, (Dublin: Mercier Press in collaboration with Radio Telefis Eireann, 1977), pp. 85-96 (p. 85).

Robin Flower, the editor of the English translation of O'Crohan's text,[84] writes

that O'Crohan's document was

> the first attempt by a peasant of the old school, practically uneducated in the
> modern sense, though highly trained in the tradition of an ancient folk culture, to
> set out the way of his life upon his remote island from childhood to old age.[85]

One could view such Gaelic auto-biographies as potential subaltern narratives which

offer an alternative historiography of a minority culture to the national state narrative of

Irish republican history where it not for the fact that such narratives where incorporated

by editors and translators into the apparatus of state nationalism in order to foster both a

sense of anti-modernity and an authentic Irish folk culture. As Jordan notes, the Blasket

memoir was a fashionable literary form in modern Irish in its meditation of the personal

experiences of the Irish peasantry.[86] As O'Nolan himself noted in 1957, '[t]he

Government sponsored "Gúm" publishing house maintains a downpour of novels,

poems, essays, plays in Gaelic; scarcely a soul buys or reads them because they are

composed chiefly of embarrassing dreeder and prawnshuck.' O'Nolan continues that

'[t]he Stationary Office has over the years published many books in Irish, translations

and attempts at novels. I would say that 90 per cent of these are worthless and ten only

middling.'[87]

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[84] The concept of texts and folklore being filtered through editors and narratives by educated, privileged people is noted by Markey: she gives the example of Croker who emphasised the supernatural, Brothers Grimm-like, element of Irish folklore to sell to the popular market, as well as 'entertaining dialogue, scenic descriptions, and sketches of amusing characters, precursors of the loveable but loyal Irish rogue of later Irish melodramas.' Markey, 'The Discovery of Irish Folklore', p. 26

[85] Flower, Robin, 'Forward', in *The Islandman (an Toileánach)* trans. and ed. by Flower, Robin, (Dublin and Cork: Talbot Press, 1934 (1929)), pp. vii-xiv (p. vii). Flower was Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Musuem between 1929 and 1944. In his book study *The Irish Tradition* Flower traces early Irish literature between the seventh and seventeenth centuries. See Flower, Robin, *The Irish Tradition (1947)* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1994) Also, see CL, 21 Dec 1940 for a parody of Flower's translation of the ninth century monastic poem 'I and Pangur Bán' in early Irish.

[86] Jordan, John, 'Introduction', in *The Pleasures of Gaelic Literature*, ed. by Jordan, John, (Dublin: Mercier Press in collaboration with Radio Telefis Éireann, 1977), pp. 9-12 (p. 9). Jordan's edited book contains a number of short essays on modern Irish language fiction, which he sees as having the common themes of memory and autobiography running through them. Hence, he states that Myles's text 'may on one level be taken as a squib on the large body of autobiographical writing.'

[87] cited in Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 123

Myles held in disdain Flower's claims to the verisimilitude of the representation

of the peasantry in O'Crohan's text, both in terms of the quality of his English

translation and his evaluation of O'Crohan's folk culture. Flower presents the Irish

Blasket Island speakers of O'Crohan's autobiography as unspoilt, authentic figures of

Ireland's folk past. He writes that

> [t]hey are all Irish speakers, and, though English is taught in the little school, it
> has made no way in the common intercourse of the island. The older inhabitants
> have a rich store of folk tale and folk song, and in the period described in this
> book the little community was a typical example of an Irish village of the old
> fashion, practically untouched by modern influences. The great value of this
> book is that it is a description of this vanishing mode of life by one who has
> known no other, and tells his tale with perfect frankness, serving no theory and
> aiming at no literary effect, but solely concerned to preserve some image of the
> world that he has known, or, in his own words, "to set down the character of the
> people about me so that some record of us might live after us, for the like of us
> will never be again."[88]

While Flower argues for a stamp of authenticity to be placed upon O'Crohan's life story

as a valuable, accurate and unspoilt record of a disappearing folk culture, Bonaparte's

record is set up by the editor Myles as a parodic version of one of the last examples of

the way of life of an authentic Irish speaking Gael who document their personal and

community histories. At the end of the various sections of his testimony Bonaparte

echoes O'Crohan's famous tag line 'mar ná beidh ár leithéidí arís ann' ('because our

likes will not be there again') to demonstrate this sense of disappearance.[89] While

Bonaparte maintains that '[i]t is right and fitting that some testimony of the diversions

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[88] Flower, 'Forward', p. x. Equally, E.M. Forster, in a review of a translation of Maurice O'Sullivan's
Gaelic autobiography *Twenty Years A-Growing* (*Fiche Bliain ag Fás*) writes that O'Sullivan's text is an
'egg of a seabird' which is 'lovely' and 'perfect' because 'everything flows' naturally in the text. The
autobiography is described as a 'fresh egg from the Blaskets' which was 'laid on [Forster's] doorstep'.
This indicates a model of translation of such texts which were marketable for a metropolitan audience,
both in Ireland and abroad, due to the demand for authentic accounts of pre-modern Ireland. Such
narratives are marginalized due to their use of the Irish language and made marketable in English
translation as a majoritarian narrative of state nationalism and Irish exoticism. See O'Sullivan, Maurice,
Twenty Years a-Growing, trans. by Llewelyn Davies, Moya and George Thomson (London: Chatto &
Windus, 1933)
[89] Equally, *An Béal Bocht* is subtitled 'An Milleánach', which translates as 'Whinelandman'. Hence,
O'Crohan's *The Islandman* is demoted to this status from the offset of the text.

and adventures of our times should be provided for those who succeed us' (TPM, 11), this attempt to document his own life as historical evidence of a minority Irish-speaking culture is instantly brought into question by the paratextual nature of Myles's representation of his account.

If, as Cronin notes, O'Nolan had a 'keen sense of the ridiculous aspects of the language movement',[90] Myles, as 'AN FEAR EAGAIR' / 'The Editor' of Bonaparte's document, writes that

> I believe that this is the first book ever published on the subject of
> Corkadoragha. It is timely and opportune, I think. Of great advantage both to the
> language itself and to those studying it is that a little report on the people who
> inhabit that remote Gaeltacht should be available after their times and also that
> some little account of the learned smooth Gaelic which they used should be
> obtainable.' (first editorial 1941; TPM, 7)

Myles ironically mirrors Flower's claim that O'Crohan's autobiography is the first attempt by an uneducated peasant to present his biography and folk culture in a pure Irish, and so exposes how other autobiographies are introduced by editors and translators and are used as historical and anthropological documents to record oral culture and the passing of Gaelic way of life. O'Crohan's text is about the loss of the Gaelic way of life as he reflects back on his youth on the Blasket Islands. However, as Shea argues, rather than being the anti-thesis of modernity as Flower presents the text, the autobiography explores the points of contact between the introduction of modernity of the mainland to the island and the oral, folkloric traditions of the island

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[90] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 123. Hence, O'Nolan as an Irish speaker distances himself from the Gaelic revival of the 1940s. O'Nolan, in the early 1940s, wrote a letter to Quidnunc, author of the 'Irishman's Diary' in the *Irish Times*: 'It is common knowledge that certain categories of Irish speakers are boors. They (being men) have nuns' faces, wear bicycle clips continuously, talk in Irish only about *ceist na teanga* and have undue confidence in Irish dancing as a general national prophylactic […] Hence some self-consciously intellectual citizens are anxious to avoid being suspected of knowing Irish, owing to the danger of being lumped with the boors. There is, however, a *non sequitur* there. A knowledge of Irish does not necessarily connote adherence to the social, cultural or political philosophies of any other Irish speaker.'

communities.[91] For example, O'Crohan records how the islanders come into contact with teachers from the mainland, the English language, clothes from Dingle, and material objects from shipwrecks.

If the translation and mediation of O'Crohan's text by editors and publishers sets up an essentialist version of pre-modern peasant identity, Myles highlights how anthropologists documented islanders like O'Crohan within this framework. Flower remembers O'Crohan

> [l]ying under the lee of a turf-rick, or sitting in his own house of the King's kitchen, he would pour out tales and poetry and proverbs, quickening the whole with lively comments and precise explanations of difficult words and interspersing memories of his own life and of the island past.[92]

Flower positions O'Crohan and his text as a consumable document for the world outside of the Gaelic speaking community, whereby urban readers now had access to island folk traditions which were disappearing due to the advent of modernity. Thus, as Editor, Myles claims '[t]his document is exactly as I received it from the author's hand' giving it the stamp of authenticity which will later be mocked in the text (TPM, 7). In his Preface from 1964 on the re-publication of his text, Myles continues his joke as he mourns the lack of publication of *An Béal Bocht* since the 1940s. He writes that

> [i]t is sad to relate that neither praise nor commendation is deserved by Gaelic folk – those of them who are moneyed gentle-folk or great bucks (in their own estimation) – because they have allowed a fascicle such as *The Poor Mouth* to remain out of print for many years; without young or old having an opportunity to see it, nor having any chance of milking wisdom, shrewdness and strength from the deeds of the unusual community that lives west in Corkadoragha – the seed of the strong and the choicest of paupers. (second editorial 1964; TPM, 9)

Unlike the wisdom which O'Crohan provides Flower with, the supposed wisdom and strength of the peasantry are the very things which are openly mocked in O'Nolan's

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[91] Shea, Thomas F., 'Tomás Ó Criomhthain and Literary Craftsmanship', in *American Conference for Irish Studies* (National University of Ireland, Galway, 2009)
[92] Flower, 'Forward', p. xiii

text. Like Flower's Forward, Myles's mock-serious preface bemoans the loss of the

Gaelic language and way of life:

> [t]hey live there to this day, but they are not increasing in numbers and the sweet Gaelic dialect, which is oftener in their mouths than a scrap of food, is not developing but rather declining like rust. Apart from this fact, emigration is thinning out the remote areas, the young folk are setting their faces towards Siberia in the hope of better weather and relief from the cold and tempest which is natural to them.

> I recommend that this book be in every habitation and mansion where love for our country's traditions lives at this hour when, as Standish O'Grady says, 'the day is drawing to a close and the sweet wee maternal tongue has almost ebbed'. (TPM, 9)

While Myles references real issues which have resulted in the decline of the Irish

language, such as emigration and poverty, his reference to the Gaels emigrating to

Siberia to escape the bad weather of the west of Ireland undercuts any reterritorialized

intent in his message and instead exposes the collective mourning of Gaelic culture and

the lack of any form of language revival or assistance to improve the real day-to-day

conditions of the Irish peasantry.

As Smyth argues, while anti-colonial discourse provides a necessary way to

decolonise, 'its adherence to the dialectical mode of thought made available by the

colonial power ensures that such creative discourse is always already overwritten with

colonialist values.' This results in an 'enabling and disabling' discourse of national

identification which O'Nolan tries to move beyond without establishing another

reterritorialized code of practice.[93] O'Nolan, in reaction to such cultural conservatism

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[93] Smyth, 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', (p. 36). Similarly, Lloyd describes this process of self-definition as 'entirely reactionary' to colonialism 'both by virtue of [their] obsession with a deliberately exclusive concept of racial identity' and 'by virtue of [their] *formal* identity with imperial ideology'. Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* p. x; emphasis in original. Hence, Delaney argues that nationalists propose a model of the nation which 'is similarly monocular and monologic, and strives to occlude that which is not easily assimilable within its descriptive borders.' Delaney, 'Decolonization and the Minor Writer', p. 7. Smyth concurs with this point, arguing that 'even after independence has been achieved, the residue of liberal and radical critical discourse leaves the post-colonial subject, as so much commentary in Ireland since 1922 attests, still bound to the *other* against

and protectionism, exploits the persistence of imperial dichotomies within forms of 'Irish Ireland' nationalism for comic and satiric value. O'Nolan displays an awareness of the epistemological construction of notions of colonial and national difference and nationalist historical over-determination which produces a chauvinistic and inward-looking Irish culture which is at once reactionary and defensive.[94] Thus, O'Nolan sets out to satirise the despised professional Gaelgeoirs (Irish language learners and revivalists) such as Flower or Hyde who wished to reconnect with the idyllic western peasant's condition. Throughout the text he exposes how such Gaelgeoirs repeat the colonially inherited significations of the Irish peasantry in their travels to the West of Ireland. For example, the Gaelgeoirs take on Gaelicized names during the feis at Corkadoragha: hence, a poor, small and unenergetic man who resembles a mouse can refer to himself as '*The Sturdy Bull*' while Bonaparte feels that his name is inadequate in comparison to men who are more Gaelic than him. In particular, the Gaelegoirs engage in the more performative aspects of Gaelic identity by wearing kilts, a clothing item Bonaparte does not own, while the President delivers a chauvinistic 'truly Gaelic oration' on Gaelic identity, as he argues that the Gaelic question and Gaelic life must be

which it must constantly measure its 'freedom'. So, the question then becomes: once positioned as the *other* within a discursive economy of power and knowledge, how can individuals and groups strive for release from subjugation without at the same time accepting their designation as *other* and thereby reinforcing the structures of that economy?' Smyth, 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', p. 38; emphasis in original. The answer to this question seems to be the negative in the case of the immediate post-independence period.

[94] During the early 1960s O'Nolan, writing as George Knowall, comments that, like O'Nolan, Ireland has multiple names to 'brand' itself. He lists these 'pseudonym[s] adopted by this most honourable nation' as Eire, Republic of Ireland, Ireland, Banba, Scotia, Fodhla, Cork and Saorstát Éireann and argues that the word 'Irish' is a patent whose use Americans infringe upon when they refer to themselves as Irish-Americans. If Knowall presents Ireland as a flexible space which can be named in multiple ways like O'Nolan's own authorial identity, then Ireland is also exposed as a brand whose reputation is protected (See MAD, 237-9). Thus, on St. Patrick's Day in 1941 Myles chose not to write in Irish despite his reader's expectations that he would on this particular day because of the way Ireland is marketed as a tourist destination. Myles, to counter-act this, writes that other newspapers have 'a nice leading article in Irish (and *on* Irish)' on St. Patrick's Day which focuses upon 'saving-the-language' but '[t]hroughout the whole year they print nothing but offensive puerilities in Irish'. Thus, Myles, '*in a patient tired voice*' replies to his readers that these leading articles are 'nauseating. The language itself, having been ridiculed for a year, is beslobbered with laudatory mucus' for the sake of Irish tourism (CL, 17 Mar 1941; AW, 24; emphasis in original).

the only topic for discussion in the Irish language (TPM, 54-5). Thus, the Gaels must engage in a performance of their authentic identity for their visitors in order to win medals for 'who was most in earnest about Gaelic' (TPM, 58). The Gaelgeoirs create competitions for people to speak pure Gaelic endlessly, resulting in non-sensical chattering and rough and inarticulate grunts, whereby the man who comes second never speaks Irish again and the winner sets his house on fire. Therefore, Myles exposes the association between the Irish language and the western's peasant's rural identity due to the psychological damage that is created because of the nationalist desire to de-anglicize the Irish nation after political independence was gained.

3.2.2 The absurdity of the Irish peasant's condition: Bonaparte's cliched narrative

This refusal to offer a reterritorialized and realistic assessment of the peasant's condition and identity due to this romanticisation is nowhere more evident than in Myles's presentation of Bonaparte's autobiographical narrative. Like O'Nolan's English language novels, *An Béal Bocht* is a type of bildungsroman which records the psychological growth of its narrator Bonaparte, just as the Blasket Island autobiographies recorded the life of the islanders from their birth until old age when they joined mainland Irish society.[95] The novel opens with Bonaparte writing down a record of his life because he is about to die. His self-articulation is in the style of his vernacular tongue as he names himself by surname, first name and country to describe his Gaelic identity. As Eagleton argues,

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[95] For example, O'Crohan writes that 'I may as well give some brief account here of the way we managed things in this Island when I was young, more particularly since the fashion of that world has passed away and nobody now living remembers it except a few old people.' O'Crohan, *The Islandman (an Toileánach)* p.34. Therefore, his work presents an image of himself as a boy learning from his parents the traditions and ways of his island community. In particular, O'Crohan's diary *Island Cross-Talk* (1919-22) offers sketches on his daily experiences of beauty, poverty, hunger, and hardship. O'Crohan, Tomás (Tómas Ó Criomhthainn), *Island Cross-Talk: Pages from a Diary (1928)*, Enright, Tim (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) Enright comments that *Island Cross-Talk* offers a valuable record of the topography of the island and its folklore. Enright, Tim, 'Introduction', in *Island Cross-Talk: Pages from a Diary*, Enright, Tim, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 1-9

> [a] nation, like an individual, has to be able to recount a reasonable story of itself, one without either despair or presumption. As long as it veers between idealization on the one hand and disavowal on the other, it will […] be incapable of working through the traumatic moments of its history.[96]

As is evident from Bonaparte's narrative in *An Béal Bocht*, such a reasonable national narrative by an individual cannot be achieved in the post-independence period. Bonaparte's narrative, as a parodic version of Gaelic autobiographies, is unable to record precisely his folk culture and his own authentic Irish identity. Unlike Flower's claims to O'Crohan's accuracy in memory, Bonaparte fails to fully see his situation which leads to a twisted tale of mis-contact and miscomprehension as he cannot remember properly his own biography, and so he relies on text-book and colonial descriptions of the peasantry to understand his condition and construct his own subjectivity.[97] As Hirsch argues, 'to define an idea of the Irish peasant was to define an idea of Ireland itself',[98] and so because of this, Myles's peasant's attempt to write down and record his life on his death-bed in prison is instantly exposed as a clichéd narrative inherited from the colonial and post-revolutionary period.

Flower writes that O'Crohan 'was keenly observant, watching and judging the people about him, eagerly alive to their tricks of character, and appreciating to the full the humours and tragedies of their life.'[99] Flower sets up O'Crohan for his reader as an authentic eye and observer who will offer a factual, truthful study of the island from his intelligent memory. Flower argues that O'Crohan has a 'natural critical faculty' and that '[h]e has always reflected on his experience and watched his fellows with a certain aloofness. A not unfriendly irony distinguishes his conversation and gives a sharp

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[96] Eagleton, Terry, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995) p. ix
[97] Knowall ironically comments on the 'wisdom' of the spoken word and the 'impeccable memories' of the illiterate Gaeltacht peasant like O'Crohan. He concludes that '[t]he *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is not too far ahead of them at all' in their ability to recite tales over a number of days and nights (MAD, 80).
[98] Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1130
[99] Flower, 'Forward', p. x

flavour to many of the pictures in his book.'[100] In response to this, Myles sets up Bonaparte's own self-belief that he can offer a detailed, accurate account of life in Corkadoragha; however, this is done in order to undermine such a belief. Bonaparte claims that '[t]here is another day of my youth which is clear in my memory and eminently describable.' (TPM, 15) This claim is undercut because Bonaparte lacks the ability to signify and describe his own condition because he does not have full knowledge of his situation. For example, Bonaparte tries to locate the truth behind his Gaelic origins, but this leads to uncertainties about his paternity. Bonaparte is unsure if his mother is his mother as there was a rumour he was born by another woman (TPM, 13). He writes that '[a]ll that, nevertheless, is only the neighbours' talk and cannot be checked now because the neighbours are all dead and their likes will not be there again.' Bonaparte cannot access any sense of truth within his narrative because this information, contained in the disappearing Gaelic culture, can never be obtained. He is equally confused about his father's identity, thinking that his grandfather the Old-Grey-Fellow is his father (TPM, 15). Even Bonaparte's access to who the Old-Grey-Fellow could be is limited by the Old-Grey-Fellow's beard which covers his face. As a baby, Bonaparte's perception is blocked because half of his grandfather's face 'and all of [his] chest were invisible because there was a wild, wool-grey beard blocking the view.' (TPM, 14) Ruling out his grandfather as his father, Bonaparte asks where his father is and is told by the Old-Grey-Fellow that '[h]e's in the jug!'. Bonaparte, confused by this idiomatic expression, writes that '[a]t that time I was only about in the tenth month of my life but when I had the opportunity I looked into the jug. There was nothing in it but soar milk and it was a long time until I understood the Old-Grey-Fellow's remark'

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[100] ———, 'Forward', p. xi

(TPM, 15).[101]

Bonaparte cannot define his own subjectivity through his paternity. Myles is critical of the peasant's acceptance of their Gaelic fate and of colonial and national stereotypes associated with their identity, as exemplified in Gaelic auto-biographies. He mocks their mourning of the loss of Gaelic life due to the advent of modernity in the west, and he also parodies how they plan their lives around the supposed knowledge from 'guid' Gaelic books which trap them into a literary fate. Thus, through the *bricolage* structure of the novel, Myles makes us aware of the clichéd nature of Irish literary and nationalist sources through their repetition of certain phrases. For example, Bonaparte writes that Sitric 'O'Sanassa will have another day!', mirroring the 1798 revolutionary Edmund Power's phrase 'Beidh lá eile ag An BPaorach!' (Power will have another day) as, ironically, Power stood on the gallows (TPM, 128). Equally, Bonaparte's experience at school mirrors that of Máire's (Séamus Ó Grianna) novel *Mo Dhá Róisín*, borrowing phrases such as 'bristí de ghlas na gcaorach' to refer to the homogeneous nature of all the children who wear 'grey-wool breeches' in the text as well as the incident where all the children are renamed in an Anglicised form of their name, whereby in *An Béal Bocht* every Gael refers to himself as Jams O'Donnell. Thus, Sitric is praised because he represents the cliché of the poverty stricken Irish peasant. Bonaparte writes that Sitric 'possessed the very best poverty, hunger and distress', and

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[101] O'Nolan's other texts also present protagonists with a confusing sense of their own paternity, and hence identity. In *The Hard Life* Finbarr opens his narrative stating that 'It is not that I half knew my mother. I knew half of her: the lower half – her lap, legs, feets, her hands and wrists as she bent forward. Very dimly I seem to remember her voice.' (THL, 3) Like the narrator of *The Third Policeman*, Finbarr's parents disappear from an early age, with both narrators receiving 'very vague and unsatisfying' explanations for where their parents had gone too (THL, 4). In particular, Finbarr and the narrator's sight is limited in their access to their fathers. Finbarr never met his father and can only 'see and study a faded brown photograph' of a uniformed man, a uniform which Finbarr 'could never make out' what it stands for from jobs such as a field marshal to a postman (THL, 4). Hence, just as the author O'Nolan refuses to provide a clear portrait of himself, his characters also resist or cannot achieve this despite their own attempts.

so a Dublin man breaks Sitric's water bottle because the presence of the bottle 'spoiled the effect' of Sitric's hyperbolic identity (TPM, 88).

Throughout the text stock scenes and characters are employed in the narrative from other Gaelic texts and colonial stereotypes, from the pig which lives in the house with Bonaparte's family to the endless rain which pours down upon the miserable peasants, to emphasis the importance of the trope of literary fate in Gaelic auto-biographies. For example, when Bonaparte and the Old-Fellow arrive at Ferdinand's house to engage in the ritual of arranging a bride for Bonparte, the Old-Fellow comments that

> 'Tis said in the good books that describe the affairs of the Gaelic paupers that it's in the middle of the night that two men come visiting if they have a five-noggin bottle and are looking for a woman. Therefore we must sit here until the middle of the night comes.
>
> But 'twill be wet tonight. The skies above are full.
>
> Never mind! There's no use for us trying to escape from fate, oh bosom friend.' (TPM, 81)

Comedy arises out of the fact that they sit in the rain until nightfall, and when they enter the house the fire has to be rekindled nine times because of the water on their bodies which keeps on putting it out (TPM, 81). This reliance on the clichés of Gaelic autobiographies to dictate and shape their lives is shown in particular in the character of Ferdinand O'Roonassa in Killeagh, the Old-Grey-Fellow's friend. Like Bonaparte, Ferdinand also 'lived in a little house in the corner of the glen as you journey westwards along the road' and gave a 'great Gaelic welcome' to them on their arrival at his house. He is an 'old worn man' with a daughter called Mabel who is a 'small, well-made, comely girl'. There is also an old woman 'dying for twenty years in the bed in the chimney-corner' living in his house, along with his son 'Mickey (his nickname was the Gambler) but he was carousing yonder in Scotland.' Myles sets up their household as a

replica of the type of household that is found in Gaelic autobiographies as they correspond to literary types. Hence, Ferdinand will embody the role of storyteller as a 'real shanachee recounting real folklore in the old Gaelic manner.' Myles exposes the significations behind how such a role is seen for comic effect. For example, it is agreed that it is not proper unless the shanachee settles down in front of the fire and puts his 'two hooves' into the ashes, thus repeating another cliché taken from Máire's Gaelic books. This ritual is used ironically to emphasise the stereotype of Gaels around the fire listening to stories, especially when in the text it is not cold outside and yet they are forced to heat themselves in front of fire to hear the shanachee's story (TPM, 68). Thus, their behaviour corresponds to the programme set out by the tropes of the good books as they act and speak in a certain way.

This chapter has explored how O'Nolan, through his adoption of the stage Irishman Myles na Copaleen as his authorial persona, challenges colonial and national forms of verisimilitude over the western peasant and his folklore. In *An Béal Bocht*, Myles as editor exposes the absurd depiction of the Gael as a pre-colonial and pre-modern version of an unattainable Irish identity which both the colonial and post-independence Irish subject seeks to signify within essentialist terms. Through an exploration of the *bricolage* nature of the text through its complex relationship with multiple representations of the Irish peasantry, I have shown O'Nolan's political 'minor' use of the Irish and colonial canons to demonstrate the political aspect of his parodic citation. O'Nolan warns us against adopting clichés as true forms of representation and of searching for pre-modern versions of ourselves due to the advent of modernity. As Taaffe notes, '[t]he inhabitants of Corca Dorcha were Frankenstein's

monsters, the progeny of the anthropological spirit crossed with romantic nationalism.'[102] Myles demonstrates, through exaggerated parody, how Free-State nationalism had idealized and invented an image of the Gael as an anthropological figure to base on identity upon. This image romanticizes and continues Matthew Arnold's view of Irish culture as 'a badge of a beaten race', as for the narrator Bonaparte this sense of being beaten is something to romanticize and celebrate. This absurdity forces the real Irish peasants into a situation of squalor, misery and struggle whereby '[a]ll literature exists in a polarity between the heroic and the abysmal view of life. Ó Criomhthain's book present the heroic, salted by a sort of everyday realism; O'Nolan's the abysmal, energized by the outrageousness of its comedy.'[103]

However, as the next chapter will explore in more detail, Myles na gCopaleen was not simply concerned with issues of national and linguistic identity. Instead, we must examine O'Nolan's use of the pseudonym in relation to the contemporary urban world of Dublin as a form of *flânerie* as he comments on daily and national life in his newspaper column as a well-known journalistic figure in the public sphere. Such commentary reveals the complex and liminal Irish identity and life O'Nolan seeks to portray throughout his work through his comic exposure of the workings of the state on a daily basis. If print capitalism is engaged in a re-imagining of the nation, Myles's column is full of imagined versions of Ireland which contest any singular version of the Irish national narrative.

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[102] Taaffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* p. 102
[103] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 130

Chapter 4: 'Cruiskeen Lawn': print capitalism and the *flâneur*

> [O]ne cannot help wondering whether we allow the newspaper to take far too big and dominant a place in our lives. No other words can explain the pitiful condition of the man who buys several newspapers (MAD, 71)

Myles na gCopaleen's 'Cruiskeen Lawn' column is often viewed as deteriorating in quality and wit after World War Two. Hence, the first collection of O'Nolan's journalism taken from material written between 1940 and 1945 is amply titled *The Best of Myles*.[1] As Young notes, the column is often viewed as a burden and hindrance to the production of O'Nolan's literary novel writing after the experimental promise of *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*.[2] Jackson argues that '[t]he column has generally been dismissed as a series of humorous squibs, satires and sketches, albeit displayed against a glittering backdrop of verbal prestidigitation. Brilliant, perhaps, but not, finally, 'important'.'[3] Hence, a dichotomy has been set up in studies of O'Nolan's work between the low brow and tiresome columnist Myles and the high literary modernist Flann O'Brien.[4] A second reason for the lack of critical analyses of the column is the issue of bitterness attached to the later columns, whereby the satiric persona of Myles is often seen as becoming entangled with O'Nolan's personality.[5]

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[1] See O'Brien, *The Best of Myles*

[2] Young, Steven, 'Fact/Fiction: Cruiskeen Lawn, 1945-66', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 111-8 (p. 111). Other critics, such as Hugh Kenner in *A Colder Eye* and Stephen Jones in *The Flann O'Brien Reader*, repeat this view that the column was a hindrance to his creative work. Brooker also notes the critical consensus that the journalistic persona of Myles resulted in the failure of the literary artist Flann O'Brien and that this attitude fails to register the achievement of the column as an outlet for his talent. Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* pp. 87-8

[3] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 11

[4] There are, of course, personal biographical reasons for why O'Nolan focused on column and periodical writing during the late 1940s and 1950s. Not only did he have to support his family after his father's death by earning an additional salary, but his second novel *The Third Policeman* was rejected by publishers for being too fantastic. Equally, copies *At Swim-Two-Birds* were destroyed due to a bombing of a London warehouse during World War Two, resulting in no re-issue of the novel until the 1950s.

[5] This is particularly evident as the public identity of Myles was known by word of mouth amongst staff at the *Irish Times,* as well as in the civil service and amongst literary circles in Dublin, and so associations could be made between O'Nolan and Myles. Thus, Myles was not a protected incognito identity. Breuer, when arguing that exile was necessary for Beckett's aesthetic, maintains that Krapp, in *Krapp's Last Tape*, is a version of a bitter Beckett if Beckett had stayed in Dublin, and may be more

Young notes that from 1956 playfulness was rare as the column became more direct in its attacks.[6] The column is dismissed because of its repetitive structure, an effect one experiences if one reads it in collected form. However, it must be remembered that the column was read by generations of readers over a period of twenty-six years. It is repetitive because Myles attacks again and again the same targets, often using or recycling his own material when necessary to meet deadlines, while reprints were rare until the later years of the column when O'Nolan was ill due to his alcohol problem from 1964 onwards.[7] However, as Jackson notes, the original reader opening his morning paper had no idea whether Myles was going to amuse, anger, surprise, disgust or bore him'. Hence, Jackson, when editing a collection of Myles's articles, preserves the order of original publication 'to restore something of Myles's unpredictability'.[8]

If the column is characterised by its ambiguity and unpredictability, I would argue that O'Nolan was engaged in a very productive and innovative form of writing between 1940 and 1966.[9] Cronin points out that the column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' was

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appropriate as an image of O'Nolan in the later years of his life. Breuer, Rolf, 'Flann O'Brien and Samuel Beckett', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, 37:2* (Autumn-Winter 2007), 340-51 (p. 342)

[6] Young, 'Fact/Fiction: Cruiskeen Lawn, 1945-66', p. 115. Jackson also argues that '[i]n the eyes of the world Brian O'Nolan was turning into his own creation.' Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 13

[7] See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 232-233 for a fuller account of the effect of drink on O'Nolan's health during the mid-1960s, including dozens of trips to the hospital, collapsing in public, breaking limbs, and developing anaemia and cancer. During the 1960s he recycled earlier pieces from 'Cruiskeen Lawn's' war years, usually with introductions in italics. Jackson notes that '[a]lcohol was an undeniable factor in O'Nolan's creative processes: its use (and abuse) underlies a good deal of the column. I have been reliably informed that some submissions were written when he was very drunk'. Hence, in the column as well as O'Nolan's fiction the theme of social drinking occurs, representing the Dublin Man as a heavy drinker, especially as the poet Jem Casey and Kelly state that 'A Pint of Plain Is Your Only Man' and Kelly exclaims that '[y]ou can't beat a good pint' in *At Swim-Two-Birds* (ASTB, 22). Jackson refers to the column as 'the diary of a depressive megalomaniac' because of his alcohol problem. Jackson, 'Introduction ', pp. 13, 14. Also see Young, 'Fact/Fiction: Cruiskeen Lawn, 1945-66', p. 113

[8] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 11. Kevin O'Nolan also notes the 'innovation and surprise' of the column. O'Nolan, Kevin, 'Preface', in *The Best of Myles*, ed. by O'Nolan, Kevin, (London: Flamingo, 1993), pp. 9-10 (p. 9)

[9] Young calculates that between 1945 and 1966 there were approximately 3,090 columns. Young, 'Fact/Fiction: Cruiskeen Lawn, 1945-66', p. 112. Cronin notes that the column was written in batches on Sunday afternoons to be published the following week. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 115

probably inspired by Beachcomber's column in the *Daily Express*: displaying many similar traits, both columns had a cast of characters and running stories and were intolerant of pretension, keeping art and artists in their place through their use of caricature of high-brow public figures.[10] O'Neill argues that in his 'columnism' Myles 'was the scourge of pretension throughout Ireland, most particularly in the rising governmental class – and at a time, let us be plain, when it was neither popular nor profitable to be so.'[11] This chapter will frame the column's innovative production and critical engagement with Irish socio-political history in relation to Anderson's presentation of the impact of print capitalism on the creation of nation-states. As Curran argues, the column is useful for historians and social commentators on twentieth-century Ireland as it assimilates the day-to-day specifics of the Irish nation in an imaginary context through the use of fantasy.[12]

If the nation is imagined through state-mediated centralizing forces, Myles offers a postcolonial form of resistance to any monocular viewpoints of national affairs.

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[10] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 196. In particular, English Catholic author J.B. Morton, who wrote under the inherited pseudonym Beachcomber in the column 'By the Way' from 1924 until 1975, created incredible characters such as Prodnose, a humorless, reasonable voice who interrupts Beachcomber's flights of fancy like the Plain People of Ireland do to Myles, and Dr Strabismus, an eccentric inventor and scientist who may have been a model for de Selby in *The Third Policeman* as well as the column's 'Research Bureau'. Equally, the structure of Beachcomber's column, with its random assortment of paragraphs containing unconnected ideas, is similar to 'Cruiskeen Lawn'. Michael Wharton, under the pseudonym of Peter Simple in the column 'Way of the World' in the *Daily Telegraph*, also engaged in quasi-autobiography and the creation of a list of characters. Equally, the journalism of the Austrian journalist Karl Krass could have inspired Myles's interest in linguistics and the way words exposed their users. Ultimately, this chapter will not focus in particular on how Myles develops these characters and on who he attacks due to space constraints. His characters include, but are not limited to, a Dublin man whose life revolves around the activities of his opinionated brother; the brain-dead and easily shockable Plain People of Ireland who often stupidly interrupt Myles's silioquies much to his annoyance and despair; and Keats and Chapman, two unlikely friends who exist within alternative time frames which delimit the laws of causality. Equally, Myles has multiple targets in his satire, from the civil service which he views as being staffed by the ignorant sons of farmers, the Dublin Corporation, the old Ascendancy readers of the *Irish Times*, contemporary international and Irish literary artists, de Valera's Institute for Advanced Studies which is parodied as Myles na gCopaleen's Research Bureau, the Irish Tourist Board, and the Electricity Supply Board (E.S.B.).

[11] O'Neill, 'Introduction', p. xiii

[12] Curran, "Could Paddy Leave Off from Copying Just for Five Minutes': Brian O'Nolan and Eire's Beveridge Plan'*,* p. 354. Curran notes that from 1944 onwards the column began to incorporate more immediate social subjects and that 'the wilful nihilism of this early humour' in *Comhthrom Féinne* and *Blather* 'was replaced by a far more calculated judgement as to satirical effect.' (p. 355)

If newspapers for Anderson build imagined nations, Myles's deterritorialization of the format of the newspaper column demonstrates an awareness of the power of a literary journalistic text to depict the everyday and the banal in order to counteract the formation of national narratives. Anderson argues that the newspaper and the novel provided the technical means for re-presenting the kind of imagined community that is the nation. He notes that while people may never meet in the nation, such forms of print capitalism link them as sociological entities: hence, in a novel or a newspaper column, events and people one has never met or been involved in are embedded in the minds of the omniscient readers creating a nation of would be readers of the same nationality. Hence, the author of a novel or column is intimate with the reader in his production of calendrical time and a familiar sociological landscape which he describes in accurate detail.

Anderson notes the profound fictiveness of newspapers in the arbitrariness of their inclusion and juxtaposition of stories that are not otherwise connected. Instead, these random stories are linked imaginatively through calendrical time whereby the date provides a connection in the 'onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time' where ''the world' ambles sturdily ahead'. There is a relationship between the newspaper, as a form of book, and the market: just as the book was 'the first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity', newspapers can be viewed as a type of book which are 'one-day best-sellers'.[13] In particular Anderson notes Hegel's observation 'that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers' which are 'performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull'. Hegel argues that 'each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident,

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[13] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* p. 34

yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.'[14] If, as Anderson concludes, 'fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating the remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations', an examination of 'Cruiskeen Lawn's' participation in and challenge of linear, chronological time and the imagined nation of Ireland is needed.[15]

'Cruiskeen Lawn' can be read as a one day best-seller book which involves and exposes the fictive, creative structuring of historical time through the omnipotent intimacy of the pseudonymous author Myles towards his readers. If for Anderson the novel and the newspaper create the imagined nation, O'Nolan's novels and newspaper columns deterritorialize comfortable versions of the nation and the connection between the journalist's voice and his/her reader. Myles wrote for a new post-independence Irish intelligentsia who demanded idiosyncratic social and cultural analysis; however, Myles did this in order to reflect 'their own beliefs and preoccupations back at them, with boundaries distorted and certainties doubtful.'[16] Myles positions his role as that of a keen observer of the Irish nation as he reads and comments upon other newspaper articles to expose their foibles and limitations in their presentation of the world. Thus, his manifesto is that '*They will not get away with it*. Over each back number I will go, nothing will remain unchallenged; all – *all* – will be exposed', and so he scans a range of material on a number of unrelated topics in his quest to revise the world (CL, 21 Aug 1944; AW, 133-5; emphasis in original).

Unlike the majority of critical prose texts written during the counter-revival period which were rooted in realistic, historical and political analyses of the nationalist

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[14] ———, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* p. 35
[15] ———, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* p. 36
[16] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 10

social order,[17] the social criticism contained in the 'Cruiskeen Lawn' column employs parodic fantasies as a mode of critique. In order to make sense of O'Nolan's style and self-positioning as the journalist Myles na gCopaleen, I employ Benjamin and Baudelaire's musings on the social function of the *flâneur* as a useful metaphor to frame how O'Nolan brings into question the dominant nationalist modernity of the 'Irish Ireland' movement. Therefore, the next section will examine the concept of the *flâneur* with reference to Benjamin and Baudelaire in terms of the *flâneur's* anonymous, voyeuristic and meticulous role as observer and participant in Parisian capitalist modernity, before offering analysis of O'Nolan's production of his own authorhood and persona within this concept. Just as Benjamin's figure of the *flâneur* has helped to illuminate the emergence of subjective techniques for processing and managing mass information in nineteenth and twentieth century Paris, O'Nolan offers an unstable, fleeting, postcolonial *flâneur* figure in his characterisation of Myles na gCopaleen during his journalist career. 'Cruiskeen Lawn' is a exercise in self-parody of O'Nolan's own Irish national identity as Myles explores the interstitial and fictive nature of authentic notions of Irish identity and journalism by intruding upon and within the discourse of factual journalism. His column reminds the reader that all texts are fictional as he flaunts his own creativity and reflects the reader reading to confront and interrogate Ireland's condition of modernity politically, ultimately producing a contradictory and ambivalent reading of Ireland's complex form of nationalist modernity.

4.1 The concept of the *flâneur*

Buck-Morss describes Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project*) as 'a

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[17] During the mid-twentieth century many authors relied on periodicals and journals such as the *Bell*, the *Irish Statesman*, *Kavanagh's Weekly*, *Dublin Review*, and *Envoy* to offer critique of the Irish nation-state formula.

historical lexicon of the capitalist origins of modernity, a collection of concrete, factual images of urban experience.'[18] In his study, Benjamin attempts to record the origins of capitalist modernity through a focus on a collection of images relating to Parisian urban experience during a period of societal change due to the burgeoning capitalist market.[19] During the period of high capitalism, Benjamin writes about subjectivities in crisis as forms of metropolitan living and consumerism change and re-shape social identifications. Benjamin handles these images politically to transfer revolutionary energy to them. He chose to avoid studying dominant social types, like members of the national bourgeoisie, and instead went to the margins of society to examine the figures of the *flâneur*, the prostitute, the sandwichman and the collector whose existence he believed were threatened with extinction by the closure of the public walkways, the Parisian arcades.[20] As Buck-Morss notes, Benjamin's 'method was to create from [these figures], through the formal principle of montage, constructions of print which had the power to awaken political consciousness among present-day readers.'[21] Buck-Morss argues that Benjamin explored the lack of coherent social order and identity due to the

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[18] Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', p. 99
[19] Burton argues that Paris during the nineteenth-century was a city positioned between the old aristocratic order and the new bourgeois class system: this was due to changes in class structures which led to an importance being placed upon money as a sign of bourgeois status. The old pre-1789 aristocratic order had been replaced with a new class system based around money which determined social position and status rather than inherited rank or title. Hence, Parisians demonstrated their new found wealth through conspicuous consumption and a spectacle of outward public displays of bourgeois wealth in public spaces. Thus, Burton argues that the bourgeoisie colonised Parisian public boulevards to display their wealth. Burton, Richard D. E., *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* (Durham: University of Durham, 1994) pp. 61-3
[20] As Benjamin argues, the *flâneur* came to rise due to architectural change in Paris rooted in budding capitalism in the creation of the arcades for vending purposes. These arcades were lined with elegant shops and were, for Benjamin, a city in minature. Thus, Benjamin locates the *flâneur's* ambiguous position and home within this interior-exterior space which is not quite a street and not quite a building. Thus, the *flâneur* disappered due to the rise of the department store and the demise of the arcades, his home. Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Zohn, Harry (London and New York: Verso, 1997) pp. 36-7, 54. Gluck argues that '[t]he transformation of Paris into a rationalized and impersonal public space in the course of the 1850s and 1860s was gradually destroying the physical and cultural preconditions of *flânerie*.' *Flâneurs* could no longer render the new city comprehensible as the networks of the arcades are removed like his enterprise of loitering. Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 755
[21] Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', p. 99

rise of capitalist modernity in his writings, believing that this crisis was embodied in the figure of the *flâneur*. Benjamin, by viewing Baudelaire as a *flâneur* in his exploration of the lack of social order and identification due to shifts in the socio-landscape of Paris, ultimately perceives the *flâneur's* object of inquiry as modernity itself within this crisis of representation.[22]

4.1.1 Baudelaire, Benjamin and the demise of the *flâneur*

As Gluck notes, any study of modernity must relate back to Baudelaire's essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), a study which enabled Benjamin to articulate his concept of the *flâneur* in his writings on Baudelaire more generally.[23] Gluck writes that modernity for Baudelaire was 'an unprecedented experience of change and disruption that was characterized by the loss of stable external references for individual perception.'[24] Gluck relates modernity to a 'crisis of representation or visuality, which affected all thoughtful observers, but was of most immediate concern to artists and writers charged with depicting the contours and distinct characteristics of modern life.'[25] Baudelaire had to re-imagine a world whose traditional social order had changed dramatically due to the development of urban centres and the rise of industrialisation in Paris. Baudelaire explored this cultural crisis of representation through the urban figure of the *flâneur*, most particularly in relation to the artist Constantin Guys, whom he viewed as 'the painter of modern life'.[26] Baudelaire's essay depicts the *flâneur* as the quintessential symbol of the modern artist and as 'a meticulous observer and recorder of

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[22] Buck-Morss, Susan, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989) p. 304

[23] See Baudelaire, Charles, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art & Artists*, Charvet, P.E., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 390-435

[24] Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 748

[25] ———, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 749

[26] Dutch born Guys (1809-92) was a realist illustrator of everyday life of the Second French Empire (1852-70).

experience in the city.'[27] Thus, because of this crisis in representation, Baudelaire seeks to read the epic and heroic in the ordinary world which Guys portrays in his paintings of urban experience. Baudelaire praises Guys' realistic illustrations of the everyday details of life, from women's clothing to horses and carriages, thus positioning him as a 'man of the world […] who understands the world and the mysterious and legitimate reasons behind all its customs'.[28]

The *flâneur* for Benjamin is a privileged persona of geographical dislocation and cultural transgression whom Benjamin re-inscribes throughout his writing. A *flâneur* is 'an idle stroller' or 'the passive consumer of the urban spectacle' who is engaged in *flânerie* or aimless sauntering and perambulation along city streets as a type of productive labour which is free from any sense of urgency.[29] He embodies movement through, or navigation of, imagined national sociological spaces, and usually undergoes dizzying subjective experiences during such journeys which expose the process of socialisation. Burton argues that the *flâneur* was a quintessential product of nineteenth-century Paris who was more than 'a mere peripatetic observer of Parisian life'.[30] This marginal figure of the *flâneur* of the Parisian arcades is seen by Benjamin as loitering in tranquil arcades as a form of trade as he peruses the varying selection of luxury goods and people displayed before him. The *flâneur's* shopping principle is "look, but don't touch" and involves a form of imaginary gratification provided by the objects he observes.[31] Thus, Burton presents the *flâneur* as an active intellectual who stands apart

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[27] Baudelaire writes of the *flâneur's* devotion to 'the sketch of manners, the depiction of bourgeois life and the pageant of fashion', cited in Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 749

[28] Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', pp. 396-7

[29] There is no English language equivalent for the French word *flâneur*. Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 749. See also Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* p. 185

[30] Burton, *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* p. 1

[31] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*. ed. by Tiedemann, Rolf (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press, 1999) p. 968

from the city even as he appears to fuse with it.[32]

Benjamin writes of how the *flâneur* came to prominence due to the nineteenth-century architectural change in the city of Paris when the arcades were created. The arcades were interior streets and passageways between neighbourhoods lined with luxury retail shops which were open through iron and glass roofs. Buck-Morss views them as a wish-fulfilment image expressing the bourgeois individual's desire to escape through the symbolic medium of objects from the isolation of his subjectivity by browsing the consumer goods on display in the arcades.[33] Benjamin saw the arcades as 'a world in miniature' where the *flâneur* could find a cure for his ennui by strolling at his leisure as a consumer in the interior-exterior space of the arcade.[34] With the creation of modern pedestrian streets, the metro and so on, the *flaneur's* free style roaming and occupation was threatened with extinction as he is forced to follow a predetermined route in a crowded space. Benjamin chose the Parisian arcades as his central image because these earlier forms of industrial luxury went into decay. These arcades grew from a lustrous place into a dilapidated one for him.[35] Traffic, in the form of mass-produced cars in the public space, destroyed the *flâneur* as the principles of mass

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[32] Burton compares the *flâneur* to the *baudad* who is passive and affective as he is absorbed by the flux of urban life: 'the homme de foules is a pure spectator-figure who longs, however, to merge ecstatically with the spectacle before him, a longing that is doomed to eternal frustration for he remains as isolated and imprisoned in self at the end of his odyssey through the Paris streets as he was at the outset.' This homme who is passive and despairing is set in direct contrast to the *flâneur* who is purposeful and vigorous. Burton, *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* pp. 1, 6

[33] Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', p. 103. Parsons sets out the social and metaphorical descriptions of urban types which are often undiscriminated. Parsons notes Benjamin's convoluted and changing definition and incarnations of the *flâneur* from 'the expert observer of the urban scene, translating the chaotic and fragmentary city into an understandable and familiar space, seems to become increasingly detached from his asphalt environment' to a more surrealistic mode of historical materialist discourse. Ultimately, Parsons argues that '[t]he flâneur is elusive; he literally walks away from Benjamin's definitions into the labyrinth, myth, and fragments of the city'. Parsons, Deborah L., *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 3-4

[34] Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Zohn, Harry (London and New York: Verso, 1997) p. 37

[35] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* p. 1213

production spilled onto and disintegrated the streets, waging 'war on flanerie'.[36] If mass production has taken over our public space, '[f]laneurs, like tigers or pre-industrial tribes, are cordoned off on reservations, preserved within the artificially created environments of pedestrian streets, parks, and underground passageways.' For example, '[i]n the metro there is no verging off course, no time for the flaneur's "irresolution"'. Metro cars are sealed tight as space-capsules with no air to breathe.[37] Benjamin argues that this type of crowding of urban life was psychologically damaging.

The demise of the *flâneur* in the nineteenth-century is due to the development of mass production and its effect on the public space. The twentieth-century *flâneur* wanders through internal and external spaces to observe the beauty in the everyday, the banal and the commodity objects on display. Thus, the closing of the arcades led to the rise of the *flâneur's* position amongst the crowd of these pedestrian streets. Baudelaire writes that his

> passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions.[38]

Buck-Morss notes that Baudelaire depended on the development of the mass marketplace to sell his poetry. As a *flâneur* Baudelaire goes to the marketplace to find a buyer or consumer for his observations. Baudelaire's seemingly aimless wanderings through the street are actually a method of productive labour which is part of a structured capitalist system. Baudelaire's *flâneur* is a consumer who is both part of and

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[36] ———, *The Arcades Project* p. 547
[37] Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', p. 102; Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* p. 536
[38] Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', pp. 399-400

outside of forms of capitalist modernity: he is nostalgic for the world of the epic adventure and attempts to recreate its possibilities through the depiction of the everyday and his engagement within the capitalist modernity.[39]

4.1.2 The metamorphosis of the *flâneur*

Gluck writes of the 'demise of the *flâneur* and his metamorphosis into the hero of the novel' whereby 'the original *flâneur* who inhabited the Parisian arcades of the 1840s has been irretrievably lost to the twentieth century' as a salaried employee.[40] Despite his loss of marginality as a paid employee, he still maintains the perceptive attitude which he embodies through his daily production of news, literature and advertisements for the information, entertainment and persuasion of the masses. Due to the expulsion of the *flâneur* from the arcades onto the street, his attitude has exploded in a myriad of mass media forms which continue to bare his traces.[41] While engaged in *flânerie*, he partakes in a form of anonymous urban sociological voyeurism as he studies the crowds that surround him on the streets. Hence, the perceptive mode of the *flâneur* is important: he is a meticulous and aloof recorder of the everyday of bourgeois life who, as a prototype for a new form of salaried employee, like a modern novelist, journalist, reporter, detective, caricaturist or storyteller, observes the manners of bourgeois life while he 'covers his beat'.[42] Baudelaire praises Guys for the anonymous nature of his painterly identity by signing his name as M.G. or Monsieur G, whereby '[n]one of his drawings is signed, if by signature we mean the few letters, which can be so easily forged, that compose a name, and that so many other artists grandly inscribe at the bottom of their most carefree sketches.'[43] M.G. loves to mix from his incognito

[39] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* p. 185

[40] Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 755

[41] Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', p. 105

[42] ———, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* p. 306.

[43] Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', p. 395

position within the crowd which acts as his 'enormous reservoir of electricity'. The *flâneur* for Baudelaire is 'a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements presents a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life.'[44]

The *flâneur* is Baudelaire's true hero of modern life because 'he had the ability to make visible and legible the elusive landscape of modernity that had become invisible and illegible under ordinary conditions.'[45] Burton refers to the *flâneur* as a 'reader' of urban life who deciphers the city. The world of Parisian life is then a system of signs for the *flâneur* to engage with, even in its most trivial aspects. Burton writes that urban life for the *flâneur* was a 'multiplicity of interlocking semiotic systems and that everything in the city was, by definition, meaningful.'[46] The *flâneur* searches for meanings in the banal and the trivial as he engages in his *flânerie* as every aspect of life is subject to his minute readings. He 'transformed the fleeting and trivial impressions of the urban scene into images and narratives that expressed the essential qualities of modernity' of his contemporary environment for his reader or audience's diversion from the tedium of the empty hours of non-work life.[47]

As Burton notes, all cultural phenomenon become forms of communication for the *flâneur* as he deciphers their meanings. Burton argues that the *flâneur* deduces a series of social, political and psychological meanings from such forms of communication and hence has a god-like power through his knowledge of the masses, his Other.[48] The *flâneur* in this sense sets himself apart from the masses, or the crowd,

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[44] ———, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', p. 400
[45] Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 749
[46] Burton, *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* p. 2
[47] Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 749;
Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* p. 306
[48] Burton, *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* pp. 3-4

as he walks through the urban landscape recording his observations in order to awaken the masses to their condition.[49] He treats the people and objects he observes scientifically as he presumes a correspondence between outward appearance and inward reality. Burton notes that for Benjamin the *flâneur* was in need of specialized and easily assimilated information and techniques to guide him through an increasingly illegible city due to the unprecedented change and global flux of high capitalist modernity in Paris creating individuals who are estranged from one another and their environment.[50]

Yet, at the same time, he is a participant in the proliferation of the mass culture of capitalist modernity and urban life due to his consumption of the people or objects that surround him, which he then converts into narratives to sell to newspapers. Benjamin sees the *flâneur* as an intellectual parasite of the Parisian arcades who strolls around the city treating people as objects and texts. The act of seeing is important for the *flâneur*, as through the act of sight he can learn how to avoid the signification of being seen by others. His Other loses power to signify as he, as a marginal figure in high capitalism, gains agency through sight and deciphering us. He is a probing observer of the spectacle of capitalist modernity because, as Buck-Morss argues, '[i]n commodity society all of us are prostitutes, selling ourselves to strangers; all of us are collectors of things.'[51] Ultimately, there is a common likeness between the modern novelistic hero and the *flâneur* due to their common cultural enterprise: as Gluck argues,

> [l]ike his nineteenth-century predecessor, the hero of the novel was also a
> cultural type, rather than a particular individual, who embodied the general

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[49] Buck-Morss maintains that Baudelaire does not belong to the crowd but instead uses the crowd as a refuge in order to remain anonymous. Through this, the streets rather than his previous haunt of the arcades become his rooms of work. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* p. 186

[50] Burton, *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* p. 4. See Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* pp. 35-39

[51] Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering ', p. 104.

characteristics of the modern condition. He, too, was a textual creation as well as a creator of texts, and thus constituted a symbolic bridge between the realms of social experience and aesthetic representation. Significantly, however, the world of social experience and aesthetic representation had become both more fragmented and more radical in the twentieth century and the hero of the novel invariably developed different strategies for representing them.[52]

The *flâneur* is a detective or a spy of modernity and mass crowds who 'strives to be both all-seeing and invisible'. As a suspicious spy, the *flâneur* is 'capable of assuming a variety of disguises in order to pursue his scopophiliac passion undetected.' Because of this, to see is to have agency and power as a roving voyeur of the masses as 'the visionary powers of the *flâneur* call in question the principle of identity itself.'[53] Benjamin sets the *flâneur* within the interior-exterior ambivalent space of the arcades as he positions himself apart from but also participates in the Parisian capitalist modernity of his daily *flânerie*. He is what Buck-Morss refers to as a rebellious bohemian and yet a producer of commodities.[54]

In the next section I will use the concept of the *flâneur* as a model to decode O'Nolan's use of the persona of Myles and his writing style. O'Neill argues that Dublin intellectuals during the mid-twentieth century who had to write after the high creativity of the Irish Literary Revival period 'were victims of promise and for whom, in the clerical orthodoxy that was Eire, promise was safer than success.'[55] Myles, in his column as a *flâneur* figure, lampoons the development of the bourgeois state, which was the result of the fight for Irish independence before 1922. In the column 'humour is a serious business: nonsense has its purpose. Its purpose, for Brian O'Nolan was to

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[52] Gluck, 'Reimagining the Flâneur: The Hero of the Novel in Lukács, Bakhtin, and Girard', p. 755. This is particularly apparent in *At Swim-Two-Birds* when the student narrator's friend Brinsley states that '[t]here are two ways to make big money, he said, to write a book or to make a book.' (ASTB, 24)

[53] Burton, *The Flaneur and His City: Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* pp. 4, 5

[54] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* p. 304

[55] O'Neill, 'Introduction', p. xv. Kiberd writes that 1930s 'Dublin felt less like a streamlined modern capital' and more like 'a collection of discrete villages, each with its own accent, personality and appearance.' This image of Dublin can be seen in *The Dalkey Archive* which centres around two such villages, Skerries and Dalkey. Kiberd, *Irish Classics* p. 513

disagree – the prerogative, and perhaps the province, of all writers.'[56] O'Nolan positions his pseudonymous author in an antagonistic relationship to the Irish state and its versions of modernity which resulted in 'the cultural exclusivism of the Irish Ireland movement' which 'created a climate of opinion in which authors whose work might encounter moral disapproval could also be suspected of a lack of national authenticity or will.'[57] Myles complicates any easy notion of national identification through his complex portrayal of his own subjectivity. Myles, who chooses to retain an ambiguous relationship to other journalism and to national and international issues in his column, surveys the world and builds up a picture of his own persona as central to, and critical of, culture and society. If 'Irish Ireland' is about the assimilation of its citizen subjects, Myles's stylistic challenge through his journalism of bewildering nonsense gathered from multiple sources depicts a *flâneur* figure who re-assesses the processes of Ireland's postcolonial modernity by engaging with and critiquing its development. Through his deterritorialization of the make up and structure of an empirical textual report, the logic of the 'truth' of reports is questioned as they are shown to not be full-proof. This, as will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, produces a complex form of postcolonial agency and resistance through the use of anonymous authorial identities through O'Nolan's ambivalent political positioning in the column.

4.2 Myles na gCopaleen's *flâneuresque* persona and column

As Benjamin and Baudelaire depict, the anonymous figure of the *flâneur* is characterised by his casual yet purposeful observations of the city as he engages in idle strolling amongst the crowds that surround him. I extend this metaphor to examine how Myles presents his own random assortment of observations in relation to the Irish

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[56] O'Neill, 'Introduction', p. xvi; emphasis in original.
[57] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 63

nation in his deterritorializing newspaper column. As Clissmann argues, '[t]hrough the pseudonymous character of Myles na gCopaleen, [O'Nolan] was able to extend the range of his interests to cover every aspect of Irish life, and many of a more international nature.'[58]

4.2.1 Myles na gCopaleen's 'Unsleeping Eye'

In the column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' Myles is the main player, rather than a peripheral comic character of Boucicault's play. Jackson describes Myles as 'a volatile and moody creature: he can be puckish, witty, irreverent, or simply childish, and he can be petulant, obsessive, brutal even desperate. There is something approaching the tragic about him.'[59] O'Nolan takes the image of nineteenth-century historical Myles as a peasant storyteller who displayed a 'gift for the gab' in Griffin's novel, and evolves him into the role of a perpetual storyteller and creator of texts as well as a continuing fictional creation in his newspaper column. There are links throughout the column between the earlier stage Irishman portrayals of the Myles character-type and O'Nolan's presentation in his journalism. For example, Myles is referred to as '[t]he veteran Irish singer', just as he performs a number of ballads in *The Colleen Bawn*.[60] Because of this, Myles colours the Irish national landscape with his own inherited Irish consciousness like the other quintessential *flâneur* figure Mr Bloom; just like Bloom, Myles is a mass of contradictions which characterise modernity due to the vast array of stimuli which surround him as he loiters through the imagined sociological national space of Ireland. If Mr Bloom's mind for Kiberd is 'a compendium of shreds garnered

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[58] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 188. Thus, Foster argues that 'Myles is an expert in all fields, a dab hand at mechanical engineering in particular, always ready with advice for the government, never without an idea about social improvement.' Foster, Thomas C., 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An Introduction', in *A Casebook on Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds*, ed. by Foster, Thomas C., (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2002)

[59] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 12

[60] O'Brien, Flann, *The Hair of the Dogma*. ed. by O'Nolan, Kevin (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1989) p. 20; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus (HD, 20)

from newspaper editorials and advertisements', Myles, through the processes of his meandering mind, interior monologues and soliloquies, exposes clichéd mass cultural language systems that are inherent in postcolonial Ireland as he cites from them.[61]

Myles na gCopaleen, as an aloof detective-journalist of mid-twentieth century Irish nationalist modernity and an example of the myriad of forms the *flâneur* transformed into due to the advent of high capitalism, takes on a dual role as both an observer and participant in the nationalist modernity that encompasses him and acts as a source for his perceptive writings. Myles is the head of 'Cruiskeen Industries, Ltd, a subsidiary of the Cruiskeen Corporation. Cruiskeen Industries, Ltd' which produces the consumer product 'Cruiskeen Lawn' for the *Irish Times* (HD, 25). As a twentieth-century *flâneur*, he manufactures what he refers to as 'a small quantity of raw, unrefined Cruiskeen' to be mass-consumed by his readership for their diversion and entertainment (HD, 26). As a *flâneur*, Myles produces news, advertisements and short literary pieces for the entertainment and persuasion of his public by loitering in public spaces to collect anecdotes and expository stories. O'Nolan's relies on the anonymity of the author figure Myles in order to adopt a critical stance towards the imagined Irish nation within this trade he engages in. The use of this penname empowers O'Nolan to act as both observer and participant of the Irish political landscape in a similar way to how Baudelaire's *flâneur* acts in relation to capitalist modernity. As a *flâneur*, Myles exists on the streets of Dublin and its bars, such as the Scotch House and the Palace Bar, in his column.[62] For example, Myles talks to cab drivers on his way to buy carpet slippers for his granda in Cabinteely (CL, 7 Feb 1945; AW, 156), and he walks along the strand in Rosslare while on a visit to his apple trees in Wexford (CL, 27 Oct 1945;

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[61] Kiberd, Declan, 'Introduction', in *Ulysses*, (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. ix-lxxxix (p. xli)
[62] See Taaffe, *Ireland through the Looking-Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* for a discussion of the Dublin character of O'Nolan and Myles which are often seen as interchangeable.

AW, 178-9). This enables Myles to, on the one hand, stand aloof from the spectacle of national modernity which Irish people are involved in, and yet, on the other hand, participate in this nationalist modernity through his voyeuristic observations and in his role as an all-seeing, all-knowing journalist.

Myles writes down his observations '[o]n behalf of my constituents (the human race) whom I have had the honour of representing for so long on the Governing Body of the University of Life' (CL, 1 Jan 1945; AW, 153), and acts as an informer for his reader of the state of the world, and more particularly, Ireland, where it is 'my sublime privilege over the course of the last ten centuries to see unfolded the fantastic pattern of human destiny; little has escaped my notice' (CL, 25 Sept 1944; AW, 140). In one article from January 1945 Myles feels it is his solemn duty to inform his reader that he has a cold: 'I regret to inform the sovereign Irish People (1922) Ltd, that I am suffering from a severe cold.' (CL, 17 Jan 1945; AW, 155) He goes on to state that 'it is my stern duty to record the following absolutely certain 'cure' suggested by 'friends'. He sets himself against the friends' suggestions which are clichéd pieces of advice in Dublin accents such as stopping in bed, fighting the cold on his feet, going to the chemist, having a good mustard bath and lemon drink, drinking hot milk, taking 'aspireens' and port wine, and putting an 'ould' sock around the neck four times (AW, 156). Thus, Myles is deeply intimate with even the most banal aspects of the Irish nation and his readers' concerns and ideas.

Myles writes that 'the eternal vigilance which the Sage of Santry has pronounced to be the price of freedom' means that 'nothing escapes the Unsleeping Eye' of Myles (HD, 22-23).[63] As a voyeuristic *flâneur*, Myles maintains his curious,

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[63] Myles na gCopaleen lives in Santry, a suburb in north Dublin and is oftern referred to as the 'Sage of Santry'.

aloof perspective throughout his column as he aims to deal with national affairs and put them 'in proper perspective' (HD, 26). As Baudelaire argues in relation to the *flâneur*, 'whilst others are sleeping, this man is leaning over his table, his steady gaze on a sheet of paper, exactly the same gaze as he directed just now at the things about him'.[64] The parasitic *flâneur* Myles is engaged in a relentless drive to record, organise and explain the stories he overhears during the day amongst the masses, but what he produces does not necessarily rely on realistic social analyses but instead demonstrates the fragmented nature of modern existence through his often absurdist focus on banal detail and trivial topics. After all, modernity is characterised by 'the transient, the fleeting, the contingent', and so O'Nolan distances the persona of Myles from the stable entity of the dominant Irish national bourgeois in order to offer a fleeting and often contradictory anonymous perspective with the aim to awaken his reader to their condition.[65]

4.2.2 Identity, agency and resistance: Myles na gCopaleen's autobiography

Myles creates his own fictional Wonderland which he wanders through, positioning himself in fictional versions of Irish historical moments and the Irish imagined nation. Orvell and Powell argue that 'Myles na Gopaleen soon took on a character all his own, or rather a plurality of characters, for there were few limits to the experiences or virtues of the man.'[66] Equally, Brooker refers to his 'on-going improvisation' in the development of the author-character.[67] Hence, his reader is forced to be suspicious of his ambivalent behaviour as a *flâneur* figure and of his observations on nationalist modernity as he raises issues over his own anti-nationalist actions as well as issues relating to the truth and accuracy of factual newspaper reporting. Myles is

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[64] Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', p. 402
[65] ———, 'The Painter of Modern Life (1863)', p. 404
[66] Orvell, and Powell, 'Myles Na Gopaleen: Mystic, Horse-Doctor, Hackney Journalist and Ideological Catalyst', p. 52
[67] Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* p. 90

largely positioned in public areas at key national and international historical events in his column. O'Nolan reveals through the column an episode by episode life-biography of Myles. O'Nolan inflates our impression of the Irish peasant as a singular, localised figure of the west of Ireland to portray a character who is in a constant process of re-creation just as O'Nolan re-produces and re-fashions the column over twenty-six years. Because of this, many of the stories which Myles is directly involved in are often discontinuous and have no conclusive ending, just as a newspaper report from one day may not be picked up the next day.

O'Nolan situates the figure of Myles as someone who challenges easy distinctions and classifications which Irish nationalist modernity demands through its promotion of the lifestyle of the Irish speaking rural peasant and Catholic social practices more generally. Like Baudelaire who explored the cultural crisis of representation in Paris due to the diminishing traditional order, Myles explores the nationalist desire for wholeness due to the advent of modernity where such pre-colonial desires are impractical, such as reviving the Irish language and Gaelic social order. Through his non-realist style, Myles exposes the social function and content of such idealised images of Irish identity and instead scrutinises the provincial absurdities of its idealism to the point of the surreal in his development of Myles's biography.[68] Ultimately, O'Nolan extinguishes his own identity in the pursuit of a myriad of modernist, fragmented, ventriloquised pen-names and identities for Myles na gCopaleen through auto-biographical and historical blurring of Irish nationalist time.

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[68] This, of course, counters authors such as Trellis in *At Swim-Two-Birds* who, by writing a book on the perils of sinful acts, aims to provide a social function and commentary, or Mick in *The Dalkey Archive* who wants to publish a corrective study on Joyce. Thus, as Lloyd argues in relation to K.'s twarted desire for a social function in *The Castle,* '[i]n a major novel, the narrative would tend to culminate in the achievement of K.'s desire, but here it is perpetually frustrated, with the effect that his identity as the land surveyor remains in question and his identification with the functionaries of the Castle is never achieved.' Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* p. 21

O'Nolan literally achieves what Barthes defines as the author's role: for Barthes, the author as a novelist becomes inscribed in the novel as one of its characters and no longer maintains a 'privileged, paternal' or 'truthful' authoritative position. Instead, the author 'becomes, as it were, a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work'.[69]

This is nowhere more evident than in the tapestry of the 'true' biography of Myles na gCopaleen. Jackson refers to the development of Myles's persona as 'a disguised voice reciting the confusing story of a hidden life.'[70] Like Brother Barnabas, Sir Myles's life has involved travelling through multiple historical time periods and spaces where he meets a number of historical figures and re-writes historical facts.[71] For example, Myles lives in Santry and is known by his family as Sir Myles or the Da, yet he worked with Clemenceau to bring about a rappel à l'ordre in France, he collaborated with Einstein, played the fiddle for Kreisler, studied under Scarlatti, and knew both John McCormack and Joyce very well.[72] He was also Provost of T.C.D., President of the Republic of Letters, District Justice of Ballybofey, and refused a Professorship of Architecture in U.C.D. and the Presidency of Ireland. He is the son of King Henry VIII, a count of the Holy Roman Empire and a famous detective. In 1648 Myles was at Westphalis, in 1815 he travelled to Vienna with the Bishop of Autun, and he was at Fairyhouse in 1916 (CL, 26 April 1945; AW, 159). Myles writes that

> I have lived in Europe all my life. I have spent many years in Tibet, in Syria, in Iceland, in Guatemala. I am an old man and have devoted all my life, all my

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[69] Barthes, 'Work to Text', p. 1474

[70] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 13

[71] Brother Barnabas acts as a prototype for Myles's biography: like Myles, Brother Barnabas has an extraordinary history outside the laws of time and space, has had contact with the great and famous, and expresses an amused tolerance towards the foibles of the human race (MBM, 72-3). Myles may also be based on the pseudonymous author 'Father Prout' (Francis Sylvester Mahony) in the nineteenth-century journal *Fraser's Magazine*: like Myles, Father Prout is an authority and pedant on everything as he wanders through history claiming acquantance with great figures.

[72] Myles says that he is like Joyce: 'a complete prig, a snob, and a person possessed of endowment unique in the archives of conceit' (CL, 6 June 1957).

energy, all my money to the service of humanity, keeping back nothing of wisdom, of charity, of wealth which might benefit. My ancestors, of whom there were thousands in every age, have been statesmen, lawgivers, philosophers, priests, not less distinguished than they were pious, diligent, honourable, and fearless in the defense of truth. I have known war and I have known peace. (CL, 25 Sept 1944; AW, 140)

He also claims that has never experienced hunger because '*I have no body*!' (CL, 28 Nov 1945; AW, 182; emphasis in original), yet he broke his back in 1932 when a pick-axe fell down four storeys from Mary's Church on him while cycling (CL, 20 Dec 1945; AW, 184-6).

Thus, Myles is a kaleidoscopic comic performer and a creator of masks, lies and disguises rooted in nationalist and international historical sources which have helped to create the imagined nation. He endlessly employs surrogate voices to speak for him leaving the reader unsure who is truly speaking. These voices include that of Myles as 'Dublin gurrier or European aristocrat, inventor or thief, scholar, journalist, cheap comic, classicist, misogynist, diplomat, grammarian, family doctor, philosopher, prophet, potential suicide, madman, critic or god.'[73] Clissmann notes that there are many official biographies of Myles but that '[t]he 'official biographies' tell of Myles's long years in different countries and incarnations and recount in startling and overwhelming detail the list of his many high offices, distinctions and deeds of bravery.'[74] If Baudelaire saw the *flâneur* as a theatrical performer who assumed many masks and disguises in order to re-enact the lost totality of epic culture in the midst of fragmented modern culture, O'Nolan, by embodying the name of a stereotypical Irish

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[73] Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 21. O'Nolan's texts are crowded with such ambiguous figures, such as 'Miss Annie' in *The Hard Life* who Finbarr fails to recognise as his half-cousin when she comes to take care of them after their mother's death (THL, 4). Her repetitive answers to questions with the phrase 'Seemingly' add to the secretive and ambivalent nature of her relationship with the orphaned boys (THL, 11, 24). Equally, Mr Collopy is described ambiguously in the text when Finbarr first meets him: 'There is something misleading but not dishonest in this portrait of Mr. Collopy. It cannot be truly my impression of him when I first saw him but rather a synthesis of all the thoughts and experiences I had of him over the years, a long look backwards. But I do remember clearly enough that my first glimpse of him was, so to speak, his absence' (THL, 9).
[74] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 1

peasant, presents Myles as maintaining an insider role on all things Irish. Myles enters the texts he produces in his column as an authentic peasant voice in order to dismantle the notion that he will represent one stable identity for the new nation. Instead, what O'Nolan produces is a hyperbolic version of authentic Irishness. O'Nolan develops multiple names to depict his author-character: Myles is known as His Grace, His Satanic Highness, My Excellency, the Sage of Santry, and the Wordsworth of Ireland, Baron, Ireland's Own Hatchetman, The Irish Disraeli, The Man in the Hat and The Gaelic Demosthenes.[75] He also has multiple occupations, being Head of Cruiskeen Industries, Director of the Myles na gCopaleen Banking Corporation, and President of the Hiberno-American Air-Lions Incorporated, to name but a few.[76]

If the peasant was seen by the Irish Literary Revival as 'a "natural" aristocrat', O'Nolan explodes this idea with the development of Myles as a titled Irish peasant.[77] For example, Myles provides multiple accounts of his life as the Anglo-Irish statesman Sir Myles. It must be remembered that O'Nolan was publishing his column in the traditionally pro-British *Irish Times* and his own journalistic identity within this context as an Irish Catholic writer remains ambiguous, especially when he produces a mock version of his main readership's own identity in the characterisation of Sir Myles. If Smyllie employed Myles to broaden Anglo-Irish interests in Ireland, Myles explores the ambiguous position of the old Ascendancy who read his column through the development of his persona. Myles explores the question of neutrality during World War Two for the old Ascendancy readers of the *Irish Times*.[78] Hence, while Smyllie

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[75] Orvell, and Powell, 'Myles Na Gopaleen: Mystic, Horse-Doctor, Hackney Journalist and Ideological Catalyst'*,* p. 53
[76] He is also the supreme Governor of 'the Myles na gCopaleen Banking Corporation' (HD, 24-5), and the President of the Hiberno-American Air-Lions Incorporated.
[77] Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant'*,* p. 1120
[78] See Lee, J.J., *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 253-70 for a discussion on Irish neutrality which was declared on 2 September 1939. 'Cruiskeen Lawn', written during a time of war, 'looked studiedly off-center at reality' as 'the column provided relief from the times, but is was also written out of the conviction that the spirit of playful nonsense was

evaded the Irish war censorship board by displaying support for the Allies, Myles accuses him of playing 'with his Panzerdivisionen'. Because of Myles's comic style during a time of national emergency, one reader accused Myles of 'holding a party when the house next door was burning down.'[79]

O'Nolan develops a number of articles based around Myles' acceptance of an English title as Sir Myles, 'a vassal of the British Crown', in order to expose the significations inherent in such an Anglo-Irish identity when critiqued by chauvinistic nationalism, as well as the supposed factual nature of newspaper reporting and the recording of historical events. As a *flâneuresque* journalistic voice, Myles plays with the notion of not being seen by his readers due to his many contradictory disguises and opinions. The structure of the report is a *bricolage* of quotations and opinions from many people on the politics of the Irish peasant's supposed acceptance of an English title. The external voice who reports this rumour is biased towards Myles, referring to him as 'the brave old gentleman'. Reports quote a British military spokesman who praises Myles as a 'distinguished old man whose services to the cause of humanity during the sombre crises of World Wars 1 and 2 can never be repaid' and is 'a great European and a great gentleman'. However, all these stories are based on hearsay and the 'truth' behind them is constantly brought into question. For example, the rumour that Myles accepted a title from the British Crown is 'according to a story put out by A.P. from London last night. Considerable speculation has arisen in diplomatic circles here and across the Irish Sea as to the significance of the rumoured demarche' (HD, 20). Opinions always contradict one another on how the reader of the column should judge Myles's behaviour as a traitor to Irish national identity or not. There are many

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alien to dictators and not the smallest component of civilized society.' Orvell, and Powell, 'Myles Na Gopaleen: Mystic, Horse-Doctor, Hackney Journalist and Ideological Catalyst', p. 51

[79] cited in Jackson, 'Introduction ', p. 9

hyperbolic arguments developed against Myles. For example, a Mr Molotov accuses Myles of murder and burning down the Reichstag and Mr Oliver Flanagan maintains that Myles has been a British spy for twenty years who earned money from Moscow (HD, 22). Reports from Irish papers are 'restrained; the Government organs are cautious in tone and speak guardedly about the danger of mistaking eccentricity for genius, while several left-wing journals have criticised the former M.F.H. for what they regard as a betrayal of 'Celtic ideals'.' (HD, 20) Myles himself, when in the dock over this issue, creates his own history of patriotism in order to contradict these allegations. He maintains that he fought in the G.P.O. in 1916, a claim which is seen by the chief prosecutor as 'a lie, a cynical, blasphemous lie, uttered by a man whose conscience did not hesitate before murder, and whose honour did not prevent him from committing perjury. He does not deserve to be refuted, for the facts established by us are irrefutable…' (HD, 22)[80]

If the nationalist and Anglo-Irish bias of factual newspaper reporting is deterritorialized within 'Cruiskeen Lawn', O'Nolan furthers this saga by creating hyperbolic events surrounding the controversy of Myles's acceptance of a British title. These include serious rioting in Dublin with 'clashes between armoured cars and terrorists from the Myles na gCopaleen Monarchist Clubs have been reported in several suburbs.' (HD, 20-21) There is a curfew placed on Dubliners because of these riots as the military are drawn in. Members of the Myles na gCopaleen 'Gold Shirts' who are 'a small group of plutocratic terrorists' who fight with Fenians, who are described as 'be-caubed thugs from the Cruiskeen Lawn Clubs on the North Quays'. People are injured, three hundred reported dead or missing, and the Government buildings are evacuated eighteen times due to mine scares. Myles is placed at the centre of all debates over Irish

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[80] Myles, in this sequence of articles, produces further texts relating to his ambiguous subjectivity, such as police reports and newspaper articles which continue the mystery over his identity.

identifications in a non-realist fantastical version of the imagined Irish nation where factions disagree over how to define him, and by extension, Ireland. His identity is placed in constant doubt as we are unsure which fictive report is factual and instead are left with a constantly fluctuating narrative that escapes easy classification and complicates any easy relationship between the author Myles and the reader. As Mr John Dillon is reported to have said, 'we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that a dark cloud is overshadowing us. Irish Ireland is stunned and shocked by a gross and wicked betrayal on the part of their whilom champion and erstwhile friend.' (HD, 21)

The anonymity of the persona of Myles enables O'Nolan to freely probe his surroundings through fantasy as an undercover detective journalist who parodies versions of Irish nationality. He is able to demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the world and yet remains on the margins of that society through his constant re-creation of the character Myles. Using the penname Myles enables O'Nolan to float freely as a voyeur amongst the multitude. Benjamin argues that the *flâneur* 'enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes.'[81] As an evasive *flâneur*, Myles reports half-truths and out right lies and uses language to cloud what his actual opinion may be. For example, he uses anonymous material such as letters from readers and quotations from articles to offer a critique of Ireland's nationalist modernity. In an article from September 1944 Myles complains about being pestered by readers with their writing which they send to him, from comic verses to marriage proposals (CL, 20 Sept 1944; AW, 136-7). He writes that 'I do not trouble to observe the rather tawdry terrestrial impedimenta which surround me. Emotionally, the 'world' gives me nothing; intellectually it is of no assistance.' He distances himself from the

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[81] Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* p. 55

masses, his readership, and their literary production, for his own 'transcendent enterprise'. He refers to himself not as a passenger but 'call me an Inspector, an Ambassador, a Plenpotentiary without Portfolio' (AW, 136) and maintains that

> my mission and its manifold implications find their raison d'être in a realm which cannot be apprehended in the 'light' of sense-experience, my presence here is a 'phenomenon' so completely outside and beyond the planes of existence which human thought is able to hypothesize into the structure of the universe.

Ultimately, on a comic level, Myles places himself outside the realm of reality and factual newspaper reporting on the nation, claiming that 'I am the shadow on the wall of the cave mentioned by Plato. I am the second one from the left in the grey frock coat and dundrearies.' He does not want to be disturbed or spoken to: 'I am not a vocational group, do not wish to be organised or become 'functional', in no circumstances will I join a trade union. The reason? Because I am, myself, a …. a …. vocation.' (AW, 137)

If Myles na gCopaleen is his own vocation outside the laws of chronological time and space, 'Cruiskeen Lawn' offers a curious re-mapping of the imagined Irish nation and its subject-citizens through Myles's historical memory and fantasy.[82] Any sense of a coherent narrative of the nation is deterritorialized through the performativity of Myles's infinite ironic selves. As de Man notes, such a form of irony produces 'a complexly negative narrative: the self is never capable of knowing what it is, can never be identified as such, and the judgments emitted by the self about itself, reflexive judgments, are not stable judgments.'[83]

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[82] Lloyd calls for critics to trace the multiple temporalities of contemporary cities, as in Ciaran Carson's poetry collection *Belfast Confetti* which Lloyd argues 'maps the complex, layered and shifting temporalities and geographies of Belfast through the intersecting optics of documentary history and anecdotal memories. Each optic is undercut, moreover, by the uncertainies produced, not only by the familiar vicissitudes of recall, but precisely by the recurrent incommensurabilities of documentary record and subjective recollection, a question constantly of the imperfectly totalizaing framing of the event, the mapping of sedimented layers of memory and history.' Lloyd, *Ireland after History* p. 49

[83] de Man, Paul, 'The Concept of Irony', in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. by Warminski, Andrzej, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 163-84 (p. 176)

As a *flâneur*, O'Nolan exploits his own reading in his column in the form of critical commentary and dialogic plagiarism to make his reader aware of how the Irish state is being reported by other journalism. Young argues that his carries away material from daily life where it can be fashioned into imperishable art.[84] Myles's journalistic production is similar to Kafka's 'minor' literary fiction, as '[b]y focusing closely on the routine moments of daily life in ways that bored into history, Kafka attended to the deeply personal in order to unravel the web of social relations.'[85] Both authors expose the socialisation inherent in the newspaper and the novel as it constructs a form of imagined national community. O'Nolan's column, through its anonymity and ambivalent *flâneuresque* positioning, offers a challenge to the national narrative and to forms of postcolonial modernity in Ireland. This results in a column which offers a peculiar form of postcolonial agency and resistance which defies easy classification due to the contradictory depiction of the columnist Myles.

As chapter five will discuss in more detail, O'Nolan offers a technical and critical challenge through his destabilised narratives and narrators in the novel form as well as the newspaper format. As has been noted extensively by critics, O'Nolan's first English language novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* is characterised by its challenging metatextual nature which was years ahead of its time. This novel, through an examination of the role of translation and spatial narrative mapping in the text, questions ideas of centralised authority and distinctive markers of Irish identification in early Irish literature and the contemporary world. This 'minor' literary novel destabilises notions of narrative progression, coherence, and generic convention, and in

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[84] Young, 'Fact/Fiction: Cruiskeen Lawn, 1945-66', p. 117
[85] Katz, Cindi, 'Major/Minor: Theory, Nature, and Politics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 85:1* (Mar 1995), 164-8 (p. 166)

doing so, goes beyond simply 'writing back' to offer a more complex postcolonial engagement with the literary heritage of Ireland within the context of nationalist modernity. Like Myles na gCopaleen, the unnamed student narrator of *At Swim-Two-Birds* expresses concern for his reader to have freedom from the despotism of his author. It is up to reader of the text to gain agency by reading his text consciously as it exposes the limitations of forms of literary representation in Ireland as it intensifies one literary register by hooking it on to another one.

Chapter 5: *At Swim-Two-Birds* and the palimpsestic translation of Irish literary heritage

> The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognized for exactly what it is. History always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. Consequently fear of the present leads to mystification of the past. The past is not for living in; it is a well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act. (Berger) [1]

While *At Swim-Two-Birds* was published by Longman on 13 March 1939, it took another two decades, with the re-publication of the novel, in 1960, before it received literary recognition and its now well-established canonical position within the Anglo-Irish and international literary canon as a metafictional and postmodern novel.[2] While the novel was praised by early reviewers such as Dylan Thomas and Graham Greene,[3] it is the oddity of the book which caused its initial financial failure. Not only is the book difficult to summarise in terms of plot, but it also involves a *bricolage* structure which is made of 'dozens of little tap-roots to the Irish literary and social memory' alongside equally complex international literary associations.[4] Foster notes the

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[1] Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) p. 11

[2] Timothy O'Keeffe pursuaded MacGibbon and Kee to re-issue the book in 1960. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 85-99 for a publication history of the novel. The book only sold 244 copies in 1939 and copies of the novel were destroyed in a London warehouse which was bombed during World War Two by the Germans. See CL, 4 Feb 1956 for an amusing comment on this by Myles na gCopaleen who blames Hitler for the lack of success of the text.

[3] In an early review, Graham Greene praised the novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* as 'one of the best books of [the twentieth-] century. A book in a thousand...in the line of *Ulysses* and *Tristram Shandy*' while Robert Alter suggests that *At Swim-Two-Birds* was 'one of the earliest postmodern novels'. See Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) p. 223. *The Hard Life* is dedicated to Graham Greene: '*I honourably present to* GRAHAM GREENE *whose own forms of gloom I admire, this misterpeice*', possibly as a response to Greene's positive review of *At Swim-Two-Birds* in 1939. Dylan Thomas places O'Nolan's novel at the forefront of Irish writing while Burgess, in the *New York Times Book Review*, included the novel as one of the best contemporary novels in English. Beckett and Joyce also praised *At Swim-Two-Birds*. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 55, 86-102 and Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 310. As Foster argues, '[a] novel with such a diverse list of admirers commands our attention.' Foster, 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An Introduction',

[4] Wain, John, '"to Write for My Own Race': The Fiction of Flann O'Brien', *Encounter, 29:1* (July 1967), 71-72, 74-85 (p. 80). Wain gives the example of the character Byrne in the text, who could be modelled on Joyce's closest friend Byrne at U.C.D. Similarly, both the student narrator and Yeats's grandfather read Falconer's *Shipwreck*. Ó Brolcháin offers a useful short survey of Irish and international texts O'Nolan re-assembled for his text. Ó Brolcháin notes that the novel has its origins in a story called *Glór an tSíoraíocht* (*The Voice of Eternity*) which, like *At Swim-Two-Birds*, contains Finn MacColl storytelling to policemen who cannot speak Irish and constantly interrupt him. He also notes O'Nolan's use of the German novel *Die Harzreise* by Heinrich Heine (ASTB, 33). Not only does the student

difficulty in offering a useful summary of the action which takes places in the text, which is due to its Chinese-box structure, stating that '[t]he hackneyed approach to summarizing *At Swim-Two-Birds* is to confess the impossibility of the task, then to plunge ahead in a rush to encompass all the mad detail of the novel.'[5]

This is particularly apparent from the cover page and paratextual elements of the novel which require the reader to trace its obscure references. Not only is the cryptic title of the novel a topographical reference to an Irish language place name Snámh-dá-én in translation which is mentioned briefly in the Irish legend *Buile Suibhne*, but the Greek epigraph, which translates as 'for all things go out and give place to one another', demonstrates the fleeting and transient nature of any form of representation in the text (ASTB, 68, 7).[6] Both the title and the epigraph indicate that the novel will refuse to

narrator mention that he has to purchase this novel for university in the text, but many of the textual elements from the German text are re-modelled in the novel. These include similar boozy, footloose and unnamed university protagonists who neglect their studies. In that novel the student protagonist sets out on a trip and meets an array of amazing characters, such as a tailor who is addicted to poetry with hazy metre and likes to quote long chunks of verse, and a character obsessed with the colour green. The tailor, like Sweeny, quotes forty-one verses over eight pages. Equally, the novel contains an account of a famous German athlete Lüder who is capable of enormous jumping like both Sweeny and Craddock in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. O'Nolan had a copy of this novel and it was part of his university syllabus. Equally, O'Nolan's novel has its origins in his own work, such as the illusion of Shanahan's cowboy tale which resembles an article from January 1933 in *Comhthrom Féinne* by Brother Barnabus which is also based in Ringsend. Ó Brolcháin, 'Comparatively Untapped Sources', pp. 10-13

[5] Foster refers to the text as 'the story of a young novelist playing with all his toys' where many elements 'simmer together in a lively stew pot of story.' Foster, 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An Introduction', Foster is one of a long line of literary critics who have tried to make sense of the *bricolage* structure of the text. As Wain notes, '[t]o attempt a criticism of this book is a task I have alternatively longed and dreaded to approach. I love it and have always been willing to testify to my love. Yet to discuss it? To do anything more ambitious than merely assert its uniqueness?' Wain, "to Write for My Own Race': The Fiction of Flann O'Brien', p. 71. For an interesting study of the *bricolage* structure of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, see Surgi Speck, 'Bricolage, Analogies and Hinges: Order in the Recombinant Universe Of "Tristram Shady"', Surgi-Speck argues that Sterne shuffles and reshuffles material from his own life, scientific theory and linguistic and literary traditions to create 'event fragments' and 'structure fragments' in the text. This is similar to the student narrator's use of materials in O'Nolan's text from his own life and the texts he reads (p. 65). Equally, there is difficulty in translating *At Swim-Two-Birds* into other languages due to his linguistic, idiomatic and cultural references. See Lanters, José, "Unless I Am a Dutchman by Profession and Nationality': The Problems of Translating Flann O'Brien into Dutch', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 143-50 for a discussion on translating the text into Dutch.

[6] Foster argues that O'Nolan 'came to feel that the reference [to the place *At Swim-Two-Birds*] was too arcane and that its strangeness might hurt sales. He was ever hopeful that his books would be widely popular, evidently not recognizing that their form, and particularly the form of this one, precluded general popularity far more than any title ever could.' Foster, 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An

conform to any easy interpretation. Through its artistic collage, a polyphonic version of

the Irish national narrative is created, with no one form of representation remaining

stable or functioning as the ultimate Irish narrative. This becomes apparent in the

difficulty of summarising the competing stylistic and narrative elements of the plot. The

novel, from the beginning, seems to be about a student novelist who is writing a novel

about another novelist Trellis. This novelist Trellis is a tyrannical author figure who

controls his characters' every movement: because of this, his characters drug him when

he is asleep and engage in mutiny by creating their own stories as authors and by trying

to bring about their author's death. In this text all the characters become palimpsests of

previous narrative versions of themselves which all point to O'Nolan's focus

> on palimpsests and partial erasures […] the mutiny theme acquires added
> impetus when Trellis's characters began to "write over" their author, composing
> their own text in which Trellis is tortured, put on trial, and destined for death. As
> Trellis is being "erased" and re-composed by his characters-turned-authors, one
> of the "new" novelists interrupts the novel-within-a-novel-within-a-novel-
> within-a-novel by inserting "a brown tobacco finger in the texture of the story
> and in this manner caused a lacuna in the palimpsest" (ASTB, 185).[7]

The novel relies on a structure whereby any one narrative is in a constant state of re-

composition and re-inscription. The process by which the various forms, styles and

voices transform into one another must be understood in relation to Benjamin's concept

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Introduction', Other titles O'Nolan suggested included *Sweeney in the Trees*, *Truth is an Odd Number*,
Through the Angel's Eyelid, and *Task-Master's Eye*. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and
Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 87 and Comer, 'A Mortal Agency: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p.
104
Garvin suggested the epigraph, which was taken from Euripides' *Hercules Furens* or *Heracles
Mainonemos* (*The Madness of Heracles*) which, incidently, resembles the translated title of *Buile Suibhne*
(*The Madness of Sweeney*). Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* p. 63
and Cornwell, *The Absurd in Literature* p. 261. Kiberd provides an alternative translation of the epigraph
as 'all things naturally draw apart and give place to one another'. Kiberd, *Irish Classics* p. 502. John
Garvin is often considered a benevolent father-figure for O'Nolan. O'Nolan was Private Secretary to
Garvin, Sean T. O'Kelly, Paddy Ruttledge and Sean McEntee while working in the civil service.
Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* pp. 67-8. It must also be noted that
the choice of both the title and the name of the author for the book demonstrates Genette's observation
that the sender of the author's name is not always the author and can be the publisher instead. See
Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* p. 46
[7] Shea, 'Patrick McGinley's Impressions of Flann O'Brien: *The Devil's Diary* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p.
275. The trial scene is a version of Bloom's trial in *Ulysess*.

of the role of translation.

This chapter positions O'Nolan's creative translations of Irish mythologic material in *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a version of Benjamin's tangential model of translation within an Irish postcolonial context through O'Nolan's engagement with a number of literary and cultural texts from the major canon which describe Ireland. The process of translation involves re-articulating the past in order to realise the present. Mike Cronin argues that during the late nineteenth-century there was a growing cultural confidence in Ireland which led to curiosity about the past and an interest in a future for an independent Ireland away from British colonial rule and cultural influence. He maintains that questions of language and cultural self-confidence and distinctiveness were central to the emerging definitions of Irishness during the period, but without translation these questions could not be formulated. Translation, for Cronin, is a founding contributory moment in Irish modernity which must not be ignored. Cronin positions Ireland as a translatable space which is fought over and inscribed between the Irish and English languages, and between imperial and nationalist versions of Ireland's future.[8]

This is particularly apparent if we examine how Irish modernist and postmodernist texts from the Irish Literary Revival period to the present day rely on translations of ancient Irish language canonical texts as the basis and starting point for their creative work.[9] Kiberd argues that '[t]he Irish Renaissance had been essentially an

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[8] Cronin, Michael, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996) p. 131

[9] The Irish Literary Revival translations should also be read within the wider context of modernist translation practices by Pound and Eliot. Translations by contemporary Northern Irish poets include Carson's *Táin*, Heaney's *Beowulf*, Michael Longley's Greek translations, Marina Carr and Frank McGuinness's tragic dramas based on Greek legends, and Friel's translations of Russian plays and stories. These writers place particular importance on the role of the English language in literary production. Kiberd notes the importance of Hiberno-English dialect for Irish Literary Revival playwrights: 'Yeats had politely questioned the realism of Douglas Hyde's ideal of a national literature in Irish and had gone on to ask: 'Can we not keep the continuity of the nation's life, not by trying to do what

exercise in translation, in carrying over aspects of Gaelic culture into English.' Kiberd positions the Irish translator within this context 'as often *inventing* as *reflecting* an original Ireland'.[10] Cronin maintains that translation has a revolutionary creative potential in Ireland: he states that '[t]o the extent that all translation involves matching like to unlike, coupling the familiar and the foreign, the translation process has much in common with paradox, metaphor and discovery.'[11] This, for Cronin, suggests 'potential for play' within translations as themes, texts and objects are 'ludically recycled when they are distanced from their real-life uses'.[12] If the Irish Literary Revival adapted translations of Celtic material as the basis of their experimental quest for a national form, in this chapter I apply Cronin's concept of Ireland as a translatable space for potential creative purposes to examine how O'Nolan revisits, through his ludic recycling of Celtic tales and themes, the translation process that was inherent in the project of the Irish Literary Revival. While taking on many of the energies of translation inherent in the work of Yeats, Synge and Gregory, O'Nolan critiques the emergence of a self-conscious ethnic and nationalist Irish literature which is primarily concerned with images of authentic Celtic origins in the post-independence period. By defining identity in historical and national terms, this major literary canon fulfilled the function of nationalist aesthetic culture and acted as the common property of Ireland to create a sense of a collective nationhood. O'Nolan, through his metafiction in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, refuses to produce a linear narrative which depicts the Irish nation in a simplistic fashion. O'Nolan's metafiction exposes how Ireland is brought into being by

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Dr Hyde has practically pronounced impossible (i.e. saving Gaelic), but by translating and retelling in English, which shall have an indefinable Irish quality of rhythm and style, all that is best in the ancient literature?' Kiberd, 'J.M. Synge: 'a Faker of Peasant Speech'?' p. 63. See also Yeats, W.B., 'Letter to the Editor of *United Ireland*, 17 December 1892', in *Uncollected Prose I*, ed. by Frayne, John P., (London, 1970), p. 255

[10] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 625; emphasis in original

[11] Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* p. 4

[12] ———, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* p. 5

the act of translation. The writing reaches moments of comic disunity and abundance, offering alternative versions of Irish history and providing non-elite histories and viewpoints which shift the axes away from dominant versions of 'Irish Ireland', and which express the political implications of these dominant discourses.

Translation has become a means to establish a lineage to a pre-colonial past in post-independence Ireland, and so I argue that O'Nolan, in his self-conscious production of a 'minor' literary text, subverts the conformation of a stable national literature based on translation. Instead, he provides contemporary folklore and popular ballads, both real and fictional, in the novel to debunk any singular, authoritative version of Ireland as promoted in Celtic narratives since the Irish Literary Revival.[13] Firstly, I will define Benjamin's concept of translation as a 'minor' literary strategy, before examining the role of translation in O'Nolan's appropriation of Celtic mythology in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. I will investigate how O'Nolan incorporates J.G. O'Keeffe's 1913 bilingual edition of the Celtic narrative *Buile Suibhne* (*The Frenzy of Sweeney*) as the basis for his own creative translation in the novel, with allusions to other Celtic texts including the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*The Battle Raid of Cooley*) and the *Fiannaíocht*. Contextual information on O'Keeffe and these texts will then be provided within the context of antiquarian translation to reveal how translators make choices as they shift

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[13] Quintelli-Neary argues that the Irish Renaissance offered a 'serious treatment accorded to heroic figures of Irish folklore' and that this 'could not be sustained very far into the twentieth century. Near religious fervor vis à vis traditional Gaelic writings would be supplanted by satirical and parodic handlings of Irish mythological source works. The traditional Gaelic hero would alternatively serve as political symbol and buffoon; and the chauvinism exhibited by chroniclers of a national mythology would be replaced by a purpose that more likely resembled that which inspired the tongue-in-cheek records of many medieval Irish tales' (p. 1). She argues that Stephens, Joyce, O'Nolan, Wall, and O'Duffy's novels all satirically recycled the motifs of ancient tales and myths as examples of fantasy writing to 'assert the uniquely Irish quality of their writing and evince their ability to recycle motifs from well-worn tales.' (p. 2) This is not an attempt to rob the tales of dignity or denigrate the tradition but instead should be read as part of a tradition of satire and parody inherited from Gaelic bards and from Merriman, Swift and Carleton (p. 3). Quintelli-Neary, Marguerite, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels*. ed. by Sullivan, C.W., *Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (London: Greenwood Press, 1997)

between languages and cultures. Then, I will provide textual analysis of how O'Nolan appropriates and warps O'Keeffe's translation, placing it in a dialogical relationship with other styles, concepts and forms in the novel which create a multi-faceted and heterogeneous depiction of contemporary Ireland and its relationship with its past on 'several planes and dimensions' (ASTB, 101). Rather than offering a noble version of Celtic mythology as maintained by the Irish Literary Revival, the contemporary modern Dublin characters offer a revision of O'Keeffe's translation, as they transform and re-cycle Sweeny's epic narrative and the *Táin* into their own contemporary narrative through the production of alternative stories and poetry inspired by *Buile Suibhne* and the *Táin*. Hence, O'Nolan challenges the fixity of a unitary sense of high and low Irish culture as mythological fantasy and romanticism are juxtaposed with the gritty realism and debasement of post-independence modernity in a form of palimpsestic translation.[14]

5.1 'Minor' literature and translation

At the beginning of their book, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari ask '[h]ow can we enter into Kafka's work?' because his 'work is a rhizome, a burrow.' They note that Kafka's labyrinthine castle has 'multiple entrances whose rules of usage and whose locations are not very well known', just like the hotel in the novel *Amerika* which 'has innumerable main doors and side doors' whereby 'no entrance is more privileged' than another in order 'to trick the enemy'.[15] Similarly, Wollaeger asks '[w]hat are the political consequences of reading Joyce within the

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[14] Ironically, O'Nolan's use of *Buile Suibhne* in the text has been read as 'parodic' by Clissmann and 'serious and accurate' by Wäppling . Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 129 and Wäppling, 'Four Irish Legendary Figures in *At Swim-Two-Birds*: A Study of Flann O'Brien's Use of Finn, Suibhne, the Pooka and the Good Fairy' p. 60

[15] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 3. Interestingly, Trellis's characters are forced to live in the Red Swan Hotel, a space where borrowed characters from different genres and texts co-exist, from 'a cowboy in Room 12 and Mr McCool, a hero of old Ireland, is on the floor above. The cellar is full of leprechauns.' (ASTB, 35) The Red Swan Hotel is literally full of rooms which contain narrative options: Furriskey opens one of the many doors in the hotel and enters the room where Lamont and Shanahan exist, but one wonders who he may have met through another door (ASTB, 52).

labyrinthine structures of his own intentions?' due to his extratextual allusions.[16] This description of the rhizome-like structure of Kafka and Joyce's labyrinths, with their multiple unprivileged entrances, resembles the opening and the overall structure of O'Nolan's text *At Swim-Two-Birds*. On the first page of O'Nolan's novel, the student narrator of this experimental text muses that

> [o]ne beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with. A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in the prescience of the author, or for that matter one hundred times as many endings. (ASTB, 9)

An experimentation in literary form is produced for the remainder of his text through the use of multiple genres, styles, intertextualities and parodies which depict a multi-faceted and comic version of Ireland and the novel genre. While this chapter will not deal exclusively with all the forms O'Nolan employs in the text, it must be recognised that he builds a multi-faceted *bricolage* narrative from a heterogeneous array of materials he had at hand, such as cowboy narratives, encyclopaedic entries, eighteenth-century poetry, gambling letters, and the details of his own life.

Both Kafka and O'Nolan give the reader the choice to pick an opening to their work and map their own passage throughout their texts. As Marco argues, 'minor' literature is not an imitative representatory literature but instead engages in a stop and go narrative structure of a number of movements and meetings across various narrative planes.[17] Thus, the student narrator gives '*three separate openings*' to his novel involving a depiction of the Irish devil the Pooka MacPhellimey, Mr John Furriskey and Finn MacCool. However, these three narratives do not offer a simple presentation of folkloric, realist or mythic character representations. For example, while the Pooka is

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[16] Wollaeger, Mark A., 'Stephen/Joyce, Joyce/Haacke: Modernism and the Social Function of Art', *ELH, 62:3* (1995), 691-707 (p. 691)

[17] Abel, Marco, 'Speeding across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac on the Road', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies, 48:2* (Summer 2002), 227-56 (pp. 229-31)

associated with nature through a reference to his hut in the firwood, he has more in common with Furriskey: not only does Furriskey have stained teeth and a cavity in his left canine, but the Pooka whistles through a gap in his teeth while the student narrator hurts his tooth while chewing bread in his mouth (ASTB, 9-10). The openings work within generic forms in order to subvert their assumed signifying practices. As Barthes argues in relation to his version of a revolutionary text,

> this ideal text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning […] we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach.[18]

At Swim-Two-Birds as a novel is encased in just one opening or one chapter which seems to indicate a structured novel, but within this text there are an heterogeneous array of narratives which begin sometimes in the middle of their narrative, are often revised or interrupted by other forms of narrative, or do not have any sense of closure. The extract describing Finn MacCool on the first page of the text is explored by the student narrator in more detail from pages thirteen to twenty, and then revised as Finn becomes a character in Trellis's story acting as Peggy's father as well as a model for Trellis's characterisation, and later in Orlick's story as a judge who condemns Trellis for his crimes against his characters.

At Swim-Two-Birds* can be read as a 'minor' literature which is spatially aware of how narratives, from Celtic mythology to realism, construct the world within certain assumed linguistic systems of signification. In the text, through his inclusion of a number of different styles and genres, these maps change depending on which entrance the reader, character or author chooses to take and on how the narratives are revisited by their narrators within the texts. I argue that this principle of multiple entrances is a

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[18] from Barthes' study *S/Z* (1970) cited in Brooker, Selden, and Widdowson, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* p.151

political strategy because, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, '[o]nly the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the Signifier, and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation.'[19] O'Nolan reflects on his role as signifying author by choosing to manipulate language, genre and the role of the author as colonial/national signifier, and highlight and reflect upon this manipulation as history and literary narrative are recycled and reproduced in his work.

If the novel relies on a postmodern structure whereby any one narrative is in a constant state of re-mapping, this 'minor' literary process must be understood in relation to Benjamin's concept of the role of translation. Benjamin argues that 'any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information […] This is the hallmark of bad translations.'[20] Benjamin implies that a translation should be less about maintaining accuracy between two languages because no translation is possible if the translator strives for likeness between the translation and the original. Because of this, Benjamin asserts that the translator cannot reproduce 'the unfathomable, the mysterious, the "poetic,"' unless he is a poet himself.[21] Benjamin argues that there is a reciprocal relationship between languages, and because of this, languages do not strangle one another but are interrelated in what they express; hence he writes that

> [i]t is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his recreation of that work. For the sake of pure language, he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language.[22]

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[19] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 3
[20] Benjamin, Walter, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Arendt, Hannah, (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 69-82 (p. 69)
[21] Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', p. 70
[22] ———, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', p. 80

In other words, Benjamin is arguing for a process of creative translation whereby the translator 'watches over the maturing process of the original language and the birth-pangs of his own.' In relation to translation by the Irish Literary Revival, Kiberd argues that

> [t]he new version glances off the original, as a tangent touches a circle before pursuing its own primary course: yet that course is forever determined by the point of impact. For Walter Benjamin the great flaw of most nineteenth-century translations was their excessive respect for the conventions of the target language (usually the imperial one), and their refusal to allow its usages to be creatively disrupted by the syntax of the source.[23]

Benjamin is interested in the after-life of an original work in translation, '[f]or in its after-life – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living – the original undergoes a change.'[24] Benjamin further argues that

> [j]ust as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.

Benjamin argues that 'the continued life of works of art' must be 'determined by history' because '[t]he history of the great works of art tells us about their antecedents, their realization in the age of the artist, their potentially eternal afterlife in succeeding generations.'[25] Hence, 'Benjamin called this *citation*, but it could as validly be termed *translation*, for what is suggested is neither a break with the past nor an abject repetition

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[23] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 628. Similarly, Bhabha describes tangential notions of 'minor' departure from major canonical forms. He writes that '[t]he critical edge of minority writing is born of this tangential temporality that resignifies or translates the discourses of the majority in terms of the minoritarian tradition determined by its point of tangential departure.' Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 440. This results in liminal breaks and breaches in literary traditions for Bhabha.

[24] Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', p. 73

[25] ———, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', p. 71

of it, but a rewriting.'[26]

The next section explores Benjamin's notion of tangential translation as a mode of creative re-writing, renewal and transformation of an original text and as a form of 'minor' literary strategy by focusing on how O'Nolan re-maps the Irish legend *Buile Suibhne* in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. If, as Cronin has argued, Ireland is a translatable space which is constantly re-written over, an analysis of O'Nolan's palimpsestic treatment of the original Irish legend throughout his text reveals a political aspect to his work which refuses any static form of writing and instead demonstrates a flexibility in Irish cultural texts which monologic nationalism denies.

5.2 Appropriating and warping myth in *At Swim-Two-Birds*

5.2.1 Context of Anglo-Irish translations

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to a rise in vernacular English language translations of pre- and early Christian Irish history and Celtic mythology. While early antiquarian societies did not affiliate their translations with a national or sectarian politics, later translation and antiquarian organizations and individuals did.[27] Nineteenth-century scholars prided themselves on the exactness of their translations as they produced early Irish texts for the benefit of other scholars rather than a general national audience. To a certain extent, these early translators and

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[26] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 629

[27] Cronin maintains that societies such as The Dublin Gaelic Society (1807), The Iberno-Celtic Society (1818), the Ulster Gaelic Society (1830), The Irish Archaeological Society (1840), The Celtic Society (1845), and The Ossianic Society (1853) avoided political affiliations in relation to their translation work, especially as any interest in preserving the living Irish language would be dangerous as it could revive old enmities and sectarian fears. Cronin argues that antiquarianism was a middle ground, and by extension, so was translation, as it allowed the exploration of cultural identity within the bounds of ancient Irish 'civilisation' to avoid contemporary parallels with the loss of the Irish language. Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* p. 132. However, from the late nineteenth-century onward '[t]he Irish seized translation of their own cultural heritage as one means of reestablishing and redefining their nation and their people'. Tymoczko, Maria, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1999) p. 21. Examples of more politicised translators include Eugene O'Curry, John O'Donovan, Charlotte Brooke, Edward Bunting, Samuel Ferguson, and Whitley Stokes.

antiquarians can be considered part of the imperial regime which attempted to make sense of Ireland and its ancient past and dying language. Kiberd notes that

> the former greatness of the Celts was established in the first instance by British public servants and translators, who set out to reform and improve the debased contemporary realities of Irish culture. Since the ancient Celtic past was a thinly-disguised version of the British imperial present, acceptance of that present (albeit in the English language) could presage a restoration of former Irish glories.[28]

Since the imperial power led the way in naming and translating Irish cultural texts into English, the question arises: how did Irish authors challenge this form of cultural imperialism?

Rather than being faithful to the original Old and Middle Irish texts, creative translations in the vernacular Hiberno-English by the Irish Literary Revival reached and inspired towards a more general audience of the Irish reading public rather than fellow antiquarians. Anglo-Irish translators such as Standish O'Grady and Douglas Hyde produced translations of medieval Irish manuscripts into a vernacular Hiberno-English which made the texts more accessible to the contemporary reading public and the non-Irish speaking Anglo-Irish writer. O'Grady, in his preface to his translation *Silva Gadelica* (1892), acknowledges the intimidating translation environment which called for antiquarian precision and accuracy.[29] Unlike previous scholars, O'Grady does not present himself as an archaeologist but as a humble quarryman who painfully gets through his translation. Cronin argues that 'Hyde's translations mark a transition from translation as an act of exegesis to translation as an agent of aesthetic and political renewal. Translations no longer simply bore witness to the past, they would actively

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[28] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 625
[29] O'Nolan includes many of O'Grady's translations from *Silva Gadelica* in the text as half-parodies; these were originally translated for the Irish Text Society. For a short survey of O'Grady and his aesthetic by O'Nolan, see O'Brien, Flann, 'Standish Hayes O'Grady', *Irish Times* 16 Oct 1940; MBM, 253-9.

shape a future.'[30] Anglo-Irish translators like O'Grady, Hyde and O'Keeffe were translating to recover the past and 'to use them as pre-texts for greater inspirations on their own languages' whether that be Irish or Hiberno-English.[31] These translations marked a turning point for the Irish Literary Revival, as authors such as Synge, Martyn and Yeats, who did not know or did not have a sufficient level of skill in Irish, could use these translations as models of their own creative texts. Because of these translations, Anglo-Irish creative writers could now access a whole body of mythology to develop a distinctive Irish mode in verse and prose. Hyde, by taking pride in the Irish language in its translated format, translates into the vernacular of Hiberno-English which aimed to be idiomatic and unpretentious to convey the energy and difference between Irish and English without descending into parody. As Cronin maintains, '[t]he act of Irish-English translation remained inescapably political' and can be read within the light of Ireland's colonial condition in its attempt to re-vitalise a distinct national culture.[32] Translations enabled the Irish Literary Revival to develop an authoritative national canon of literature to represent Ireland in its own terms and its own vernacular English language.

However, what the Irish Literary Revival produced out of this process of

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[30] Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* pp. 135-6. Hyde's translations of poetry were published in the *Nation* newspaper 1890, in the *Weekly Freeman* 1892 and in *Abhrain Gradh Chuige Connacht* or *The Love Songs of Connacht*. In its modern introduction, Micheal Ó hAodha argues that the translations marked a turning point for the Irish Literary Revival and revealed a new source for the development of a distinctive Irish mode in verse and poetic prose. Yeats emphasised the liberatory effects of Hyde's translation strategy in a preface to *Love Songs* where the formal antiquarian translation styles were being replaced. Yeats wrote that Hyde opened up a region of the mind for authors to wander in, while Moore stated that Hyde wrote beautiful English based on Irish. Hyde was aware of past translation traditions and wanted to reproduce vowel rhymes and exact metres of the original Irish language. Ó hAodha, Micheal, 'Introduction', *Love Songs of Connacht: Abhráin Grádh Chúige Connacht,* ed. by Ó hAodha, Micheal (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969 (1893)) pp. v-x

[31] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 627

[32] Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* p. 133. McCaffrey notes that '[t]o indicate the cultural continuity between the age of the pre-Christian heroes and the era of the modern Irish farmer, the writers often translated the ancient sagas into the speech of nineteenth and twentieth century Irish peasants, with the heroes of old depicted in poems, in novels, and on the stage as peasant lads and lasses.' McCaffrey, 'Trends in Post-Revolutionary Irish Literature', p. 26. One example of this is the ancient heroine Deirdre who becomes a peasant girl in Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows*.

translation did not always satisfy its Irish audience who were enjoying a surge of cultural confidence at the turn of the twentieth-century. This can be exemplified if we examine how Synge's drama was received in the Abbey Theatre. Yeats, in his attempt to build a national culture for Ireland, was horrified by the riotous reaction of the national bourgeoisie to Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. While Yeats wanted to regenerate the contemporary artistic imagination through the national theatre, the public saw intolerable images on the stage, such as Irish women escaping with beggars in *In the Shadow of the Glen*. Ireland as a translated space was caught within a battle between two versions of Ireland, that is, D.P. Moran's 'Irish Ireland' and Yeats's romanticised version of Ireland.[33] The misty, idealistic romanticism of Yeats can be contrasted with how mythology was translated in a puritanical and narrow minded model for more conservative nationalism. If in colonial times the modern was equated with foreignness, domination and violence, so the representation of the culturally old is viewed as being more appealing and hence fought over by different nationalists.

5.2.2 Context of *Buile Suibhne*

During the nineteenth-century, antiquarians took a renewed interest in Gaelic texts and re-ordered twelfth-century Irish language manuscripts into mythological cycles as they translated them.[34] There are four major cycles of Irish mythology. The

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[33] Gregory, who was a chief driving force behind the Irish dramatic movement, discovered Synge. In her book *Our Irish Theatre* she comments on the reaction to *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1907. She comments that the play was met with puzzlement, hising and shock 'at the wild language' as she depicts a group of hostile men in the theatre who disturbed the performance during its opening nights. See Gregory, Lady Augusta, *Our Irish Theatre* (London, 1914). For an example of an account of the riots, see Holloway, Joseph, *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre*. ed. by Hogan, Robert and Michael J. O'Neill (Illinois: Crosscurrents Modern Critiques, 1967). Holloway (1861-1944) kept a journal where he recorded his impressions of theatre he had seen. On 26 January 1907 Holloway, after seeing Synge's play, argues that the play 'is not a truthful or just picture of the Irish peasants, but simply the outpouring of a morbid, unhealthy mind ever seeking on the dunghill of life for the nastiness that lies concealed there.' He describes Synge as an 'evil genius' and Yeats as 'his able lieutenant' as he objects to the play's use of peasant dialect and sexual references and action.

[34] The development of the Irish language has been classified into three major periods: the Old Irish period between the eighth and mid ninth centuries; Middle Irish, between the mid-ninth to twelfth centuries; and Modern Irish after that. Myles objected to the study of Old and Middle Irish in universities whereby 'a large number of persons are making a living out of monkeying about with what they are pleased to call

first, the *Mythological Cycle*, which originates from *The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, or the *Book of Invasions*, gives information on the various people who came to Ireland within the context of Christian European history.[35] These stories include information on pre-Christian Irish deities and events. However, these stories were written down relatively late in late Middle or Modern Irish. The second major cycle is the *Ulster Cycle*, containing stories from Iron Age Ireland including the *Táin*, which is the closest Irish mythology has to an epic.[36] This cycle concentrates on heroic tales of heroes from Ulster, conflicts over succession and dominance, and tribal struggles. It contains fifty stories in Old Irish and Middle Irish including information on archaic customs, the active role of deities (similar to the Greek gods in Homeric epic) and the extreme heroic code. The third cycle focuses on Finn MacCool and his warriors the Fianna and is often the most popular of the cycles. *Buile Suibhne* (*The Frenzy of Sweeney*) is an anonymous Middle Irish narrative which dates from the twelfth-century and is found in the fourth cycle, *The Cycles of the Kings*, which is often described as a collection of stories which cannot be grouped into easily categorised cycles. *The Cycle of the Kings* explores the conflict between the introduction of Christianity in Ireland and pagan traditions and beliefs, and incorporates pre-Christian stories into writing. This fourth cycle focuses on legendary and historic kings, and includes tales of voyages, adventures in the pre-

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Old and Middle Irish.' Myles assumes them of using that term 'Old Irish' incorrectly, stating that 'Old Irish' 'is New Irish' and 'Middle Irish' 'is a meaningless terms (actually), because the mid-point of our linguistic time-contimuum is perpetually shifting to compensate for the ever-ripening bloom of 'Modern Irish.'' (CL, 25 Aug 1942; AW, 53-5) Ó Hainle notes that O'Nolan had access to the early Irish tradition due to his ability to read and speak in Irish, even in Middle and Old versions of the language. O'Nolan's father's personal library was well-stocked with seventeenth and eighteenth-century editions of Irish sagas, and O'Nolan's degree in Irish at U.C.D. was aimed at improving students' knowledge of late medieval literary traditions. This enabled O'Nolan to write Middle Irish passages in his journalism and in *An Béal Bocht* and he uses the two primary sources of *Buile Suibhne* and *The Fiannaíocht* for his M.A. thesis and later for *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Ó Hainle, 'Fionn and Suibhne in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', pp.18-19

[35] See *Book of Invasions* (*Lebor Gabála*): Macalister, R.A.S., and John MacNeill, eds., *Lebor Gabála (of the Conquests of Ireland)* (Dublin, 1916)

[36] The *Táin*, through its presentation of the hero Cuchulainn, has been exploited by Irish nationalists and unionists. For example, Hyde saw Cuchulainn's bravery as a model for how landlords should behave, Pearse saw him as a symbol of militant enduring nationalism for freedom, Yeats argues that he was driven by destiny but divided by himself, while Loyalist wall murals through the motif of the red hard of Ulster associate him with unionism and a Christ-like image.

Christian otherworld, Christian texts on saints' lives, laws, genealogies, placelore, medical tracts, and beautiful poetry. The cycle also includes references to actual historical events and people including the Battle of Mag Rath in *Buile Suibhne*, however, there are exceptions, such as the *Adventures of Fergus* which involves an encounter with a leprechaun.

Buile Suibhne tells the tale of the seventh century AD King Suibhne, or Sweeney, from County Down/Antrim (Dal Araidhe). The tale's structure is a mixture of prose inset with poetry spoken by and between the principal characters and contains many moving, long lyrical poems about nature. In the tale, which is told anonymously by a third-person narrator, Sweeney and his wife have an argument over the influence of St. Ronan in his dominion and the coming of Christianity which he resists on two separate occasions. Sweeney is annoyed by the noise of St. Ronan's bell and, while naked, rushes outside and throws the bell in a lake before going to battle. An otter recovers the bell, and St. Ronan places a curse on Sweeney to wander naked for a lifetime. St. Ronan then goes to the battle, annoying Sweeney once again when he blesses the army. Sweeney threatens him and breaks his bell with his spear and kills Ronan's assistant before the Battle of Mag Rath. St. Ronan puts a second curse on Sweeney to fly through the air mad and naked and be condemned to death by spearpoint. Sweeney tries to continue fighting but starts to tremble like a bird as he suffers from battle shock. He perches on a yew tree away from his kingsmen and flees to Donegal. Sweeney, for the remainder of the narrative, undergoes an exile abroad as he provides long verse lamentations at different geographical locations, such as at Glen Bolcain with the lunatics. He suffers from cold, heat, collisions and falls from trees. While one of his faithful friends, Linchehaun, tries to help him, Sweeney is tortured by a hag as they engage in a leaping contest. When Sweeney tries to return home, St.

Ronan issues further torments on him. However, St. Moling pities Sweeny and lets him stay in his monastery where Sweeney is redeemed and given absolution. Despite this, other people are less charitable and Sweeney is killed by the spear of St. Moling's cook's husband. He is given his last rites and is freed from the curse by St. Moling.

O'Keeffe provided a scholarly English translation of *Buile Suibhne* for the Irish Texts Society in 1913.[37] O'Nolan, by adapting O'Keeffe's translation for the structure of his novel, deterritorializes the nationalist outlook of the translation which presents the heroic code of ancient Irish kings alongside the trope of the beauty of Irish nature. I argue that O'Nolan is aware that *Buile Suibhne* is an oral text based upon and mediated through medieval Christian orthodoxies.[38] After all, the written text O'Keeffe used to base his translation upon is merely a version of an oral tale set down by medieval scribes. Because of this, Irish mythological cycles are always forms of palimpsestic re-readings within different contexts and are open for creative renewal. As Benjamin reminds us, the afterlife of the original text is important as *Buile Suibhne* is transformed and renewed through the stylistic features of contemporary language and genre. Hence, O'Nolan's resurrects the story of Sweeney, whereby his words which are set into fixed meaning in manuscript form undergo a maturing process and transformation through translation, parody and allusion in *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

Rather than thinking of the medieval manuscripts and their translations as precise and authentic versions of the tales, O'Nolan points out that the tales from the *Book of Invasions* are really networks of associated stories. Just as his journalism and

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[37] See O'Keeffe, James G., ed., *Buile Suibhne (the Frenzy of Suibhne) Being the Adventures of Suibhne Geilt: A Middle-Irish Romance*. O'Keeffe, James G. Vol. XII (London: Irish Texts Society, 1911)

[38] White argues that pre-colonial society and culture 'is more open to interpretation' due to its oral tradition of myth and folklore: '[t]hese narratives provided the basis for a common identity before modern nationalism emerged.' If oral histories lead to Irish writers redefining identity in creative ways through mythology, then '[c]olonization allowed those architects of national revivals to emphasize that which was most helpful to the cause of national liberation.' White, 'Modeling the Origin and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland', pp. 2, 3

his fiction writing avoid any continuous sense of narrative, oral narratives and their recording in written form naturally contain repetitions, omissions, contradictions and inconsistencies, something which O'Nolan picks up on when deterritorializing O'Keeffe's scholarly translation. O'Nolan taps into the recurrent transformation through translation of such texts to suit the needs of their employers and particular national contexts. As Octavio Paz points out, great creative phases of cultural history 'have been preceded or accompanied by inter-crossings between different poetic traditions'.[39] Equally, Tymoczko notes that Ireland has been shaped by many languages – Irish, Latin, Old Norse, Old French, Middle Welsh, English, and the languages of new immigrants since the latter half of the twentieth-century. She writes that

> [a]s with so many cultures that have been colonized, literature and culture form a palimpsest. Each language in a culture such as that of Ireland generally brings with it some aspects of a literary system – generic convention and metre, for example – but neither language nor literary system is the sole determinant of whether a literary piece is part of a *national* literature.[40]

The palimpsestic structure of *At Swim-Two-Birds* challenges the notion that Celtic mythological narratives are the sole national narrative of Ireland, and instead presents its reader with alternative heterogeneous narratives of Ireland's past and present condition. O'Nolan is aware of the variety of narrative systems and conventions which have depicted Ireland, and the instability of oral narratives which are in a constant flux,

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[39] Paz, Octavio, 'Translation: Literature and Letters', in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* ed. by Biguenet, John and Rainer Schulte, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)p. 160 cited in Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 624

[40] Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* pp. 13-4; emphasis in original. Brown concurs with Tymoczko, stating that Ireland underwent frequent cultural invasions which 'have produced a composite civilization or indeed a mosaic.' Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* p. 44. McMullen makes a similar point with regards to *At Swim-Two-Birds*: she writes that rather than presenting an essentialist singular notion of 'Irish Ireland' identity, the text 'de-essentializes "Irishness" by restoring a historical perspective upon a culture shaped by Gaelic, Christian monastic, Norse, Norman, British, European and American contributions'. She continues that O'Nolan 'recognizes a mechanism in the dialogic novel to release many of these voices from monologic rule into mutual interrogation' McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', pp. 66-7. Clissmann also writes that O'Nolan's text opens up Ireland to 'some thirty-six different styles and forty-two extracts' which reflect the dialogic nature of cultural tradition and his work. Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 86

and so explodes the notion of national major literature through his multiple styles and influences which makes Ireland a space of translation/transliteration.

5.3 Palimpsestic and *bricolage* translation

> As Standish O'Grady wrote in his study *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period*
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> [a] nation's history is made for it by circumstances and the irresistible progress of events; but their legends, they make for themselves [..] The legends represent the imagination of the country; they are that kind of history which a nation desires to possess.[41]

If legends are used to create a sense of imaginary national identification, Tymoczko notes that translations are a means to assert differences between national cultures by 'charting the shifting relations between two cultures.'[42] In *At Swim-Two-Birds* the translation and transliteration of a number of cultural texts, from Early Irish literature to American cowboy stories, exposes and decodes the way literature is used to create a sense of nationhood within strict narrative limits of identification. As Evans argues, O'Nolan's text reflects upon the nationalist 'process of narrative formation, reclamation and revision'.[43] Benjamin's tangential model of translation is applicable to O'Nolan's text as he demonstrates the limits of historical understanding alongside the fluidity inherent in Early Irish as well as modern texts to describe a multi-faceted Irish historical reality. Instead of producing a monolithic nationalist version of Celtic heroes, O'Nolan re-models such heroes in different styles and genres in an endless form of palimpsestic

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[41] O'Grady, cited in Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* p. 16

[42] ———, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* p. 18 Tymoczko also explores the symbolic structures of *The Book of Invasions* in *Ulysess*, focusing on Joyce's use of Irish epic genres and the Otherworld. See Tymoczko, Maria, *The Irish Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

[43] Evans, "a Lucuna in the Palimpsest': A Reading of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 96. Evans reads this 'problematic palimpsestic process within a climate of censure and confinement' which she positions in opposition to O'Nolan's imagination and creativity. Thus, Evans reads *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a narrative of resistance to prescriptive practice of essentialist and nationalist identity of the Irish subject in its 'deliberate attempts to escape the strait-jacket of an identity model contained within a range of nationalistic narratives' (p. 93).

re-reading. Thus, the literary elements of *Buile Suibhne*, the *Fiannaícht* and the *Táin* such as genre, poetic form, character types, plot structures, humour and style are re-appropriated through a multitude of other stylistic influences in a constant state of 'minor-becoming'.

As Kiberd notes, '[c]entral to [Anglo-Irish literature] is a need, often felt by the Irish, to translate the past, in the sense of displacing it, and to put it into a disturbing relationship with the present.'[44] O'Nolan achieves this in *At Swim-Two-Birds* by juxtaposing the Celtic heroes Finn Mac Cool and King Sweeny with three modern working class characters John Furriskey, Antony Lamont and Paul Shanahan: in the text Finn tells the narrative of the *Madness of Sweeney* to the three characters as Sweeny literally falls from his throne at Dal Araidhe into the chaotic and playful narrative world of the Dublin working class.[45] However, this is not the first or last tale Finn could tell these three characters as they symbolically sit together by the fire listening to his oral recital, thus mirroring the storytelling traditions of Celtic times (ASTB, 63). Upon the commencement of Finn's recital of Sweeny's epic, Shanahan comments that 'we're off again', indicating that they have heard similar tales from Finn already (ASTB, 64). As Foster notes, there is no originality in O'Nolan's use of this tale in the text: instead Foster views its usage as a form of *bricolage* textual indebtedness. Just as Finn tells the story of Sweeny's downfall, so Sweeny retells this story in his own lays, and the three working class characters, and later Orlick Trellis, offer additional alternative versions of Finn's narrative of Sweeny which are reflected through a number of different cultural forms. *Buile Suibhne* 'is clearly a product of various hands over two or three centuries

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[44] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* p. 630.
[45] This mixing of characters from different historical periods is a common feature in O'Nolan's work, from Myles's adventures through historical time and space and to the events in *The Dalkey Archive* where St Augustine and De Selby meet under the Irish sea. Brian McHale refers to this form of historical mixing of characters from different time periods as a 'transhistorical party' in postmodern fiction. McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987) p. 17

and of which some parts are prose narrative and some voiced by the protagonist himself,' and O'Nolan's narrative reflects the palimpsestic nature of storytelling and writing from Irish and international traditions.[46]

> As Roberts notes in relation to Michael Tournier's writing style, a *bricoleur*
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> selects the items best suited to his project from the existing repertoire and incorporates them into new structures, juxtaposing objects which previously had little or nothing in common with one another, and adopting them for purposes quite different from their original or intended ones.[47]

O'Nolan, during his Masters degree in Irish, wrote an M.A. thesis entitled 'Nature in Irish Poetry' which included analysis and an appreciation of natural imagery from early to quite recent literature and a translation of *Buile Suibhne* In typical *bricoleur* style, O'Nolan culls material for his thesis from O'Keeffe's translation of *Buile Suibhne* just as he plagiarizes the same material for his first novel.[48] In this aesthetic based on plagiarism of O'Keeffe's translated version of the text, O'Nolan does not simply reject Christian and Celtic ideologies inherent in O'Keeffe's text but instead chooses to juxtapose such a national narrative against other texts to produce palimpsestic parodies based on selective citation. While his parodies are very light, it is their juxtaposition against more contemporary narratives which enables his reader to re-assess the function of Celtic mythology within the context of national self-consciousness.[49] One should not read O'Nolan's inclusion of extracts from O'Keeffe's translation of *Buile Suibhne* as a form of blank pastiche but instead as a form of comic mimicry of forms of translation

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[46] Foster, 'Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: An Introduction',

[47] Roberts, Martin, *Michael Tournier: Bricolage and Cultural Mythology* (Stanford: Anma Libri, 1994) p. 12

[48] O'Nolan initally failed his Masters Degree because of this plagiarism and had to re-submit it rewriting and expanding the thesis. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 66

[49] While Mays maintains that O'Nolan's use of Celtic mythology in the text are 'hardly parodies at all', Ó Hainle argues that O'Nolan is concerned with how early Irish literary texts as used as models for national identity: because of this, Ó Hainle argues that O'Nolan employs such texts to distort and mock the need for scholars who desire some historical truth in the stories of the Fianna such as Douglas Hyde and Cormac Ó Cadhlaigh. See Ó Hainle, 'Fionn and Suibhne in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', and Mays, 'Brian O'Nolan: Literalist of the Imagination', p. 254

which, when placed in a dialogic relationship with other narratives, account for what any one text's values are when interrogated simultaneously by being placed against one another.[50]

Before being placed in relation to other textual agents in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Finn MacCool's authentic pre-colonial bardic voice is initially deterritorialised by the student narrator who offers an '*Extract from my typescript descriptive of Finn Mac Cool and his people, being humorous or quasi-humorous incursion into ancient mythology*' (ASTB, 13). This extract is a conscious parodic version of O'Grady's translation of the Finn canon.[51] The extract sets up a dialogic question and answer format between Finn and his Fianna warrior Conán as Finn orally relates, or refuses to relate, narratives of the Celtic past. Finn acts as an authoritative figure of such narratives, presenting himself as central to narratives of the Celtic past through his repeated use of the pronouns 'me' and 'I'. He presents a nostalgic list of information on the glory of his past, focusing on forms of sweet music from the natural environment, which could go on indefinitely only for the fact that Finn refuses to repeat further. (ASTB, 13-4). Hence, rather than offering singular answers to Conán's questions, Finn produces endless, multiple answers which slip into parody of O'Grady's original translations of the Fianna's glorious past. Finn comments that '[t]here is no torture so narrow as to be bound and beset in a dark cavern without food or music, without the bestowing of gold on bards.' (ASTB, 14) For O'Nolan the richness of Early Irish narrative variation is crucial, and this richness relies upon repetition and constant re-readings of the same oral tales by bardic figures. However, within the text, Finn's

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[50] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition'*,* p. 75
[51] The framework of the text comes from 'The Feast in Conán's House' in the *Fiannaíocht* tales where Conan asks Finn to narrate anecdotes of his adventures. Ó Hainle, 'Fionn and Suibhne in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 25

supposed association with a pre-colonial form of Irish manliness whose presence connects the reader or listener to a poetic and mystical version of Ireland's history is challenged through the hyperbolic presentation of O'Grady's original translation.

As a representative of Celtic values Finn demonstrates qualities which the modern nation must emulate and aspire to in the hope of recuperating a Celtic past and detering the modern corrupting influences of Europe and Britain. The attributes of the Fianna are demonstrated by Finn's valour and generosity which set up notions of manliness in contrast to weakness or effeminacy: for example, a Fianna warrior must undergo dangerous battles and excessive torture to prove his manhood, such as sitting on a cold hill for five days with twelve-pointed stag-antlers hidden in his seat while he is engaged in endless 'sweet poetry' (ASTB, 16-17). However, the comic nature of such absurd feats of manhood exposes O'Grady's original text, particularly as Finn's theory on the advantages of Finn's people borders on the ridiculous. Finn states that '[m]yself I can get wisdom from the sucking of my thumb, another (though he knows it not) can bring to defeat a host by viewing it through his fingers, and another can cure a sick warrior by judging the smoke of the house in which he is.' (ASTB, 18)

O'Nolan exposes Celtic narratives as inherently comic, fantastic, grotesque and ludic: his presentation of the excessive giganticism and ego-centricism of Finn's personal image reveals the incompatibility of such forms of Irish manhood for the post-independent nation. Ó Hainle notes that Finn's great stature is turned into giganticism because O'Nolan wants to make his reader aware of the tendency towards exaggeration in folktales where the Fianna are often represented as giants to explain their super-human feats. In the text Finn's many pursuits, customs and beliefs are described in elephantine and non-sensical language which mimics and exposes O'Grady's original

translation through his bizarre style.[52] For example, Finn is described thus:

> [t]oo great was he for standing. The neck to him was as the bole of a great oak, knotted and seized together with muscle-humps and carbuncles of tangled sinew, the better for good feasting and contending with the bards. The chest to him was wider than the poles of a good chariot, coming now out, now in, and pastured from chin to navel with meadows of black man-hair and meated with layers of fine man-meat the better to hide his bones and fashion the semblance of his twin bubs. (ASTB, 14)[53]

O'Grady's translations of the inflated prose style of Early Irish manuscripts, which are characterised by stock descriptions, compound and alliterative words, and verbosity, leads to O'Nolan's parody of the Finn canon. O'Nolan demonstrates a linguistic awareness and deterritorialization of how Early Irish literature and its character types are represented in translation through his repetition of linguistic and grammatical structures and alliterative patterns. Finn's hyperbolic qualities expose a version of a Celtic hero who encapsulates everything and yet amounts to nothing. Finn states that

> I am an Ulsterman, a Connachtman, a Greek, said Finn,
> I am Cuchulainn, I am Patrick.
> I am Carbery-Cathead, I am Goll.
> I am my own father and my son.
> I am every hero from the crack of time. (ASTB, 19)[54]

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[52] Ó Hainle notes that mimcry of O'Grady's language in his translation is achieved through O'Nolan's use of synonymous pairs, alliterating sequences, repetitions, myriads of unusual compounds, deliberately mistaken or mock literal translations, gross over-statements, and high flown English. ———, 'Fionn and Suibhne in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', pp. 23-4

[53] Similarly, Finn's face is described in gigantic and metaphoric terms: 'The mouth to his white wheyface had dimensions and measurements to the width of Ulster, bordered by a red lip-wall and inhabited unseen by the watchful hose of his honey-yellow teeth to the size, each with each, of a cornstack; and in the dark hollow to each tooth was there home and fulnes for the sitting there of a thorny dog or for the lying there of a spear-pierced badger.' (ASTB, 16)

[54] This is also a parody of the three incantations associated with the poet Amergin Glúngel, the 'Bright kneed', which are contained in the *Book of Invasions*. This work is a pseudo-history of the first settlement of Ireland which involved the Milesians, a possible source for the name of Myles na gCopaleen, who arrived by boat from Spain and defeated the Fomorians. Amergin's songs include chants which are similar to Finn's chants in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. For example, Amergin chants
I am the wind on sea
I am wave in storm
I am sea sound
and seven-horned stage
which is similar to Finn's chant
I am a bark for buffeting, said Finn,
I am a hound for thornypaws.
I am a doe for swiftness.
I am a tree for wine-siege.

As McMullen maintains, O'Nolan is not arguing that romantic Ireland is gone: instead, he exposes the values of literary promotional images from the 1880s onwards which fuelled post-independence cultural protectionism. Just as the Irish Literary Revival mined early Irish epic texts and placed them within a more contemporary environment, so O'Nolan mines such texts but he brings heterogeneous elements to such narratives through a form of playful and creative tangential translation.[55] Ultimately, Finn is unable or unwilling to maintain his role as Gaelic bard or filí (poet): Finn cannot relate many of the tales requested such as the 'tale of the Bull of Cooley' and 'the tale of the feast of Bricriú'. The references to such tales again show the endless multiplicity of possible stories O'Nolan and Finn could supply but Finn states that '[t]hey go above me and around and through me, said Finn. It is true I cannot make them.' (ASTB, 18)[56]

However, it is only when Finn and his narrative of the *Madness of Sweeny* is juxtaposed against other characters and narratives in the text that O'Nolan's parodic citation begins to function more clearly. O'Nolan juxtaposes his modern working class characters with Finn to show that it is ridiculous to look to past imaginary heroes for

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I am a windmill.

I am a hole in a wall.

See Anon, 'Amergin's Songs', in *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by Kinsella, Thomas, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 47-9. Breuer notes that this reference is similar to Jesus' statement that 'I and the father are one' (John 10:30) and to Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* 'I was my father and I was my son' (*Texts for Nothing*, p. 74). Breuer, 'Flann O'Brien and Samuel Beckett', p. 347

[55] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', p. 74. Indeed, Joyce's *Ulysses* is read as a reaction to the cult of heroism associated with Cúchulainn which was created by the Irish Literary Revival and Pearse. See Kiberd, 'Introduction', for a discussion on this.

[56] Indeed Finn asserts a certain patriarchal narrative power to not relate certain stories. When asked by Conán to relate the story of the Churl in the Puce Great-coat, Finn replies 'Evil story for telling, that, said Finn, and though itself I can make it, it is surely true that I will not recount it. It is a crooked and dishonourable story that tells how Finn spoke honey-words and peace-words to a stranger who came seeking the high-rule and the high-rent of this kingdom and saying that he would play the sorrow of death and small-life on the lot of us in one single day if his wish was not given him…Who has heard honey-talk from Finn before strangers, Finn that is wind-quick, Finn that is a better man than God?' (ASTB, 18-9). Finn is annoyed that poets dishonour him or offer alternative versions of him in their stories: 'Finn is without honour in the breast of a sea-blue book, Finn that is twisted and trampled and tortured for the weaving of a story-teller's book-web. Who but a book-poet would dishonour the God-big Finn for the sake of a gap-worded story.' (ASTB, 19).

identity markers that can inspire the present moment. These working class Dubliners refuse to listen to such nationalist discourse and instead choose to create their own oral narrative with their own versions of modern heroes and images of Irish manhood inspired by *Buile Suibhne* and the *Táin*. These alternative narratives do not solidify the earlier translation by O'Keeffe but instead demonstrate the provisional nature of O'Keeffe's exercise. If, in the earlier parts of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the major canon of both the Finn Cycle and *Buile Suibhne* occupy a lot of textual space within the narrative offering an homogeneous version of the Irish national narrative, Shanahan's cowboy narrative, the poetry of Jem Casey, and the tale of Sergeant Craddock's miraculous jumping offer a challenge to such domination. Finn is firmly positioned in a pre-colonial world as he does not interact or negotiate with the modern audience when he tells his tales. Finn is referred to as 'old greybeard seated beyond dimly on the bed with his stick between his knees and his old eyes staring far into the red fire like a man whose thought was in a distant part of the old world or maybe in another world altogether.' (ASTB, 62). Finn is a mystical storyteller who looks to the past rather than to the future of Ireland. He is positioned firmly in this inaccessible distant space and, because of this, his poetic narrative cannot be understood properly in the present moment.

Like Orlick's later bourgeois narrative, which openly revises the narrative and characters of *Buile Suibhne* three times due to the demands of his listeners who want to change its content and action, Finn has difficulty engaging his audience who constantly interrupt him with tangential contemporary analogies and urban folktales. As Dentith notes, in relation to parody, 'language is not one's own, but always comes to each speaker from another, to be imitated and transformed as that speaker in turn sends it

onwards.'[57] Because parody runs the risk of setting up a new re-territorialization of a discourse, O'Nolan is engaged in a constant derision of all forms and he parodies and then re-parodies various cultural representations. Shanahan in particular uses the language and form of Finn's tale of *Buile Suibhne* to present alternative parodies, thus developing a network of interrelated and interanimated stories. Finn is no longer a dominant voice because the contemporary characters choose to contradict and interrupt his linear historical narrative of Sweeny and comment that Finn's poetry

> about the green hills and the bloody swords and the bird giving out the pay from the top of the tree. Now that's good stuff, it's bloody nice […] the real old stuff of the native land […] It's the stuff that put our country where she stands today […] But the man in the street, where does he come in? (ASTB, 75).[58]

Furriskey, Shanahan and Lamont have learnt that they are supposed to ritualistically admire epic narratives with their depictions of the Irish rural landscape, grand battles and heroes like Sweeny because this history has made the nation great.[59] However, the working class characters choose not to accept Finn's definitive versions of Sweeny's history because they are not represented within it, and instead re-model *Buile Suibhne* to produce their own versions of it, particularly through their presentation of Casey's 'better' poems. As Shanahan states, 'you can get too much' of high poetry which Lamont refers to as 'more of your fancy kiss-my-hand by God' (ASTB, 75, 78).

While engaged in meandering talk over alcohol, they discuss legends, fairytales and their own lives.[60] They challenge unified notions of subjectivity placed on them by

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[57] Dentith, Simon, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 3

[58] Kiberd reads Shanahan's complaint that the man on the street does not fit in to Gaelic poetry as O'Nolan's critique of the fragmented form of modernity which splits life into specialisms resulting in the modern writer not being able to write for everyone unlike in the ancient days. Kiberd, *Irish Classics* p. 504. Kiberd notes that Furriskey praises the human voice and the oral narratives of Homer over the written (ASTB, 156; Kiberd, p. 505).

[59] Ó Hainle, 'Fionn and Suibhne in *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 35

[60] O'Nolan's work more generally is characterised by its presentation of anecdotal tales which its characters have overheard or experienced. Thus throughout his canon every character tells a story as a form of performance. Thus, when the student narrator tells the epic story of his drinking session with the Shader Ward on Parnell Street the narrator states '[m]y talk had been forced, couched in the accent of the

their nation when they refer to Finn as 'Mr Storybook' who '[f]ive minutes ago he was giving out a yarn the length of my arm' and is 'a terrible man for talk', despite the fact that they are also guilty of this attribute to over-talk (ASTB, 62-3). The Dublin characters provide rapturous heterogeneous lines of the Sweeny tale to explode the binary between the high culture and mythology of ancient Irish culture and its popular expression. The characters interact with the Sweeny narrative and offer thematic and narrative innovations with social and political implications. When Finn mentions Sweeny and the hag's jumping competition, Shanahan interrupts his narrative to explain to the audience that the oral tale is 'about this fellow Sweeny that argues the toss with the clergy and came off second-best at the wind-up. There was a curse – a malediction – put down in the book against him. The upshot is that your man becomes a bloody bird.' (ASTB, 85). It makes Lamont think of and produce a comic, palimpsestic parody of Sweeny's jumping in the story of Sergeant Craddock and the fact that 'the Irish race was always noted […] With all his faults' for jumping. Craddock, who is an 'ordinary bloody bobby on the beat', who does not understand the Irish language that Gaelic Leaguers use and who is called a 'bloody English spy', is more of a hero for them than Finn or Sweeny because, as Craddock states, 'I'm as good a man as you or any other man.' (ASTB, 85-6). Protestant Anglo-Irish Craddock is the anti-thesis of the Celtic hero Finn or Sweeny and yet he becomes a hero they can relate to as representative of the Irish nation because he does not speak Irish, like the three Dublin characters, and

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lower or working-classes', thus demonstrating the performative attitude of the student's manipulation of the Dublin working class accent (ASTB, 24). Equally, storytelling is always associated with the consumption of alcohol in O'Nolan's work. Hence, in *The Hard Life* Fr. Fahrt and Mr. Collopy meet to discuss a multitude of theological questions, most of which are unclear to Finbarr in their meaning as 'the subject under discussion was never named.' (THL, 30) While they are engaged in this, their discussions are always accompanied by whiskey. Bolton notes that in relation to *The Hard Life*, '[a]s for the "exegesis of squalor" promised in the novel's subtitle, O'Brien may have had in mind Old Horse derivations of the word "squall," which signified "useless banter," an apt characterization of the exchanges between Collopy, whose name is a near homonym of "colloquy," and Fahrt, whose name implies – among other things – wind.' Bolton, 'Comedies of Failure: O'Brien's *The Hard Life* and Moore's *the Emperor of Ice Cream*', p. 124

because he defeats the Gaelic Leaguer by jumping further than the native Irish ever could.

The story of Craddock re-animates the section from *Buile Suibhne* on Sweeny's jumping contest with the hag. O'Nolan's narrative demonstrates a certain narrative irony as authors and storytellers rely on dominant discourses to develop new ideas and that authority figures are necessary in order to debunk them. Without the installation of a major literary canon a 'minor' form of writing would not be possible as it works within that canon to produce fresh narrative deviations. However, it is also important to note here that the 'minor' author is constituted and marginalised by the discursive effects of dominant and unitary narratives. O'Nolan's characters depend upon Finn's narrative as inspiration for their own alternative 'minor' narratives when they produce the poetry of Jem Casey, parodies of the poetic rhyming schemes of *The Madness of Sweeny* and Craddock's feat at jumping. O'Nolan explores this overlap through his multiple use of styles which beget each another. Hence, the identities and narrative produced in the novel as always dialogic and in relation to each other. Thus, Casey is a revision of Sweeny, who is referred to as 'a poet of the people', '[a] plain upstanding labouring man' and the 'Poet of the Pick' (ASTB, 73, 74). Like Sweeny who undergoes many tortures on his travels around Ireland, Casey suffers from bad health, poverty and malnutrition. Additionally, both Sweeny and Casey are described as sweet singers who recite poetry about the beauty of nature or alcohol (ASTB, 75). Thus, Shanahan, when asked to perform one of Casey's 'pomes', states that 'I could give one out as quick as I'd say my prayers' (ASTB, 76).

What is produced is a carnivalesque interaction between characters and styles, with the three working class characters representing modern Ireland's reception of the

image of Old Ireland. In Shanahan's interactions with Finn's tale of Sweeny, history and myth are re-interpreted and re-constructed to demonstrate the gaps and themes inherent in *Buile Suibhne*, and act as a lynchpin for the narrative structure of *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Cohen argues that the figure of Jem Casey the working class poet is '[n]either archaic like Finn nor intellectual like Orlick Trellis, Casey is the one author figure who speaks directly to the soul of Shanahan'.[61] Throughout Finn's recital of Sweeny's tale, Shanahan's narrative of Casey mirrors Finn's in terms of its structure of prose inset with poetry by the protagonists Casey or Sweeny. O'Nolan produces parallel narratives which results in Shanahan synthesizing Casey and Sweeny's characteristics in one narrative verse 'When stags appear on the mountain high, with flanks the colour of bran, when a badger bold can say good-bye, A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN!'. Thus, Shanahan takes on Finn's role as a bardic poet as Furriskey refers to Shanahan as 'a bloody poet' (ASTB, 80).

5.4 Post-independence Irish fiction

O'Nolan's appropriation of Celtic mythology in his post-independence Irish fiction for fantastic and satiric purposes is part of a wider literary trend by authors including Darrell Figgis, Eimar O'Duffy, Austin Clarke, and Mervyn Wall.[62] These authors challenge, through their intertextual re-working of earlier translations and through parodic citation of texts from the Irish Literary Revival, the discourse of nationalism which gathers its materials from the enclaves of culturally old material. Quintelli-Neary notes that Irish post-independence novelists from the 1920s onwards 'often incorporate a blend of elements from recorded myths and folktales in a single

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[61] Cohen, 'An Atomy of the Novel: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 216

[62] See Lanters, José, *Unauthorized Versions: Irish Menippean Satire, 1919-1952* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000) for a useful comparative survey of these post-independence Irish writers in terms of their use of mythology through the framework of Bakhtin's musings of the dialogic nature of Menippean Satire.

work' which reflects the interchangeable and fluid re-modelling of early Irish oral literature, such as the themes of the *Táin* re-emerging in the Fenian Cycle.[63] Hence, Quintelli-Neary notes O'Nolan's 'gift for word invention' and Joyce's 'famed fascination with wordplay has inspired readers to comment that he is not actually writing, at all times, in English.' Quintelli-Neary sees post-independence authors as fantasy authors creating 'Secondary Worlds' who are like the recorders of tales from Gaelic tradition.[64] In their texts historical characters are literally re-incarnated in texts to offer social criticism and a reflection upon nationalism, such as Finn MacCool resurrection by the author Trellis in his narrative. Finn is forced to act as Peggy's father to protect her virtue against the male characters in Trellis's novel, which inadvertently results in Finn taking advantage of Peggy himself (ASTB, 61).

Riggs and Vance maintain that O'Nolan, like his contemporaries, combines Joycean exuberance, Gaelic culture and modernist innovation in an Irish context but in more conventional and accessible language than Joyce.[65] Hence, his fiction is 'fictive fiction' about the creation of fiction which challenges notions of time, matter and identity in more conventional narratives. If O'Nolan is wary of the dominant historiographies which can be maintained through the act of modernist and nationalist translation, his aim in the novel is to highlight the fictional nature of all narrative. Thus, O'Nolan challenges the 'imaginative recreation of a common cultural past that is crafted into a shared tradition'.[66] Appiah identifies a number of genres as part of this tactic for nationalist legitimisation and he warns that realism in particular will naturalise

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[63] Quintelli-Neary, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels* p. 3. Quintelli-Neary gives the example of Desmond MacNamara's novel *Book of Intrusions* (1994) which blends elements from O'Nolan's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Behan's translation of Merriman's *Midnight Court* and the medieval *Romance of Curither and Liadin*.

[64] ———, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels* pp. 4, 5

[65] Riggs, Pádraigín, and Norman Vance, 'Irish Prose Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, ed. by Connolly, Claire and Joe Cleary, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 245-66 (p. 260)

[66] Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* pp. 149-50

the postcolonial experience. Hence '[f]ar from being a celebration of the nation, then, the novels of the second stage – the postcolonial stage – are novels of delegitimation: rejecting the Western imperium, it is true, but also rejecting the nationalist project of the postcolonial national bourgeoisie.'[67] O'Nolan's metafictional novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* can be read a novel of the 'second stage' which makes its reader question the construction of dominant historiography and identities as contained in literary fiction. As Comer notes in relation to the novelistic tradition, '[n]ovels typically yearn for coherence, for wholeness, and, above all, for an oppressive status-quo, praxis-reinforcing sense', however *At Swim-Two-Birds* 'serves no such ideological purpose' and 'is woven together with a nonsensical number of strands […] and can, by no means, be thought of as an integrated whole.'[68]

If, as discussed above, a 'minor' text contains multiple entrances like Kafka's rhizomatic narrative structures, due to its trellis-like structure, use of translation, *bricolage* and conscious metafictional aesthetic, *At Swim-Two-Birds* destabilises notions of narrative progression, coherence, and generic convention, and in doing so, goes beyond simply 'writing back'. Instead, he produces a palimpsestic 'minor' literature which is grounded in a postcolonial awareness of his country and its need for mythic revisions of its cultural past and contemporary reality. Hence, as Surgi-Speck notes, *bricolage* 'assumes an analogic interchangeability of parts where any element, any fragment, can be linked to any other' with the writer's imagination as the hinge pin which links the varying heterogeneous elements.[69] As McMullen has argued,

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[67] ———, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* p. 152
[68] Comer, 'A Mortal Agency: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 11
[69] Surgi Speck, 'Bricolage, Analogies and Hinges: Order in the Recombinant Universe Of "Tristram Shady"', p. 67

> *At Swim-Two-Birds* persistently violates conventional frame tale ontology and draws into intertextual colloquy texts framed by the discourses of various ranks and professions, shaped by multiple ideologies, and spanning pre-, post-, and colonial Irish history. None of these discourses is privileged; none has the last word.[70]

Because authorial agency for O'Nolan is only ever achieved through fragmentation, Deleuze and Guattari's image of a 'minor' writer who is constantly in a state of 'becoming' may be useful to critique O'Nolan's narratives, as will be explored in the next chapter on O'Nolan's posthumous text *The Third Policeman* which was originally written in the early 1940s.[71] Just as *At Swim-Two-Birds* created an narrative based on a network of stories which are under a constant state of revision and re-inscription through translation and citation by their readers or listeners, so *The Third Policeman* is always in a state of process which avoids achieving set meanings and identifications. Instead, like *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the text is radically open-ended like a snake eating its own tale.[72]

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[70] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition'*,* p. 62

[71] *The Third Policeman* was published post-humously in 1967, one year after O'Nolan's death on 1 April 1966 from cancer of the pharynx caused by smoking. Anthony Burgess considered the novel 'a surprise beyond the grave'. cited in Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* pp. 138, 143. O'Nolan originally submitted the novel to Longman in London in 1940 but it was rejected for being too unusual. Longman wrote that O'Nolan 'should become less fantastic and in this novel he is more so.' cited in Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 101. Harold Matson tried to find *The Third Policeman* (under an alternative title *Hell Goes Round and Round*) an American publisher; he told O'Nolan he liked book but that it was impossible to place generically and so its was difficult to get published. Cronin notes that in typical O'Nolan fashion the author took rejection hard and so he developed an apathy to the book as time passed. O'Nolan had wanted to change the novel into the third-person narrative and remove the element of the conscience Joe to make it more publishable. Hence, because of the failure to publish the novel, O'Nolan created a myth about his lost manuscript, offering multiple versions of the same story as to what happened to the book; for example, he told Sheridan that he mislaid *The Third Policeman* manuscript in a tramcar; he told Garvin that he took it to the Dolphin Hotel and lost it there; he told Liam Redmond he lost it on a train; and he also spread the rumour that the manuscript was blown page by page out of the boot of a car on a trip to Donegal. O'Nolan only told McDonagh what actually happened in terms of its rejection by publishers. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 101, 102-3

[72] Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* p. 88

Chapter 6: 'Becoming-minor': subjectivity in *The Third Policeman*

O'Nolan, in a letter to his potential publishers Longman, wrote that his second English language novel *The Third Policeman*

> opens as a very orthodox murder mystery in a rural district. The perplexed parties have recourse to the local barrack which, however, contains some very extraordinary policemen who do not confine their investigations or activities to this world or to any known planes or dimensions. Their most casual remarks create a thousand other mysteries

and so O'Nolan aims to set up a 'perfectly logical and matter-of-fact treatment of the most brain-staggering imponderables of the policemen'.[1] However, there is nothing orthodox about both the opening of the novel or the murder of Old Mathers by the nameless narrator and his employee John Divney, particularly when the narrator comes under the investigations of Sergeants Pluck and MacCruiskeen who are guilty of producing an infinity of possible ideas which confound both the narrator in search of the missing black box containing Old Mather's money, and the reader in search of an answer to the murder mystery. Instead, *The Third Policeman*, and to a certain extent its sister novel *The Dalkey Archive*, can be characterised by their digressive nature and deferral of the codes of plot, characterisation, linear narrative and scientific and scholarly meaning. The titles of both texts hint at the allusive nature of the content inside. *The Third Policeman* refers not only to the enigmatic, omnipotent and 'queer' figure of Policeman Fox who is able to control everything in the narrator's Otherworld from his secret police station, but also to O'Nolan's interest in the potential oddity of triads as the Pooka in *At Swim-Two-Birds* states that 'truth is an odd number'. Equally, *The Dalkey Archive* refers to an archive of artistic, religious and scientific knowledge Mick tries to uncover, however such an archive always remains outside his grasp as he

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[1] Letter to Longman 1 May 1939, cited in Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 97

fails to see even the most basic facts, such as Mary's affair with Hackett. Both quests, both for the missing box and Mick's search for Joyce, are metaphors for how to read the texts more generally: like the protagonists, the reader must navigate new worlds which defy meaning and remain inassimilable to notions of rational logic.

In particular, *The Third Policeman* succeeds in defying easy significations as it explores, in Deane's words, 'the sinister implications of the systems of representation upon which literature and indeed the whole social system, depends.'[2] This chapter characterises *The Third Policeman* under Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization and 'becoming-minor' to argue that O'Nolan produces a revolutionary text within a postcolonial environment which can never be fully incorporated or comprehended by dominant discourses of Irish state formation, both in scientific and artistic senses, because the narrative, plot and characterisation refuse to remain stable and comprehensible. Deterritorialization in the work of O'Nolan involves narrative digressions and distractions from the meaning of the main linear plot of the murder mystery and the narrator's search for the missing black box. There is an intentional disorganisation of the content of the novel form, the representations of subjective characterisation of the first-person narrator, and notions of scientific and academic critical inquiry. To a certain extent the text resembles Kafka's *The Trial*. Like K. in *The Trial,* the nameless narrator relates the perplexing experiences of his life in a surreal environment. The narrator is arrested for a charge of murder he did not commit and is forced to engage with complicated illogical theories which bewilder the narrator's senses and sense of his own subjectivity and the natural order of the world. This occurs from the beginning of the text which promises one type of narrative but

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[2] Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* p. 161. Silverthorne also reads the text as a 'send-up of the traditional cycle of literary production' more generally. Silverthorne, 'Time, Literature, and Failure: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*', p. 73

then does not fulfil expectations and instead produces something quite different to what is expected from mimetic representation.

Such a text should be read within the light of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming-animal' which they develop in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* to describe 'minor' literary works which re-configure mimetic representation. Writing about Gregor Samsa's transformation into a gigantic insect in Kafka's short story 'Metamorphosis' (1915), Deleuze and Guattari argue that

> Gregor becomes a cockroach not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum.[3]

Deleuze and Guattari deny an Oedipal reading of the metaphoric value of Gregor's transformation based upon father-son or state-individual conflicts, and instead argue that Kafka's texts are filled with protagonists who are engaged in 'becoming-animal'. In this process of 'becoming' Kafka's protagonists never fully achieve the identity of a bettle, a dog, a rat or an ape because such a 'becoming-animal' identity cannot be easily reduced within the significations of the dominant order. Deleuze and Guattari define this as a movement which goes '"head over heels and away," rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged.' Hence, 'the animal as an act of becoming has nothing to do with a substitute for the father, or with an archetype' and is instead characteristic of 'absolute deterritorialization' which benefits from deterritorialized flux where, in writing or through the use of language, narrative contents free themselves from their narrative forms, and ideological expression from their signifiers.[4]

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[3] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 13

[4] ———, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 12, 13

In particular, Deleuze and Guattari illuminate the idea of 'becomings' in *A Thousand Plateaus*: they argue that 'becoming-minoritarian' is not a form of representational imitation but is instead characterised by its zig-zag, rhizomatic criteria of writing whereby the author is 'not substituting [him]self for another, the structure of becoming is not reciprocal. It is a zigzag in which [he] become[s] other so that the other may become something else' through the act of writing.[5] Hence, as Burns argues

> becoming-animal is a movement from major (the constant) to minor (the variable); it is a deterritorialization in which a subject no longer occupies a realm of stability and identity but is instead folded imperceptibly into a movement or into an amorphous *legion* whose modes of existence is nomadic or, alternatively, whose "structure" is rhizomatic rather than arborescent.[6]

Gregor Samsa's new deterritorialised subjectivity as a man-insect blurs easy categorical and binary divisions between man and insect and instead uncovers new ways of seeing and operating in the world which can act as a point of escape for the reader and the protagonist if they wish to progress along what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'lines of flight'. The menacing nature of Gregor's bureaucratic life, exemplified by the three lodgers who come to live with the Samsa family and set up their own forms of hierarchical power relationships in relation to the family, must be challenged. Deleuze and Guattari write that 'everything in the animal is metamorphosis' so one cannot distinguish from its relative, variable parts. Hence, Gregor's 'metamorphosis is a sort of conjunction of two deterritorializations' in what the human imposes on the animal and in how the animal creates a means of escape the human could not have thought of.[7]

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a 'becoming-animal' is a useful theoretical framework to account for the paradoxical nature of the narrator's living-dead existence

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[5] Lawlor, Leonard, 'Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari', *SubStance, 37:3* (2008), 169-87 (p. 170)

[6] Burns, Gerald L., 'Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)', *New Literary History, 38* (2007), 703-20 (p. 7030; emphasis in original.

[7] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 35

and the policemen's obsession with bicycles who act like humans and humans who act like bicycles in *The Third Policeman*. Like Gregor Samsa's man-insect subjectivity, both images in O'Nolan's text indicate a re-thinking of clear subjectivity for a subjectivity which defies meaning and instead, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, engages in 'lines of flight'. Firstly, this chapter will relate Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the process of 'becoming-minor' as a form of infinite productive play where no single language or identity remains dominant or stable in relation to O'Nolan's text. Deleuze and Guattari argue that, in relation to the work of Kafka, Beckett, Céline and Gherasim, 'minor' literature places 'all linguistic, and even non-linguistic elements in variation, both variables of expression and variables of content.'[8] Hence, 'becoming-minor' blurs and mixes up history and experience to produce newer and varied forms of enunication in speech and writing. Such a form of polylingualism is a way to resist the consistent language of master literature. This becomes particularly apparent if one examines the role of human-bicycles and bicycle-humans in the text, and how the policemen's 'Mollycule Theory' reflects the narrator's own desire for a reterritorialized identity, and the refusal of the narrative to achieve this for him. This illuminates O'Nolan's exploration of the mimetic form of realism and of notions of spatiality, human perception and a sense of self. Through an analysis of O'Nolan's celebration of the possibilities of a fragmented subjectivity and of the epistemological free fall of all forms of scientific and literary analyses that occur in the text, it will be argued that *The Third Policeman* illuminates O'Nolan's use of his own pseudonymous authorial identity more generally as there are no terms to judge his authorial forms of 'becoming' which avoid forms of representational recognition of authorial intent and psycho-biography.

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[8] ———, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* p. 98

6.1 'Is it about a bicycle?': 'becoming-bicycle'

Deleuze and Guattari argue that 'becoming-minor' or 'becoming-animal' is 'a unique method that replaces subjectivity' as the animal oscillates between 'its own becoming-inhuman and an all-too-human familiarization'. Within this indiscernible and indefinable space '[t]here is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter'.[9] Such a space is created in *The Third Policemen* through the policemen's 'Mollycule Theory' which acts as a deterritorialized parody of Einstein's theory of relativity.[10] The narrator, on his quest to find the missing black box, arrives at a police barracks where he meets Sergeants Pluck and MacCruiskeen, two policemen who are obsessed with bicycles. Upon his arrival at the police station, the narrator is asked if his enquiry is about a bicycle, a question he is asked again at the end of the novel when he returns to the police barracks. Pluck cannot believe that he is enquiring about his fictious stolen watch while MacCruiskeen is equally befuddled that the

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[9] ———, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* p. 36

[10] For studies of O'Nolan's treatment of science in *The Third Policeman* see O'Toole, Mary A., 'The Theory of Serialism in *The Third Policeman*', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, 18:2* (1988), 215-55, Kemnitz, Charles, 'Beyond the Zone of Middle Dimensions: A Relativistic Reading of *The Third Policeman*', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, 15:1* (1985), 56-72, Spenser, Andrew, 'Many Worlds: The New Physics in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 30:1* (1996), 145-58, and Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility', Kemnitz argues that the events in the text are similar to Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum physics, with the opening chapter being set in a Newtonian universe and the black box acting as a symbolic atomic explosion into world of Einsteinian physics. O'Toole extends Kemnitz's idea: she applies the aeronautical engineer J.W. Dunne's theory of serialism to the events in the text and argues for a reading of O'Nolan's 'mélange of many theories of time, space, matter, and energy, not programmatically but ecletically, creating a universe even more incomprehensible and erratic than it would be if only classical and relativistic theories were the basis of the novel' (p. 216). Equally, Clissmann notes that O'Nolan may have been influenced by Einstein and Dunne's theories: she cites Dunne's idea that death involves the continuation of the mind but on a different dream-like time scale which Dunne refers to as the 'fourth dimension' where there is no future progression. Interestingly, despite this detailed research on O'Nolan's incorporation of scientific theories into the two texts, Cronin refers to O'Nolan's 'sketchy physics'. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 228. See also Myles's article on Einstein's theories in 'Cruiskeen Lawn' (CL, 3 Aug 1942) and Dunne, J.W., *An Experiment with Time* (London, 1927) and Dunne, J.W., *The Serial Universe* (London: Faber, 1934) See also O'Connell, Mark, "How to Handle Eternity': Infinity and the Theories of J.W. Dunne in the Fiction of Jorge Luis Borges and Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*', *Irish Studies Review 17:2* (2009), 223-37 for a comparative discussion of Borges and O'Nolan's interest in Dunne's theory of multi-dimensional time.

narrator did not arrive by bicycle, calling him 'a queer far-fetched man'.[11] In the narrator's new world the policemen's 'Atomic Theory' rules: they believe that the atoms of one object intermingle with the atoms of another, producing a new form which cannot be easily distinguished or accounted for. Pluck gives the example of this atomic exchange, citing the interchange of atoms between a blacksmith and the iron bar he wallops with a hammer as well as the example of people who get their personalities mixed up with bicycles' personalities because they ride their bicycles too often (TTP, 91).

This atomic theory, with its focus on bicycles which become human and humans who become bicycles, results in a limitless possibility of new deterritorialized codes and subjectivities which could occur or form in the world of the policemen.[12] Joe, the narrator's soul, comments that '*Apparently there is no limit,* […] *Anything can be said in this place and it will be true and will have to be believed*' (TTP, 93; emphasis in original). Any theory the policemen put forward can make sense if they provide enough empirical examples and proof within the linguistic codes of their own determinants, and so the narrator is forced to question his own human identity within these new sets of meaning. The narrator's own sense of clear identity begins to deterritorialize in relation to the policemen's 'Atomic Theory'. The narrator fears that the atoms of his wooden-leg are spreading to the rest of his body, resulting in him becoming part wood while his wooden leg becomes part human (TTP, 128). The narrator's description exemplifies this new 'becoming-bicycle' subjectivity if the lines of reasoning the policemen put forward are followed through to its natural conclusions. Pluck comments that he once had a nightmare that he had a slow puncture on his backside due to starch (TTP, 134-5).

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[11] O'Brien, Flann, *The Third Policeman* (London: Flamingo, 2001 (1967)) pp. 57, 64-5, 71; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (TTP, 57, 64-5, 71)

[12] For an article study on Beckett's use of the leit-motive of bicycles, see Breuer, 'Flann O'Brien and Samuel Beckett'.

Equally, Pluck puts bicycle clips on but does not take his bicycle out of its prison cell (TTP, 139).

Such deterritorialized codes become comically reterritorialized in the narrative once the narrator starts to employ them to comprehend his new environment on the level of narrative description. Hence, the narrator comments that 'I let go a gasp of astonishment that made a sound in the air like a bad puncture' in response to Pluck's ideas (TTP, 93). He starts to believe that bicycles can move of their own accord and that Pluck has good reason for locking his bicycle in the cell (TTP, 189-191, 107). The narrator comments that

> [i]f there is good reason for locking a bicycle in a cell like a dangerous criminal, I reflected, it is fair enough to think that it will try to escape if given the opportunity. I did not quite believe this and I thought it was better to stop thinking about the mystery before I was compelled to believe it because if a man is alone in a house with a bicycle which he thinks is edging its way along a wall he will run away from it in fright (TTP, 193).

Pluck warns him not to think about their 'Atomic Theory' too much as he will start to disbelieve what he holds to be empirical fact (TTP, 92).

However, this occurs during the closing sections of the text when the narrator escapes from the police barracks, stealing a bicycle and, by the logic of 'Atomic Theory', trading atoms with that of the bicycle.[13] He starts to employ the narrative logic of the policemen's theory of human-bicycles as his narrative describes in human and animal terms the bicycle on which he cycles back to Old Mathers' house. He refers to the bicycle as 'a tame domestic pony' which has 'grace and elegance'. The bicycle is described in sexual terms: he comments that it 'seemed ineffably female and fastidious, posing there like a mannequin rather than leaning idly like a loafer against the wall, and

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[13] See Booker, M. Keith, 'The Bicycle and Descartes: Epistemology in the Fiction of Beckett and O'Brien', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 26* (1991), 76-94 and Kemnitz, 'Beyond the Zone of Middle Dimensions: A Relativistic Reading of *The Third Policeman*', p. 71 for discussions on the scene.

resting on its prim flawless tyres with irreproachable precision'. He

> passed my hand with unintended tenderness – sensuously, indeed – across the saddle. Inexplicably it reminded me of a human face, not by any simple resemblance of shape and feature but by some association of textures, some incomprehensible familiarity at the fingertips.

The bicycle begins to resemble a female human or a mannequin through its physical structure, such as the leather of the seat which has 'sharp lines and finer wrinkles' caused by old age, and the narrator begins to reterritorialize the scientific theories of the policemen in order to re-locate his own sense of self in relation to the new environment he exists in. He becomes infatuated with the bicycle stating that 'I liked her unassuming competence, her docility, the simple dignity of her quiet way. She now seemed to rest beneath my friendly eyes like a tame fowl which will crouch submissively' and that '[h]er saddle seemed to spread invitingly into the most enchanting of all seats while her two handlebars, floating finely with the wild grace of alighting wings, beckoned to me to lend my mastery for free and joyful journeying' (TTP, 194). The narrator is engaged in a 'line of flight' as he feels he is conspiring with the bicycle to escape the significations of Pluck (TTP, 195).[14] However, this is a love-affair gone haywire: such deterritorializations of Einstein's theory of relativity based on the policemen's theories result in mastery for the narrator as he feels that he gains narrative control again. However, such a desire is constantly usurped through the ludic nature of the narrative.

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[14] Hopper reads this scene with the bicycle as a metonymic discourse of repressed sexuality in the text (p. 57). Thus, Hopper offers a 'queer' reading of phallocentric imagery of male relationships in the text, particularly between the narrator and Divney. Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist* pp. 90-7. Bobotis also offers a 'queer' reading of the text: she notes that earlier critics mis-read the bicycle as female even though it belongs to a male policeman, thus arguing that a possible homosexual element in the novel has been elided by critics. Bobotis, Andrea, 'Queering Knowledge in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, 32:2* (Autumn/Winter 2002), 242-58 (p. 242). This is in direct contrast to Cronin who comments that O'Nolan's sexuality should not come under scrutiny. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 60, 62. Also see Throne, Marilyn, 'The Provocative Bicycle of Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 21:4* (1986), 36-44 who argues that while the bicycle should be male in keeping with Pluck's 'Atomic Theory', she believes Pluck must be keeping the bicycle against her will (pp. 40-1).

O'Nolan can be seen as moving beyond the theme of abandoning authorial figures in *At Swim-Two-Birds* to a recognition of the impossibility of overthrowing authority figures as all narrative forms are engaged in a level of cyclical deterritorialization and then reterritorialization. As Silverthorne argues, the policemen, Old Mathers, de Selby and the de Selby scholars all challenge forms of scientific and academic authority through their theories as '[o]f course, the best method of controlling one authority is another.'[15] Because these characters create new authoritative mechanisms to explain the world, the narrator is forced to re-authorise his narrative quest for this missing box at various stages in the text depending on who the new authoritative figure is. However, such preemptory figures never remain stable throughout the text: for example, Pluck and MacCruiskeen believe that they control their universe through the manipulation of the substance omnium, although this is counteracted by Fox's claim that he ultimately controls them from his police station which exists between the walls of Old Mathers' house. Fox's identity remains enigmatic throughout the narrator's tale, with his existence being questioned because Pluck and MacCruiskeen have not seen him in twenty-five years and yet he sleeps at their police barracks (TTP, 35, 83). When the narrator eventually meets the third policeman, Fox has a fat body similar to the other policemen but he has the face and voice of Old Mathers (TTP, 208). Fox's identity is indeterminate between that of Mathers and the other policemen, just as Mather's 'living-dead' existence remains enigmatic throughout the text. Thus, the theme of identity, based upon the narrator's ambivalent 'living-dead' existence and limited understanding of his surroundings, will be explored in the next section.

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[15] Silverthorne, 'Time, Literature, and Failure: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*', p. 71

6.2 Narrative ambiguity: digression, Sense and Self

As Deleuze and Guattari argue, moments of 'becoming' involve points of variation which destruct binary configurations and create a neutralized spatial plane which avoids any form of rigid dualism. They write that 'the animal, flower, or stone one becomes are […] not molar subjects, objects or forms that one knows from the outside of us and that one recognises from experience, through science, or by habit.'[16] There are no limits to the infinite possibility of transgressive codes the policemen can introduce to the narrator to challenge his notions of empirical and rational sense, and his own senses which he uses to read the world around him. Silverthorne reads the narrator's lack of ownership of a bicycle metaphorically as an author without a narrative vehicle to explain his new environment. Because of this, the narrator is 'an author in search of a novel. Without the latter he will never assume an identity.'[17] The narrator's broken perception, sensations and notions of time and space are deterritorialized in his nightmarish world, resulting in his nameless existence which no longer retains an affirmative category. This is achieved in three specific ways in the text: on the level of narrative structure, through the deconstruction of notions of time and space, and through the deterritoralization of the narrator's sense of self in his in-between 'living-dead' existence.

6.2.1 Digressive narrative

Thirlwell, in his introduction to a collection of Kafka's short stories, notes that Kafka's fiction expresses dream realities and offer parodies of standard storytelling. Through Kafka's inclusion of non-conventional characters and odd narrative detail, new sub-plots are created behind the main narrative, thus upsetting hierarchical forms of

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[16] Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* p. 337

[17] Silverthorne, 'Time, Literature, and Failure: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*', p. 72

narrative.[18] In *The Third Policeman* the de-construction of the expectations of the novel form and its mimetic representation occurs on a chapter structure level which entails a large amount of digression through a number of deterritorializations and reterritorializations of the meaning of the main narrative plot line of the murder mystery. In *The Third Policeman*, the opening of the novel delays the narrative of the murder of Old Mathers through a glimpse of what happened in detail, and then a deferral of this action through the inclusion of odd detail and superfluous information. The text opens with the narrator's statement that

> [n]ot everybody knows how I killed old Phillip Mathers, smashing his jaw in with my spade; but first it is better to speak of my friendship with John Divney because it was he who first knocked old Mathers down by giving him a great blow in the neck with a special bicycle-pump which he manufactured himself out of a hollow iron bar.' (TTP, 1)

Rather than informing the reader of reasons why they killed Old Mathers, the narrator offers a digressive narrative containing absurd information on how Divney attacked Old Mathers and what type of weapon he employed. The narrator's focus upon the bicycle pump becomes somewhat reasonable once the signification of the policemen's obsession with bicycles and their accessories becomes apparent later in the text, but at the beginning of the narrative such a piece of information delays the expected format of a murder mystery narrative. Instead, the narrator downplays the main narrative plot of the murder mystery: he states that '[t]here is little to tell about the murder' (TTP, 11), and instead digresses into information about his confusing paternity, his obsessive interest in the illogical scientist de Selby, and his 'queer' friendship with Divney. The narrator hints that 'something very unusual happened' which caused him and Divney 'to get the name of being great friends' because they never part company day and night. However, he does not tell the reader directly that the reason for their seeming friendship

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[18] Thirlwell, Adam, 'Introduction', in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, (London: Vintage Books, 2005), pp. ix-xxviii (pp. xii-xiv)

is that the narrator is paranoid that Divney will abscond with the money they stole from Mathers' corpse. Instead, a 'queer' description of the situation between the two men is offered. The narrator becomes ever omnipotent and watchful over Divney in the bar, on bicycle trips and even at night by sharing a bed with him (TTP, 8). Hence, 'queer' description is provided of the situation between the two men before the real reason for the narrator's obsessive watchfulness is revealed.[19]

The ultimate moment of deferral of meaning in the text occurs as the narrator reaches into the opening in the floorboards in Old Mathers' house for the box when 'something happened' (TTP, 20). As the reader realises at the end of the novel, Divney placed a bomb in Old Mathers' house and tricked the narrator into thinking the black box under the floorboards contained the money they stole from the corpse. It is worth quoting the passage when the narrator discovers the box under the floorboards to examine the narrative ambiguity O'Nolan creates which defers the meaning of the situation:

> I cannot hope to describe what it was but it had frightened me very much long before I had understood it even slightly. It was some change which came upon me or upon the room, indescribably subtle, yet momentous, ineffable. It was as if the daylight had changed with unnatural suddenness, as if the temperature of the evening had altered greatly in an instant or as if the air had become twice as rare or twice as dense as it has been in the winking of an eye; perhaps all of these and other things happened together for all my senses were bewildered all at once and could give me no explanation. The fingers of my right hand, thrust into the opening in the floor, had closed mechanically, found nothing at all and came up again empty. The box was gone! (TTP, 20-1)

Rather than offering a clear explanation for what has just happened, the narrator undergoes sensations which defer from the true nature of the incident of his death as he attempts to describe such an indescribable moment. Brooker refers to such moments in

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[19] They are seen by the neighbours as 'the best two Christians in all Ireland' because of their seemingly close friendship in their behaviour of always being together for three years (TTP, 9). This is perceived as a beautiful, noble human friendship. Similarly, they are mistaken for two tired labourers on their way home from work after the murder (TTP, 13).

the text as cruxes or moments when reality seems to shudder and pause.[20] The narrator's senses become disorientated as his death is ambiguously and paradoxically defined as both 'subtle' and 'momentous' through the effects of the light, temperature and layout of the room. This results in an enigma for the reader who is left guessing what happened to the narrator, especially as the next character he meets is the man he murdered. This culminates in questions such as what is happening, who is dead or alive, who killed who, will the narrator ever achieve his purpose of finding the missing black box, and what the narrator's name is.

6.2.2 Spatiality and sequential time

As discussed in chapter five, 'minor' literature is spatial as it maps the passage of deterritorialization; such literature deterritorializes one terrain as it maps another in a rhizomatic fashion. Analysis of O'Nolan's mapping of a number of ontological planes in *The Third Policeman* is crucial to our understanding of his deterritorialization of notions of spatiality and sequential time.[21] As Clissmann notes, the landscape of the text is reminiscent of the farming midlands of Ireland.[22] The Irish rural landscape of the narrator's home is made into an unusual and threatening space for the protagonist due to its unfamiliar scientific laws of time and space. The environment the narrator exists in can be defined as a baroque vision of hell: in this territory, the narrator cannot find meaning and so is plunged into an abyss of arbitrary, transitory meanings which are frightening in their repetitive and mechanical nature. Throughout the text the narrator

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[20] Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* p. 49. An interesting comparison could be made between *The Third Policeman* and Ó Cadhain's Irish language novel *Cré na Cille* (1949), which is a comic book set in a small graveyard in Cois Fharraige where the living and dead locals converse about their lives.

[21] See Silverthorne, 'Time, Literature, and Failure: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*', for a discussion on how O'Nolan debunks notions of time through de Selby's mad theories. In particular, Silverthorne explores Dunne's 'unorthodox theory that time is all around us – the past, present, and future merely convenient divisions of a single medium. We are aware of existing only in the present because we choose to concentrate on that' (p. 70).

[22] O'Nolan spent some of his childhood in the rural county of Offaly in the Irish midlands. Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 5

undergoes a sense of unfamiliarity and unease as he encounters multiple, irreducible, illogical worlds which reflect and deflect his own version of the world.

Just as the bicycles begin to take on human traits in the text, the road the narrator traverses through and the landscape that surrounds him take on an eerie appearance. The road does not function as a logical passage between one space and the next. The narrator comments that

> [t[he road was narrow, white, old, hard and scarred with shadow. It ran away westwards in the mist of the early morning, running cunningly through the little hills and going to some trouble to visit tiny towns which were not, strictly speaking, on its way. It was possibly one of the oldest roads in the world. (TTP, 37)

Like the cunning human-bicycles which can move, the road literally 'runs' in a zig-zig fashion of its own accord in a digressive pattern. Hence, the narrator comments that

> [m]y surroundings had a strangeness of a peculiar kind, entirely separate from the mere strangeness of a country where one has never been before. Everything seemed almost too pleasant, too perfect, too finely made. Each thing the eye could see was unmistakable and unambiguous, incapable of merging with any other thing or of being confused with it. The colour of the bogs was beautiful and the greenness of the green fields was supernal. Trees were arranged here and there with far-from-usual consideration for the fastidious eye (TTP, 39-40).

Like the bicycles, the road and its surroundings display an ambiguous representation in its landscaped aspect which the narrator cannot identify because of its perfection. Hence, navigating such a landscape is confusing for the narrator. While travelling through the 'queer country' with Pluck and Gilhaney as they search for Gilhaney's missing bicycle, the narrator asks where they are going 'or what direction are we heading for or are we on the way back from somewhere else?' (TTP, 84). The narrator is unsure of either the direction or distance he has walked and he feels equally oppressed by the mountains that surround them which hem them in and are oppressive

on their minds (TTP, 88).[23]

The environment that the protagonist exists in does not cohere to the rules of quantifiable space. The narrator is portrayed as an atemporal, timeless figure within this space. If Newton's notion of absolute time specifies the movements of nature, using the clock as a common sense way of viewing the world, such an organisation of time is disrupted in the text. Comer argues that notions of sequential time help the modern subject to create a subjectivity which becomes coherent in relation to the confusing multitude of events of the world which are ordered in time frames.[24] Such a sense of coherent identity is rejected from the narrator's opening statement that 'I was born a long time ago', thus positioning him in a time which cannot be identified (TTP, 1).[25] Instead, as Quintelli-Neary argues, the sequential notion of time from one's birth to one's death is subverted in the text as the narrator not only relates his story from a timeless position as a dead person, but the world he exists in is similar to the timeless Celtic world of Tír na nÓg where the ageless Oisin lived. Quintelli-Neary notes that '[t]he narrator of *The Third Policeman* is likewise removed to a zone in which time has been frozen'.[26]

Within this timeless zone, any sense of normal time and space is denied in the text for the narrator, with normal day and night time being reversed or placed out of synchronisation with one another. When the narrator is inside Old Mathers' house he

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[23] Indeed, the landscape becomes unrecognisable in its lack of signifiers of a typical rural landscape. Kenner notes that there is an absense of identifiable signifiers of Ireland in the text, such as rain, Irish words, and wind, but the text contains Irish traditions in its verbal mannerisms which its humour and logic relies upon. Kenner, Hugh, 'The Fourth Policeman', in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O'Brien*, ed. by Clune, Anne and Tess Hurson, (Belfast Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 61-71

[24] Comer, 'A Mortal Agency: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*', p. 107

[25] Asbee argues that the statement 'I was born a long time ago' makes the reader think the narrator is an old man narrating about the past, and so the novel could be categorised as a bildungsroman; however incongruities emerge as the reader cannot take the narrator's statements over his mother's identity and his childhood seriously. Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* pp. 56-7

[26] Quintelli-Neary, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels* p. 87

notices that

> [t]he outside light of morning had faded away almost to nothingness. I glanced out of the window and gave a start. Coming into the room I had noticed that the window was to the east and that the sun was rising in that quarter and firing the heavy clouds with light. Now it was setting with last glimmers of feeble red in exactly the same place. It had risen a bit, stopped, and then gone back (TTP, 35).

The sun is not acting in accordance with the laws of time and nature; it is no wonder that for the narrator it is always five o'clock in the afternoon (TTP, 87), that he loses track of time while listening to the nothingness of sound coming from Sergeant MacCruiskeen's music box (TTP, 117), and that he does not know how long or far he has travelled with Sergeant Pluck to eternity (TTP, 142).

The narrator's loss of the ordering of sequential time is indicative of his loss of his own clear subjectivity in relation to the world and his ability to describe his surroundings. In particular, the narrator loses a sense of descriptive power as he tries to define his new environment in his narrative. For example, when he sees Old Mathers in his chair he comments that

> [i]t is hard to write of such a scene or to convey with known words the feelings which came knocking at my numbed mind. How long we sat there, for instance, looking at one another I do not know. Years or minutes could be swallowed up with equal ease in that indescribable and unaccountable interval (TTP, 22).

The narrator has lost the ability to narrate in mimetic fashion the world that surrounds him due to his 'living-dead' ambiguous position, and so O'Nolan deterritorializes the use of the various human senses to perceive and understand the world within coherent patterns of understanding.

6.2.3 The limits of representation and language: Sense and the senses

Writing to the American author William Saroyan in 1940, O'Nolan described *The Third Policeman* as follows:

> my hero or main character (he's a heel and a killer) has been dead throughout the book and that all the queer ghastly things which have been happening to him are happening in a sort of hell which he earned for the killing.

Spending twenty years in hell in what, for the narrator, feels like a couple of days, the narrator is destined to

> walk back along the road to the hell place and start thro' all the same terrible adventures again, the first fellow being surprised and frightened at everything just as he was the first time and as if he'd never been through it before.

Unlike the reader, the narrator never realises the situation he is in on his return journey to hell with Divney in the final chapter. O'Nolan continues that '[i]t is made clear that this sort of thing goes on for ever'.[27] If the reader finds out at the end of the novel that the narrator is actually dead and doomed to repeat the actions of the novel over and over again with his accomplice Divney, the narrative structure of the first read of the novel entails both a deterritorialization of the expectations of the novel form and genre more generally, and an occlusion of the fact that the narrator is dead in order to achieve the narrative twist at the end of the text.

Because of this, O'Nolan's use of narrative and language must be characterised in relation to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'minor' language's deterritorialization of sense.[28] They argue that language can be seen as an instrument of empirical and rational sense, and that sense presides over the designation of sound and meaning for a culture. Deleuze and Guattari argue that in Kafka's 'minor' literature '*Language stops being representative in order to now move toward its extremities or its limits*' and that Kafka's narrative 'remains a mixture, a schizophrenic mélange' of

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[27] Letter from O'Nolan to Willian Saroyan, 14 February 1940, re-printed in O'Brien, *The Third Policeman* p. 228

[28] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 20-1; emphasis in original.

meaning and language.[29] They see language as a system which creates a hierarchical system of order and power. Notions of Sense, and the senses, need to be theorized in O'Nolan's work in order to gain a clear understanding of how he deterritorializes any clear empirical sense of self through his destabilising of the languages of science, academic criticism, subjective awareness, policing and the law, and the thriller genre. Instead, O'Nolan's language is a means of non-communication. As Barthes has argued, such a revolutionary text

> practices the infinite deferment of the signified, is dilatory; its field is that of the signifier and the signifier must not be conceived of as 'the first stage of meaning', its material vestibule, but, in complete opposition to this, as its *deferred action*. Similarly, the *infinity* of the signifier refers not to some idea of the ineffable (the unnamable signified) but to that of a *playing*; the generation of the perpetual signifier'.

This, in the case of O'Nolan's novels, results in 'a serial movement of disconnections, overlappings, variations' which Barthes defines as a metonymic 'activity of associations, cont:nuities, carryings-over coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy'.[30] *The Third Policeman* is a 'minor' text because it is engaged in perpetual play and deferral with notions of rational meaning and plot with the reader through its use of language.

While O'Nolan seemingly rejected Joyce's use of language in *Finnegans Wake*, writing that it constituted the 'attempted disintegration, dissipation and demolition of the language', to a certain extent his use of linguistic forms in *The Third Policeman* reaches such moments of the abolition of meaning (CL, 7 Jul 1958). Brooker notes that the text is characterised by its sentences whose contexts are conceptually inconsistent and are at the limits of language and the visual.[31] Equally, Asbee notes the countless

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[29] ———, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 23, 26; emphasis in original.
[30] Barthes, 'Work to Text', p. 1472; emphasis in original.
[31] Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* p. 55

words and endless variations of language in the text which have no clear narrative purpose as certain phrases are repeated and recycled in the narrator's Otherworld.[32] This becomes particularly apparent in the narrator's use of vocabulary to depict his new Otherworld surroundings, describing, for example, sheep as having overcoats (TTP, 84) and cows having 'Milk-bag[s]' (TTP, 135). Many of the characters he meets employ vocabulary which confounds him, such as Martin Gilhaney who asks him if he has a 'desideratum': ''What way will you bring it about or mature its mutandum and bring it ultimately to passable factivity?'' (TTP, 49)[33] As Booker argues, such a language creates new logic that works within the narrative constructs that both de Selby and the policemen cohere too and which the narrator has to try to understand. Booker argues that '[a]ll knowledge arises in relation to other knowledge, and the resultant epistemological self-referentiality results in an infinite regression that can never hit bottom.'[34]

The narrator must create new epistemes by applying the 'logic' he has received from the policemen and de Selby in order to understand his new situation. However, such a desire for a stable ontological ground is denied to the narrator because their theories cannot be fathomed. This becomes particularly apparent in O'Nolan's treatment of the sense of vision in the text. As Brooker has argued, vision is a privileged sense as we refuse to believe anything until it is seen through our eyes. This certainty of

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[32] Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* p. 62. Like the narrator, Mick and Hackett in *The Dalkey Archive* join De Selby in an Otherworld under the rocks; 'a visit under the sea to the next world, or perhaps the former world.' Hackett describes himself as 'an Apollo space-man' on this journey, but the world they visit resembles a number of other Otherworlds such as Orfeo's travels to the Underworld, the fairyworld of Celtic mythology, and Hades in the *Odyssey* (TDA, 32).

[33] O'Nolan explores the policemen's strange use of language further in *The Dalkey Archive*: when describing the trees around Dalkey, the narrator writes of 'the whole a dazzle of mildly moving leaves, a farrago of light, colour, haze and copious air, a wonder that is quite vert, verdant, vertical, verticillate, vertiginous, in the shade of branches even vespertine. Heavens, has something escaped from the lexicon of Sergeant Fottrell?' (TDA, 7)

[34] Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility'*,* p. 38

understanding is disturbed as the narrator has to believe the things he sees even though they are logically unlikely.[35] Instead, their language and intellectual musings of the policemen and de Selby reach the point of no return in defining things that are not possible in the natural scientific world. Such significations escape major symbolic and figurative meanings in the endless possible logic the policemen and de Selby could create. Hence, Pluck describes MacCruiskeen to the narrator as 'a menace to the mind.' (TTP, 83) and this becomes apparent when Sergeant MacCruiskeen shows the narrator the various inventions he manufactures, such as his spear (TTP, 71).[36]

The spear represents what is troubling about O'Nolan's description more generally as MacCruiskeen creates something that exists by the perception of touch but not sight. When the point of the spear is half a foot away from the narrator it pricks him on his palm. MacCruiskeen does this to make the narrator think, asking the narrator to explain it (TTP, 72-4). The spear's invisibility frustrates the narrator as he reaches the limits of his understanding, particularly as MacCruiskeen digresses from explaining how the spear works to focus on the narrator's lack of ownership of a bicycle, despite the narrator's constant questions on the nature of the spear. However, such an invention cannot be explained and moves beyond the limits of representation and understanding. MacCruiskeen tells the narrator that

> [n]ow the proper sharp part is so thin that nobody could see it no matter what light is on it or what eye is looking. About an inch from the end it is so sharp that sometimes – late at night or on a soft bad day especially – you cannot think of it or try to make it the subject of a little idea because you will hurt your box with the excruciation of it.

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[35] Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* p. 54. Deleuze and Guattari argue that in 'minor' literature '[p]erception will no longer be in the relation of a subject and of an object, but rather *in* the movement serving as the limit of that relation […] Perception will confront its own limit; it will be among things, in the set of its own proximity.' Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* p. 345; emphasis in original.

[36] This spear has references to Celtic legend. See Quintelli-Neary, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels* pp. 68-9 for a discussion on Cuchulainn's magic spear the Ga Bolga. McGinley picks up on these references in this novel. See Shea, 'Patrick McGinley's Appropriation of Cúchulainn: Revisions in *the Trick of the Ga Bolga*',

The point which the narrator cannot see is 'so thin that maybe it does not exist at all and you could spend half an hour trying to think about it and you could put no thought around it in the end.' (TTP, 73) The narrator is forced to re-evaluate the senses of sight, touch and hearing in relation to their ideas, often commenting that '[t]hat is the limit' (TTP, 72).

Description and characterisation rely on faithful signifiable representation based on sight; however, there is a failure to understand and replicate characterisation in the text for the narrator. Rather than having an omnipotent first-person gaze, the narrator's sense of sight is characterised by its sightless nature: after he hears Old Mathers' cough, he comments that '[s]weat broke upon my brow and my eyes remained open for a long time without a wink, glazed and almost sightless.' (TTP, 21) Eyes take on a disturbing metaphoric value in the text which is not fully disclosed. The narrator walks through the countryside with 'wild eyes' (TTP, 55). When he meets the old-legged man Martin Finnucane, the narrator is disturbed by Finnucane's 'tricky' and 'unusual' eyes. He comments that

> [t]here was no palpable divergence in their alignment but they seemed to be incapable of giving a direct glance at anything that was straight, whether or not their curious incompatibility was suitable for looking at crooked things […] I could not meet his eyes or challenge them.

Finnucane's eyes represent his slippery identity which cannot be understood; thus, Joe's warns the narrator to '*Watch your step here. A very slippery-looking customer*', an appropriate comment to make about the array of characters the narrator meets on his quest for the box (TTP, 44; emphasis in original). However, the narrator himself becomes such a 'slippery customer' who cannot be easily signified because of his nameless condition and his creation of a number of fictive realities as the basis for his identity. As Murphy has argued, in O'Nolan's fictional world the name of the author is

'a most slippery signifier in a fictional universe of evasive signification.' Hence, because of O'Nolan's 'persistent desire to challenge fixed systems, names appear to have been provisional, a potential source of amusement rather than significant identity-markers.'[37]

6.2.4 Anxiety and agency in naming

As Shea has argued, *The Third Policeman* examines the potential of the transgression of the self through O'Nolan's manipulation of language and systems of knowledge which are made irregular through the construction of new words and arrangements.[38] Such a 'minor' literature refuses to produce an autonomous identity for the authoring subject of a text. Instead, the various authorial subjects in *The Third Policeman*, from the narrator to de Selby and his commentators, all have debatable and ambiguous identities. Throughout the text the narrator is anxious about the security of his own identity. This occurs from the beginning of the text as his employee John Divney slowly takes over his farm and bar business. The narrator comments that '[a] full year had not passed when I noticed that Divney was using the word 'we' in his conversation and worse than that, the word 'our'.' (TTP, 5-6) This results in the narrator starting to use the word 'we' rather than 'I' and so '[a]fter that it was useless trying to tell him that it was I who owned everything. I began to tell myself that even if I own everything, he owned me.' (TTP, 6) If the narrator is disempowered by Divney while he is still alive, a certain irony is attached to the narrator's mis-guided life in his devotion to de Selby. In his attempt to establish a clear empirical version of himself in relation to the publication of his scholarly book on de Selby, the narrator commits murder to fund his project and is killed in turn by Divney because if this. Ironically, the narrator states that 'I knew that if my name was to be remembered, it would be

[37] Murphy, Neil, 'Flann O'Brien', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction, 25:3* (Autumn 2005), 7-41 (p. 9)
[38] Shea, *Flann O'Brien's Exorbitant Novels* p. 133. See pp. 113-24 for a reading of language in the text.

remembered with de Selby's', particularly as de Selby's name, like the narrator's, is refuted and his existence questioned by the fictional academics in the text (TTP, 4).[39]

This becomes particularly apparent in the narrator's loss of his own name. Before he goes into Old Mather's house to locate the cash box under the floorboards, Divney advises him to

> '[…] remember this. If you meet anybody, you don't know what you're looking for, you don't know in whose house you are, you don't know anything.'
>
> 'I don't even know my own name,' I answered.
>
> This was a very remarkable thing for me to say because the next time I was asked my name I could not answer. I did not know.' (TTP, 17)

The narrator's inability to remember his own name creates a sense of anxiety in the text. Bhabha, writing on anxiety in relation to 'minor' literary practice, comments that 'the central introjective movement of anxious identification' is a common trait of 'minor' literature. In this process the author or character anxiously guesses who or what their identities are and mean in relation to dominant modes of thought. Such an anxiety results in a form of inward burrowing of the soul which turns identity, and the language which expresses it, into a liminal borderline condition.[40] The narrator undergoes this process throughout the text as he inwardly investigates what his name could be and what significants such an identity could maintain.

For the remainder of the text the narrator's real name is never revealed. When Old Mathers asks him what his name is he comments that

> I was surprised at this question. It had no bearing on my own conversation but I did not notice its irrelevance because I was shocked to realize that, simple as it was, I could not answer it. I did not know my name, did not remember who I was. I was not certain where I had come from or what my business was in that room. I found I was sure of nothing save my search for the black box. But I

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[39] He claims that 'my own work was more important than myself.' (TTP, 6)

[40] Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 442

knew that the other man's name was Mathers, and that he had been killed with a pump and spade. I had no name.' (TTP, 30)

Because he has no name, limitations are placed upon the narrator by other characters in what he can and cannot do. For example, Old Mathers says that he cannot tell the narrator where the box is because he has no name to sign the receipt with. Equally, Pluck is surprised that the narrator does not have a name, commenting that 'I was acquainted with a tall man […] that had no name either and you are certain to be his son and the heir to his nullity and all his nothings' (TTP, 60). The narrator's existence is characterised by its existential nullity: as Pluck argues, '[a]nything you do is a lie and nothing that happens to you is true.' (TTP, 112) and '[t]he particular death you die is not even a death […] only an insanitary abstraction in the backyard, a piece of negative nullity neutralized and rendered void by asphyxiation and the fracture of the spinal string.' (TTP, 113)

However, as the narrator of *The Third Policeman* notes, anonymity can also act as a form of self-empowerment and resistance which enables him to gain agency over those who wish to define him through his invisibility. The narrator, when questioned in the police barracks by Sergeant Pluck about his name, muses that

> [t]his was no harm and I decided to encourage him. I considered it desirable that he should know nothing about me but it was even better if he knew several things which were quite wrong. It would help me in using him for my own purposes and ultimately in finding the black box. (TTP, 60)

Thus, the narrator can manipulate his own identity to find out where the box is. He reflects on the creative power which can be gained through the development of one's own identity and name through the process of self-authoring. Just as Myles na gCopaleen develops an infinite variation of his own biography through his inclusion of multiple viewpoints of his identity, the narrator reflects that ''I can always get a name'',

citing Doyle, Spaldman, O'Sweeny, Hardiman, and O'Gara as possible names he could take on. He comments that 'I can take my choice. I am not tied down for life to one word like most people.' (TTP, 30) However, the danger in self-naming is that the narrator desires a reterritorialized, central identity in relation to the fictional narratives he creates about his identity. Joe, the narrator's soul, suggests that his name is Signor Bari the eminent tenor who appeared on the balcony of St Peter's in Rome (TTP, 30). Joe provides a history of Signor Bari's life in the style of a newspaper report, depicting the delirium of thousands of fans of Bari rushing towards the barriers to see his operatic performance (TTP, 42). However, when the narrator begins to believe that he is Signor Bari, Joe counters this by offering an infinite array of alternative identities the narrator could have, from Dr Solway Garr to the private investigator J. Courtney Wain (TTP, 42-3, 112). All such identities remain destabilised through this variation, resulting in a text which refuses the offer a final classification of the meaning of identity.

6.3 Epistemological free-fall: critical thinking to the point of infinity

The Third Policeman engages in a form of epistemological free-fall of all forms of scientific and critical thinking which shape the modern world and, in particular, literary production and reception.[41] As Deane argues, the novel exposes that '[d]iscourse is not something to be interpreted; it is itself an act of interpretation. All discourse is interpretation; all interpretation is discourse.'[42] Clissmann notes that *The*

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[41] For useful critical studies on O'Nolan's treatment of Enlightenment epistemology in the text, see Booker, 'The Bicycle and Descartes: Epistemology in the Fiction of Beckett and O'Brien'*,* , Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility'*,* and Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings*. Clissmann writes that O'Nolan mocks the 'inability of the human mind […] to embody or understand its own rationalisations' (p. 165). Booker views the text as an 'anti-epistemological' text because of its 'parodies of the Western drive for knowledge' and its revelation that 'all systematic programs for the pursuit of knowledge inevitably lead to […] invidious quests for mastery'. Hence, the 'text shows that the Enlightenment project of gaining a complete understanding and dominion of nature through the resources of human reason is a futile one'. Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility'*,* pp. 38, 41, 52
[42] Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* p. 161

Third Policeman is not concerned with the deconstruction of the presentation of reality in fiction, as in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, 'but with reality viewed through the medium of scientific and philosophical concepts.'[43] The text is characterised by its palimpsestic re-readings and layerings of not a number of literary texts, but a number of metaphysical concepts and abstract ideas which explore the boundaries between time, space, life and death. Within this deconstruction of dominant scientific theories a world is produced which is infinite in its imaginings where anything is possible. Clissmann argues that de Selby's misreadings and misunderstandings of scientific theories, which the narrator only grasps in an incoherent manner, are an exercise in the imagination for O'Nolan.[44]

6.3.1 Footnotes and scholarship

The disruptive nature of O'Nolan's art is nowhere more evident than in the representation of the dubious logic of the savant de Selby in *The Third Policeman*, and the re-modelled version of the character as De Selby in *The Dalkey Archive*. Author of works of 'therapeutic quality' (TTP, 101) such as *Golden Hours*, *Country Album*, *A Memoir of Garcia*, *Rural Atlas* and *Layman's Atlas*, the narrator of *The Third Policeman* first found an old tattered copy of de Selby's *Golden Hours* in his science master's study when at school.[45] He sees this as a crucial day in his life which he can pin-point exactly: 'I was sixteen then and the date was the seventh of March. I still think that day is the most important in my life and can remember it more readily than I do my birthday.' (TTP, 3) This date is the narrator's metaphorical birth-date of his life-long obsession with de Selby's theories which ultimately leads him to murder Old Mathers in order to raise money to publish the narrator's definitive and epistemological

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[43] Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 152
[44] ———, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* p. 154
[45] Not much can be gleamed from the narrator's comments on what these various books are about: he states that *Layman's Atlas* deals with the saliencies of existence like old age, love, sin, death and bereavement (TTP, 102-3) and *Country Album* appeared in fortnightly parts (TTP, 131 fn).

'De Selby Index'. O'Nolan's intent in introducing de Selby into the novel is to offer a parodic caricature of scientists and researchers alike. As Hopper argues, rather than providing a vital auto-critical function, the scholarly footnotes in the text engage in thematic interplay with the main text.[46] Throughout the presentation of de Selby's scientific theories, a number of ludicrous footnotes are provided which deterritorialize through their interpretations notions of empirical science and academic exactitude. Booker places *The Third Policeman* within a tradition of Irish writing of Joyce and Beckett which reacts against the Berkeleyan tradition of Irish Enlightenment thought and parodies the Western need for knowledge. He states that Nietzsche's 'radical questioning of the ultimate authenticity of all human knowledge also bears surprising similarities to certain developments in modern science and resonates with many later developments in literature, where numerous authors have launched similar demystifying assaults against the epistemological tradition of the Enlightenment.'[47]

Any sense of possible meaning behind de Selby's ideas and his commentators' opinions are ultimately denied through the structural use of footnotes and marginalia throughout the text. As discussed earlier, rather than offering a linear narrative of the narrator's quest for the missing box, the novel, as Asbee argues, distracts the reader and digresses through detailed and spiraling analyses of de Selby's ideas both in the main text at the start of the majority of chapters, and in extensive footnotes which often run on for pages.[48] This technique relies on constant rhetorical evasion through the employment of a number of digressive comments from the main plot-line as the narrator becomes at times more pre-occupied with de Selby's ideas rather than his own

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[46] Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist* p. 91. Thus, O'Nolan's use of footnotes counters what Genette refers to as the proper function of a footnote to clarify and explain the main point in the text. Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* p. 324
[47] Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility', p. 38
[48] Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* p. 68

peculiar situation. As Fackler argues,

> the narrator cannot resist adding footnotes from time to time. We slowly become aware of a number of facets to his fascination with deSelby. He is interested in the erroneous theories held forth by deSelby and how they were arrived at; deSelby's theories are at the center of virulent critical disagreement among a number of known, and at least one unknown, European critics and scholars; and the narrator hopes to produce a definitive deSelby index which will resolve all argument, thus becoming pre-eminent among the humbugs.[49]

The footnotes in the text from chapter two onwards are presumably from the narrator's book the 'De Selby Index'. These footnotes are written in a more scholarly style than the main body and involve an infinite level of cross commentary between different points and arguments made by the many commentators on de Selby. O'Nolan, through the introduction of footnotes which include quotations, page numbers, volume numbers and references from the texts cited, offers a mockery of scientific and academic presentation of knowledge. The detailed footnotes in the text provide, for example, further reading on de Selby and contrasts in scholarships over points of disagreement on de Selby's theories (TTP, 130 fn). At points in the text the footnotes dwarf the main body, such as a three page footnote (TTP, 129-131) and four and a half page footnote on de Selby's sleep patterns and general weaknesses (188-192 fn).[50] Equally, in chapter nine there are six footnotes as well as in-text references to de Selby, thus questioning the centrality of the main narrative of the narrator's search for the box and the relevance

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[49] Fackler, Herbert V., 'Flann O'Brien's "The Third Policeman": Banjaxing Natural Order', *The South Central Bulletin, 38:4* (Winter 1978), 142-5 (p. 144). Also see McGuire, Jerry L., 'Teasing after Death: Metatextuality in *The Third Policeman*', *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies, 16:2* (Summer 1981), 107-21 which explores how O'Nolan lures the reader into the metatextuality of the novel through footnotes and verbal games to question its epistemological value.

[50] This footnote, rather than providing additional clarification of de Selby's weaknesses, meanders into a debate over the pseudonym dispute over Kraus and du Garbandier, how de Selby distinguises between men and women, a long paragraph from Hatchjaw's friend Harold Barge from an interview, and information of whether Hatchjaw is Hatchjaw or not. Brooker reads the footnotes as rivals, diversions and supplements to the main text where the main narrative is often occluded. Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* p. 57. Equally, Booker argues that the footnotes act as 'a reminder of the futility of epistemological readings of texts, because the text is not locatable as an object of study – important information always exists outside the apparent boundaries of the text'. Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility', p. 53, n.4

of the inclusion of references to de Selby and his commentators in the narrative as a whole.

The fact that the narrator of *The Third Policeman* believes in de Selby's 'dignity and eminence as a physicist, ballistician, philosopher and psychologist'(TTP, 188 fn), despite the obvious lunacy inherent in his ideas, demonstrates that, as Booker argues, the novel is 'a parody of the narcissism of scholarly commentary'.[51] From the narrator's first encounter with de Selby it is ironic that the first edition of *Golden Hours* which he steals from his master's study has its two last pages missing, symbolic of the incompleteness of his theories, and O'Nolan's work more generally (TTP, 3). The narrator becomes obsessed with de Selby's work, choosing to travel rather than return home from school in order to buy a complete edition of de Selby's work and see if he can loan some of the less important of his commentators' books. He buys the works of the two principal commentators on de Selby, Hatchjaw and Bassett, and a photostat of the de Selby Codex, and even learns German and French to read the commentators' work (TTP, 6). Just as Trellis and the student narrator have egotistic ideas of their own self-importance as creative-artists in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, so the narrator believes his definitive 'De Selby Index', where all the views of commentators are collated, is useful and badly wanted because it show that opinions of de Selby and his theories were misconceptions based on misreadings of his works (TTP, 9).

6.3.2 Truth and biography

The narrator has a desire to reach the truth about de Selby's artistic creation but

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[51] Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility'*,* p. 41. Asbee concurs with this point, arguing that the narrator is the worst kind of scholar in his singlemindedness and eagerness to add another volume to the collections of de Selby research even if this means killing in order to achieve this. Hence, Asbee notes that the name Selby comes from the German word Selbst which means self, and argues that the novel is a satire of the narrator's search for his selfhood through his name because of his preoccupation with self-research and the self-regarding manner of de Selby. Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* p. 67

this 'truth' is deferred by an infinite number of interpretative versions of de Selby's life and theories. As the narrator states, '[a]s in many other of de Selby's concepts, it is difficult to get to grips with his process of reasoning or to refute his curious conclusions' (TTP, 130 fn). Both de Selby's autobiography and his work cannot be understood fully and instead remain at the point of their own abolition in meaning and form. Rather than offering clear scientific re-evaluations, the De Selby's Codex is a collection of two-thousand sheets of double-sided foolscap containing words with no ultimate meanings. Booker reads the Codex metaphorically 'as a representation of the illusory nature of the Truth so fervently sought by the inquiries of Western epistemology.'[52] The narrator informs us that not one word of the manuscript is legible and, as de Selby's commentators attempt to decipher passages, disagreement arises over whether a passage refers to old age, as Bassett maintains, or to lambing operations on a farm, as Henderson counter argues (TTP, 163 fn). It is noted that in Hamburg the Norddeutsche Verlag published a book by Kraus based on what Kraus claims to be the only authentic copy of the Codex of a possible four versions of the book (TTP, 163 fn). This leads to an endless spiral effect of possible meanings of the Codex which is reminiscent of contemporary analyses of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. As the narrator notes,

> [i]t cannot be pretended that the position regarding this 'Codex' is at all satisfactory and it is not likely that time or research will throw any fresh light on a document which cannot be read and of which four copies at least, all equally meaningless, exist in the name of being the genuine original. (TTP, 164 fn)

Hence, the narrator argues

> [l]ike most of de Selby's theories, the ultimate outcome is inconclusive. It is a curious enigma that so great a mind would question the most obvious realities and object even to things scientifically demonstrated (such as the sequence of day and night) while believing absolutely in his own fantastic explanations of the same phenomena. (TTP, 54)

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[52] Booker, 'Science, Philosophy, and *The Third Policeman*: Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility', p. 40

De Selby's theories ultimately remain an enigma which researchers battle over to discover a definitive epistemological meaning. De Selby's Codex is a metaphor for O'Nolan's own writing practice and presentation of his authorial identities more generally. Just as the narrator cannot find an ultimate and stable version of the Codex, so the various commentators of de Selby disagree over his true authentic identity. The novel includes an epigraph from de Selby which is set beside another epigraph by Shakespeare. While this sets up an established relationship between two great and 'real' artists, the footnotes build on a controversial rhizomatic re-mapping of the enigmatic biography of de Selby which is only ever glimpsed at but never fully explained, just like the narrator's paternity and name will always remain unclear in the text from his point of view. Such narrative clues to de Selby's multi-faceted life include a reference to an affair surrounding Kraus, Hatchjaw and the unmasking of the de Selby letter scandal by *The Times* (TTP, 131 fn), and a legal battle de Selby underwent with his landlord Porter due to hammering which resulted in strained floor-joists and damage to a ceiling (TTP, 162 fn).[53] However, these inconsequential references do not assist in any understanding of the great savant just as studies on de Selby's life, such as the French commentator Le Fournier's books *De Selby – l'Énigme de l'Occident* and *De Selby - Homme ou Dieu?*, seem to encapsulate the enigma surrounding de Selby's very existence in their titles. The commentators even go so far as to argue that some of de Selby's books are forgeries, however such statements are always undercut leaving no true knowledge on the subject. Hatchjaw investigates unfamiliar syntactical constructions which indicate forgery in de Selby's work (TTP, 129) causing him to claim that the 'Codex' is a forgery due to eleven pages all being numbered page eighty-eight. However, to counter this, Bassett finds no page eighty-eight in his copy of the 'Codex', especially as both

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[53] Hatchjaw believes the hammering was done to drown out other noises of real experiments. Bassett agrees (TTP, 162 fn).

men claim to have the only genuine copy of the 'Codex'. (TTP, 163 fn)

The commentators even compete with each other in rivalry and distrust of one another's authenticity in their authorship; the narrator naively favours the commentatories of Bassett and Hatchjaw over their rivals du Garbandier and Kraus. He views Hatchjaw, author of *De Selby's Life and Times*, *The de Selby Water-Boxes Day by Day* and *Conspectus of the de Selby Dialectic*, as reliable (TTP 102 fn), unlike the unscientific and unreliable German critic Kraus, author of *De Selby's Leben* (TTP, 130 fn). This is due to the difficulty of identifying who Kraus is (TTP, 131 fn). The narrator notes that Kraus is possibly a pseudonym of du Gardandier which he used to spread slanderous accounts in Germany, as suggested by Bassett (TTP, 131 fn, 189 fn). Hatchjaw believes the opposite to Bassett: 'that the name 'du Garbandier' was merely a pseudonym adopted for his own ends by the shadowy Kraus.' (TTP, 189 fn). Hatchjaw believes Kraus is making money by writing refutations of du Garbandier in broadsides (TTP, 190 fn). Hatchjaw goes heavily armed abroad to kill Kraus to stop what he considers a ''cataclysm'' in his work. However, ironically, on this journey Hatchjaw, the 'courageous crusader', is arrested for impersonating himself; hence, du Garbandier implies that Hatchjaw is not Hatchjaw but an impostor for the last forty years, leading to a lengthy footnote which concludes that there are five possibilities for where Hatchjaw ended up, none of which can be seen as fact (TTP, 192 fn).[54]

6.3.3 The limits of authorial representation

The identities of the various commentators, de Selby and the narrator cannot be pinned down for certain through written records. Thus, the power of scientific and academic language to signify the world clearly has been corrupted. This is indicative of

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[54] This is paralleled in *The Dalkey Archive* as De Selby, the road he lives on, and his house he lives in do not exist on any map as Mick tries to discover who he is and where he has put the DMP bomb.

O'Nolan's use of infinite and unstable categorisations of identity more generally in his own authorial pseudonyms and in his writing style through his presentation of authors and characters who exist in liminal and transformative spaces. The language in his texts goes against notions of reason, common sense and logic as he subverts the laws of time and space, from Trellis's employment of 'aestho-eugenics' in his creation of the character Furriskey, to de Selby's re-conceptualisation of darkness as 'black air' which he argues is 'a staining of the atmosphere due to volcanic eruptions too fine to be seen with the naked eye' which are caused by industrial activities (TTP, 129 fn).[55] Like de Selby's theories more generally, language is not a stable construct in the text and instead has no limits in terms of what it can say, describe and invent.

As Bhabha suggests 'anxiety may be a signal and significant affect in the 'minor' key' as 'minor' language 'may require the agency of anxiety to mark its enunciative emergence.'[56] This is reflective of O'Nolan's burrowing of his own identity through a number of historical and contemporary pseudonyms and multiple forms of language and literary forms as he anxiously re-assessed his own postcolonial subject position. This occurs in particular in O'Nolan's blurring of his own biography. In a supposedly autobiographical piece entitled 'De Me', O'Nolan offers a summary of his career.[57] He writes that

> in 25 years I have written ten books (that is, substantial opera) under four quite irreconcilable pen-names and on subjects absolutely unrelated. Five of these books could be described as works of imagination, one of world social comment, two on scientific subjects, one of literary exploration and conjecture, one in Irish and one a play.

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[55] Hence, de Selby believes that the activity of sleep is merely 'a succession of fainting-fits brought on by semi-asphyxiation' due to 'black air' and that death is ''the collapse of the heart from the strain of a lifetime of fits and fainting''(TTP, 129 fn).

[56] Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 443

[57] 'De Me' was written for O'Nolan's sister Nuala in 1956; this piece was adapted from material from a talk O'Nolan gave for the New Ireland Society of Queen's University in Belfast and as a contribution to their magazine *New Ireland* in March 1964.

He also claims to have produced an enormous amount of short stories, radio and TV scripts and contributions to magazines and newspapers reviews in 'De Me'. Not only does this autobiographical piece stretch the truth of his real biography, the article also demonstrates O'Nolan's commitment to the eradication, confusion and compartmentation of his authorial identity:

> [a]part from a thorough education of the widest kind, a contender in this field must have an equable yet versatile temperament, and the compartmentation of his personality for the purpose of literary utterance ensures that the fundamental individual will not be credited with a certain way of thinking, fixed attitudes, irreversible techniques of expression. No author should write under his own name nor under one permanent pen-name; a male writer should include in his impostures a female pen-name, and possibly vice versa.[58]

Bhabha's notion of the problems of establishing 'an interstitial space of identification' becomes relevant to an analysis of O'Nolan's use of such a compartmentalization of authorial personality, attitudes and political and stylistic positions. Bhabha describes interstitial spaces where postcolonial or minority subjects exist as 'an effect of the *ambivalent* condition of their borderline proximity' where 'the first and third positions are accepted as living in an unresolved, ongoing, ambivalent articulation in relation to each other.'[59] In such a space, binaries between Self and Other, and between first and third person subject-object relations blur and disintegrate. As has been argued before, O'Nolan's pseudonymous authorial identity is indicative of Ireland's in-between and ambivalent position towards modernity and tradition; his projection of the narrator's subjectivity in *The Third Policeman* is a process of on-going infinite articulation between differences which produce new sites of enunciation or 'becomings'. As Neil Murphy has argued, 'comically masked behind this desire to unmake, discredit, and parody there lies a despairing image of human existence' where characters are revealed

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[58] na Gopaleen, Myles, 'De Me', *New Ireland* Mar 1964, pp. 41-2
[59] Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 434; emphasis in original.

in an 'essentially repetitive, meaningless place of habitation.'[60]

The essential play on the uncertainty of rational order and identity due to the infinite level of O'Nolan's use of heterogeneous raw materials in his *bricolage* texts and textual personas demonstrates the endless possibility of meaning inherent in O'Nolan's deterritorialization of generic form, the role of the author, and national forms of culture and identification in postcolonial Ireland. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, Kafka's 'minor' literature is characterised by its resistance to major metaphors, figurations and proper names. O'Nolan, through his deterritorializing narratives which work within such nationalist and colonial metaphors and figurations of Irish identity, hyperbolically enriches them through parody, intertextual reference, modes of translation, irony and the use of nameless protagonists as well as colourful authorial pennames who can be signified simultaneously in a multitude of ways. Thus, like the narrator of *The Third Policeman*, O'Nolan embodies an infinite number of textual pseudonyms whose identities never remain stable within the textual constructions they produce.

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[60] Murphy, 'Flann O'Brien', p. 9

Conclusion: The Position of the 'Minor' Writer

> 'That is my personal instrument,' said MacCruiskeen, 'and I was playing my own tunes on it in order to extract private satisfactions from the sweetness of them.'
>
> 'I was listening, I answered, 'but I did not succeed in hearing you.'
>
> 'That does not surprise me intuitively,' said MacCruiskeen, 'because it is an indigenous patent of my own. The vibrations of the true notes are so high in their fine frequencies that they cannot be appreciated by the human earcup. Only myself has the secret of the thing and the intimate way of it, the confidential knack of circumventing it. Now what do you think of that?' (TTP, 80-1)

American author Gilbert Sorrentino, an admirer of both O'Nolan and Joyce, chose the above epigraph from *The Third Policeman* for his novel *Mulligans Stew* which is inspired by the authors' work. In this section of *The Third Policeman* Sergeant MacCruiskeen once again confuses the narrator, this time by playing a small 'piano-instrument' he has personally designed which nobody can hear except him. Metaphorically, MacCruiskeen's playing of his own instrument for his own private satisfactions can be read as indicative of O'Nolan's own use of personae and literary style which aims to baffle its reader through the playing of its own peculiar and often contradictory tunes. Montresor argues that Sergeant MacCruiskeen 'speak[s] of the private pleasure that artistic creation brings to the artist in a world that is deaf to his music. They are a defense of creation at the expense of communication.'[1] This is a fitting metaphor for how O'Nolan views his own role as artistic creator, who, like Kafka, provides the reader with a 'minor' form of writing which reaches the limits of narrative sense and description and avoids any central message which would supply a reterritorialization of meaning.

As Cronin notes in relation to O'Nolan, Joyce, Kafka and Proust, MacCruiskeen

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[1] Montresor, Jaye Berman, 'Gilbert Sorrentino: At Swim in the Wake of His Gene Pool', *Modern Language Studies, 23:2* (Spring 1993), 4-12 (p. 7)

is also an artistic handyman who can turn his hand to anything.[2] For example, MacCruiskeen shows the narrator a little highly decorated ornamental brown chest he has manufactured which contains an infinite number of identical chests contained inside each other. The narrator is both horrified and amazed by the infinite, identical chests which become progressively smaller, particularly as the chests defy perspective for the narrator and seem to all be the same size and proportion. The narrator comments that '[t]he two of us then started looking at it and we looked at it for five minutes so hard that it seemed to dance on the table and look even smaller than it might be.' (TTP, 76) The narrator cannot see the last five chests MacCruiskeen has made because his eyes cannot make them out and there is no magnifying glass strong enough to identify them.[3] MacCruiskeen's production of an infinite number of objects which cannot be perceived or understood rationally or logically acts as a metaphor for O'Nolan's endless production of thematic and linguistic diversions and complex pseudonyms which cannot be properly identified within known national or literary significations.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, O'Nolan's work, and 'minor' writing more generally, is characterised by an ambivalence towards the production, marketing and canonisation of Irish modernist writing, like Joyce's. O'Nolan, as an author who began to write at the end point of both literary modernism and the Irish Literary Revival, is pre-occupied with the haunting influences of such dominant literary discourses on mid-twentieth century Irish literature and cultural life. Hence, O'Nolan produces anti-authoritarian 'minor' literature which works within such historical canons to dismantle and deterritorialize them in the form of a 'drunken bash', just as the

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[2] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 201. Similarly, the character Teague McGettigan is described by De Selby as 'the local cabman, handyman, and observer of the weather; there is absolutely nothing he can't do.' (TDA, 10)

[3] Sergeant MacCruiskeen creates a number of preplexing machines such as a machine to mangle and stretch light (TTP, 118-120).

stranger did in O'Nolan's anecdotal essay for *Envoy*. As will be reviewed in the next section, this has resulted in a complex form of postcolonial agency and resistance in O'Nolan's work and use of authorial guises and masks which result in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the perpetual 'becoming' of minoritarian subject positions. Through his constant positioning of authorial voices and textual forms under a perpetual state of revision, O'Nolan has been read as a creative *bricoleur* and *flâneur* figure who demystifies the supposed mimesis of literary texts and concepts of national identity and is engaged in a form of loitering between political positions and styles which demonstrate a liminal, ambivalent and postcolonial position. Following my review of my main thesis arguments and themes, I will provide a discussion of further possible research in the area of O'Nolan and Irish Studies in relation to mid-twentieth century Irish fiction and journalism, modes of anonymous and pseudonymous writing, and literature by migrants in Ireland since the 1990s, before returning to O'Nolan's use of King Sweeny's transitional adventure in *At Swim-Two-Birds* to close the thesis. I will read King Sweeny in *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a personal symbol for the author Brian O'Nolan through Sweeny's challenge to dominant discourses. Sweeny, and O'Nolan's multi-faceted authorial voices more generally, represent what Bhabha refers to as 'the minority-subject-as-circuit, emerging as an anxious, yet inventive, questioning about what takes the place of the subject beyond the two designations of author and character, hero and victim.'[4] Sweeny, throughout the various palimpsestic re-writings of *Buile Suibhne* in the text, is such a minority-subject-as-circuit because, like O'Nolan's pseudonymous authors or his characters, he constantly moves between the position of being an author and a fictional character.

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[4] Bhabha, 'Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations', p. 444

7.1 O'Nolan's 'minor' aesthetic

Throughout his diverse writing career, O'Nolan was engaged in what Masucci MacKenzie refers to as the 'effects of enmeshed ideologies of canonical assimilation and cultural separation' achieved by dominant forms of colonial, nationalist and liberal identifications and political positions in Ireland.[5] This dissertation has employed Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a 'minor' literature as a port of entry to analyse the permutations of O'Nolan's authorial personae and writing techniques to uncover forms of deterrorialization within both major canonical texts and nationalist and colonial images in his writing. By focusing on the specific historical context of O'Nolan's contemporary world between the 1930s and the 1960s, and the impact of earlier forms of historical nationalism and colonialism, the thesis has demonstrated how O'Nolan's writing and authorial pennames are engaged in the immediate concerns of his contemporary world which Deleuze and Guattari define as being essential for a 'minor' literature. O'Nolan's texts both swell up and exaggerate dominant symbols of signification without resorting to a clear political alternative. Instead, O'Nolan's work and authority has been read as a form of creative deformation by reading the term 'minor' metaphorically to re-position his work and authorial identity in a liminal and in-between space in language, genre, the canon and political position.

O'Nolan is a key postcolonial social critic of both Irish nationalism and forms of secularised modernity as his work explores the historical influences of Ireland's colonial and postcolonial experience on Irish subjectivity. 'Minor' literature is a useful archetype to modify in relation to his use of language, history and form and his self-conscious exposure of political positions in Ireland. Studies of 'minor' or minority

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[5] Masucci MacKenzie, Gina, 'Under-Writing: Forming an American Minority Literature', *Journal of Modern Literature, 26:3/4* (Spring 2003), 1-11 (p. 1)

literature are generally concerned with the literature of immigrants, like Kafka, which results in an essential historical and psychological split in immigrant desire/ O'Nolan's work has been read from the position of an internal exile who reads Ireland from an inaccessible and non-categorical authorial space and territory which is both transitory and nomadic in its relation to major languages. As Bogue argues, a major language 'does not exist by itself as a static, self-enclosed, rule-governed system, but it issues from multiple patterns of actions and entities organized in such a way as to restrict variation and regularize relations of force.'[6] Because of this, O'Nolan does not produce a simple collective voice which glosses over social differences when he offers a 'minor' political critique: while Deleuze and Guattari argue that this a collective form of enunciation is necessary for 'minor' literature, O'Nolan recognises that systems of repression cannot be easily replaced and that potential forms of collective resistance may produce new normative totalizing standards. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari argue that

> [t]o make use of the polylingualism of one's own language, to make a 'minor' or intensive use of it, to oppose the oppressed quality of this language to its oppressive quality, to find points of nonculture or underdevelopment, linguistic Third World zones by which a language can escape, an animal enters into things, an assemblage comes into play. How many styles or genres or literary movements, even very small ones, have only one single dream: to assume a major function in language, to offer themselves as a sort of state language, an official language […]. Create the opposite dream: know how to create a becoming-minor.[7]

Because of the need to resist the desire to become a major language, O'Nolan's agency relies on an infinite form of storytelling where all narratives remain inconclusive and playful because they are told from a number of contradictory political positions.

In relation to debates over how to position and discuss Irish national affairs,

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[6] Bogue, 'Minority, Territory, Music', p. 119

[7] Deleuze, and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure)* pp. 26-7

o'Nolan avoids the dichotomies generated by notions of tradition and modernity or postcolonialism and revisionism and instead chooses a middle ground of multiple self-positioning. Through a focus on O'Nolan's complex portrayal of authority, agency and resistance, it has been demonstrated that his writing reflects his contemporary world's preoccupation with how Ireland should 'progress' as a national culture, just as Irish critics since the 1980s have debated how Ireland's national culture should be re-evaluated under various literary theories due to the advent of Said's *Orientalism* and postcolonial theory. Chapter one set out the case for an analysis of disillusioned postcolonial post-independence Irish writers due to the establishment of a conservative nation-state and the continuing neo-colonial elements of national policies. As O'Toole has argued, there was an assumption that Ireland was a single imagined entity and that it is was not until the 1960s and 1970s that 'it had become impossible to think of Ireland as a unifying concept that would underlie and overhang every social and cultural phenomenon, in which there were many competing and conflicting Irelands on the same island'.[8] Ireland is an anomaly within postcolonial studies due to its geographical position as an ex-colony in Europe, and so O'Nolan and his contemporaries offer an early form of postcolonial re-evaluation of Ireland's national culture long before literary critics such as the Field Day group.

O'Nolan, through his shape-shifting pseudonyms and satirical self-positioning of his own and his characters' authorial voices, ironically hovers between any two positions within such debates to disrupt attempts to construct a stable form of societal value while at the same time exposing the constructed nature of such political ideologies. As Burns notes, Deleuze and Guattari's concepts such as the rhizome, 'becoming-minor' and linguistic deterritorialization articulate the question of who

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[8] O'Toole, Fintan, *A Mass for Jesse James: A Journey through 1980's Ireland* (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1990) pp. 11-2

comes after the authorial or national subject.[9] Hence, rather than reading O'Nolan as an individual authorial voice, he should be read as reflecting the anomalous position of Irish artists who chart moments of cultural crises and change in Ireland between the 1930s and 1960s. There is a postcolonial investment in reading him as multiple authorial selves in order to avoid positioning O'Nolan as a major modernist or postmodernist literary author. As discussed in chapter one, O'Nolan, like Irish writing, has been positioned either in relation to Irish history or European avant garde literary techniques such as metafiction and modernism. This thesis, alongside more recent critiques of O'Nolan, has attempted to connect both elements of his work and unpick the dichotomy between Flann O'Brien the literary man and Myles na gCopaleen the 'hack' journalist. Instead, the case studies chapters have explored O'Nolan's ironic destruction and reconstruction of aesthetic forms which deconstruct a verisimilitude based upon paternal models of nationalism through modes of translation, *bricolage*, parody, citation and intertextuality of a number of cultural markers and texts.

O'Nolan's authorial guises and narratives distrust all narratives forms and their signifiers, and instead work within them to produce contradictory and destabilising variations. Chapter two returns to postcolonial notions of resistance, agency, ambivalence, fragmentation and authenticity to make sense of historical 'minor' voices within post-independence Ireland who challenge dominant models of reading Irish national history. While in the pre-independence period nationalism offers Ireland a centrifugal alternative to empire rule, in the post-independence period this nationalism became centripetal and monologic with regards to notions of collective identity. Postcolonial criticism is marked by its anti-authoritarian and distrustful stance to models of possible hegemony; O'Nolan's re-evaluation of the Irish historical and

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[9] Burns, 'Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)', p. 703

literary narrative in *An Béal Bocht* and *At Swim-Two-Birds,* of the major languages of Hiberno-English and Irish in *An Béal Bocht* and 'Cruiskeen Lawn', and of scientific and academic enquiry in *The Third Policeman*, offers a sites of resistance which problematises the naturalising processes of empire, capitalist modernity and nationalism. The Field Day group, despite their best efforts, create a canon of Irish national literature in their anthology which exposes exclusions and silences and, as revisionists such as Longley argue, valorizes a form of cultural nationalism it attempts to re-assess. Thus, O'Nolan's work is part of a questioning of forms of neo-colonial representation of Irish peasant subjectivity and authenticity as well as the use of the Irish language which demonstrates the incomplete decolonisation of Ireland and the simple reversal of colonial stereotypes which result in essentialism.

In *An Béal Bocht*, O'Nolan exposes national narratives, such as translated Gaelic autobiographies, as repetitive and limited in their stultification of the Irish peasant Bonaparte. O'Nolan chooses instead to revisit and reassess such peasant stereotyping in his *flâneuresque* persona Myles na gCopaleen. While *An Béal Bocht* is a satiric amalgamation of colonial and nationalist cultural texts on the Irish peasantry, Myles na gCopaleen is the embodiment of the reversal of colonial and national stereotypes of the Gael and stage Irishman who questions the racialisation of the Irish in relation to the pre-modern western landscape, folk culture and the Irish language. Myles, as editor of *An Béal Bocht* and one of the authors of 'Cruiskeen Lawn', satirises national aesthetic forms through his multi-faceted array of narrative voices and textual styles which demonstrate that 'Irish Ireland's' nationalism is trapped in a counter-identification stage of postcolonial development. This involves an exposure of the marketing and aesthetic elements of Gaelic autobiographies through the reflection of translators, editors and publishers as he hyperbolically exposes these significations as

imperial curiosities and national forms of authenticity in the face of modernity. This is a matter of verisimilitude as O'Nolan salts both the Irish language and Hiberno-English with parody in order to demonstrate the artifice inherent in such representations of the peasant.

O'Nolan must be read as a 'minor' writer who works between languages and has an ambivalent relationship to these languages; through his disruption of forms of print capitalism, such as the newspaper, he expose the hypocrisies and cultural and political ideologies of his time. His comic journalism uncovers the signifiers of nationalism and breaks down the collective value of homogeneous national literature. Rather than offering a collective image of a national community, his column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' and his journalist persona Myles na gCopaleen challenge the image of the imagined nation which was promoted by earlier forms of Irish national writing. The Irish language and Celtic culture were seen as central authorizing elements of national cultural continuity and descent. O'Nolan reclaims these narratives for different purposes to depict Dublin city, and Ireland more generally, as a textual space which can be written over constantly. Through Myles and similar pseudonyms, O'Nolan offers a Lloydian challenge to dominant narrative representation and unified subject positions in Free State Ireland.

This is particularly apparent in O'Nolan's *bricolage* employment of a number of competing styles and systems of representation which depict Ireland as a textual montage in a constant process of translation and transformation as palimpsestic versions of Ireland's national narratives are re-composed and broken down through the process of citation. Just as chapter five explored O'Nolan's manipulation of the Irish Literary Revival's tradition of translating Celtic texts in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, O'Nolan's work

more generally is characterised by its processional technique of merging a number of elements together. To this extent, all of O'Nolan's borrowings of narratives are engaged in what Murphy refers to as a

> perpetual assault against all forms of human knowledge, usually by using various parodic modes with polyphonic texts that repeatedly draw attention to the obvious fact of their own construction, and, by inference, to the fact of the construction of all texts, all knowledge.[10]

O'Nolan's metafiction in *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman* is not simply a postmodern challenge to notions of mimetic representation and authorial, artistic and scientific forms of knowledge and subjectivity, but is also a critique of national and postcolonial configurations of Irish identity whereby, in McHale's words, 'the ontological instability and tentativeness of the fictional world is demonstrated'.[11] Therefore, as Murphy maintains, O'Nolan's texts deligitimatize fiction and the newspaper's capacity to generate secure meaning through their *bricolage* composition of an array of textual predecessors which are radically juxtaposed against one another.[12] O'Nolan aims to undermine the capacity of the imagined nation to confirm to a reality based upon its national canon and resists territorializing the author as a site of unified subjectivity.

O'Nolan's pseudonymous authors become the most slippery of signifiers in his work. As chapter four explored in relation to Baudelaire and Benjamin's imaginings of the *flâneur* figure, O'Nolan's dislocation, cultural transgression and liminal position as both insider and outsider of Irish culture exposes the processes of socialisation as he stands apart from and fuses with Ireland as its observer and recorder. As an anonymous urban sociological voyeur, Myles na gCoplaeen refuses pre-determined national routes

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[10] Murphy, 'Flann O'Brien', p. 9
[11] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* p. 211
[12] Murphy, 'Flann O'Brien', pp 12-3

of identification and instead assumes disguises to lampoon the nation and forms of journalism for his reader's amusement. 'Cruiskeen Lawn' and O'Nolan's fiction scrutinizes Irish provincial absurdities and the climate of mass agreement which was prevalent between the 1920s and 1960s. He corrupts the intended purposes of authorship in his dialogic column and fictional writing with no singular version of the author or character role through his an endless inquiry into authorship and the making up of multiple selves. O'Nolan enacts this proclamation by compartmentalising his own authorial identity throughout his career, and even the various pen names he uses have a habit of re-writing and compartmentalizing their own identities to the point of infinity. Just as the narrator of *The Third Policeman* learns to celebrate his invisibility, O'Nolan's solution to defying ethnic categories of Irish identity in colonial and national terms is to be invisible within his various narratives both through his own political positioning and use of deterritorializing forms and languages.

7.2 Further research and questions

Within Brian O'Nolan studies, a number of individual projects need to be completed to gain a fuller insight into his diverse literary and journalistic career and to re-assess the dichotomy which has been set up between his earlier and later fiction and his role of Flann the literary man and Myles the 'hack' journalist. During the 1960s, the experimental quality of O'Nolan's newly re-published novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* began to be recognised within Irish and international literary circles. This re-newed interest in O'Nolan's fiction writing led to increased opportunities for O'Nolan to engage in literary, journalistic, and multi-media production for television and radio. However, ironically, during this period of re-appraisal of O'Nolan's first novel, the fiction O'Nolan produced during the 1960s is regarded by literary critics as sub-standard when compared to his earlier work and his post-humous novel *The Third Policeman*. Hence,

while the canonicity of O'Nolan's fiction writing has been established due to *At Swim-Two-Birds*, a dichotomy has been established between the experimental quality of this novel and his later fiction published during his life time, which include *The Hard Life* (1961) and *The Dalkey Archive* (1964).[13] Early academic critics, such as John Wain, argue that

> [b]oth books seem to lack a centre, a point to which all the threads can be pulled. One reads them easily and with enjoyment, but at the end one is left with a curious dissatisfaction, the feeling of having made a meal of fragments.[14]

Unlike O'Nolan's *bricolage* structure in his first novel and in *An Béal Bocht*, neither book is seen as having 'the authority and inclusiveness' of the earlier texts and instead '[b]oth books seem to toy with symbolic overtones rather than genuinely incorporate them.'[15] O'Nolan's continued journalistic writing under the pseudonym Myles na

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[13] Also, from the end of 1964 until his death in 1966, O'Nolan began writing his unfinished novel *Slattery's Sago Saga*. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 240-3. The novel is concerned with an Irish-American millionaire who hates the Irish, and wants to stop them emigrating to the U.S.A. Hence, he wants to buy Ireland and turn it into a sago forest to keep the Irish at home with jobs. In a parody of Ireland's historical association with the potato, the Irish 'will live on sago, distil sago whiskey, manufacture sago tables and chairs'. Cronin notes that this character is similar to a character in his own novel *The Life of Riley* 'who envisages the extraction of electricity from potatoes, the paving of the streets of Dublin with sods of turf and the 'possible utilization of the various parts of the herring's anatomy, down to the tail and the fin, in portable, pre-fabricated factories, themselves made of herring-bone cement, along the west coast.'' Once again O'Nolan is engaged in intertextual reference to other fiction which he includes in his own work. Cronin notes that since John F. Kennedy's visit to Ireland in the 1960s O'Nolan became increasingly interested in Irish America. O'Nolan planned to set the rest of the novel in America and culminate with the election of an Irish American President (p. 241). The novel was never completed due to O'Nolan's deteriorating health and his re-commencement of *Irish Times* work in 1965. See Cronin, Anthony, *The Life of Riley* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964)

[14] Wain, "to Write for My Own Race': The Fiction of Flann O'Brien', p. 81

[15] ———, "to Write for My Own Race': The Fiction of Flann O'Brien', p. 85. O'Nolan's biographers Peter Costello and Peter Van de Kamp note that *The Dalkey Archive* was received with great enthusiasm and O'Nolan considered it the favourite of all of his books. Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* p. 131. However, O'Nolan's other biographer Cronin criticises *The Dalkey Archive* for its below standard wit when compared to other works by O'Nolan. Cronin writes of his own immense disappointment on reading the first one hundred pages of a draft of *The Dalkey Archive* which O'Nolan showed him: Cronin records that O'Nolan 'had been speaking of a new work, experimental in nature, with a time shift of a bold order and a plot that was full of surprises. What he now handed over for inspection and comment was, in essence, a traditional novel, rather flatulently composed.' Cronin maintains that in the 1960s '[h]e had adopted a method of composition which is sometimes a sign of desperation' and that O'Nolan completed a full draft of *The Dalkey Archive* quickly 'without worrying overmuch about the subtleties of expression and overall shape and structure' which he claims to have attended to afterwards. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 226-7. Bernard Benstock similarly agrees that the later two novels are 'flat and prosaic' and 'clumsy' and argues that '[t]he pronounced inferiority of the two later novels rests with the loss of Flann O'Brien's strongest attributes, his fanciful manipulation of language and his ability to structure a complex novel to exist on

Gopaleen is often blamed for his supposed decline in creativity in his fiction writing, which resulted in O'Nolan being viewed as a 'tired hack' journalist.[16] Niall Sheridan, O'Nolan's life-long friend, asks in relation to the production of his two later novels

> [d]id the relentless demands of journalism siphon off, piecemeal, his enormous creative vitality? His column brought him vast and immediate popular fame but the social pressures this fame engendered may well have placed an intolerable strain on his temperament, which was essentially aristocratic, fastidious and private.[17]

Overall, the column is seen as becoming more brutal and harsh as it progresses, with the persona of Myles and O'Nolan becoming one and the same. This can be considered a form of reterritorialization in his political self-positioning, as Costello and Van de Kamp argue that Myles became more vindictive and personal in his attacks in his column from the late 1940s onwards.[18] Cronin criticises the presence of O'Nolan in his later texts due to the failure of O'Nolan to maintain the masks of his author-pseudonyms. He writes that

four or more levels simultaneously; both of these are Joycean skills'. Benstock argues that O'Nolan's talents for experiment come from *Work in Progress*. Benstock wrongly maintains that O'Nolan 'could hardly have divined the second without access to the completed *Wake*', especially if we consider that *At Swim-Two-Birds* was written and published before *Finnegans Wake*. Benstock, 'The Three Faces of Brian Nolan'*,* p. 62 n.

[16] Myles na Gopaleen in his 'Cruiskeen Lawn' column is often considered to be a hesitant hack who 'slumped on his hack-chair, lolling his dead syrup eyes through other people's books to lift some lousy joke' (CL, 5 Oct 1955). See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 242-3 for biographical reasons for O'Nolan's decreasing involvement with the *Irish Times*, which included his increasing ill health, periods of hospitalization and pressures due to the new editorship of Douglas Gageby at *The Irish Times*. Costello and Van de Kamp write that O'Nolan felt that journalism did not fulfil his creative needs and so O'Nolan became an insignificant hack during the 1950s. Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* pp. 23, 99, 104, 112. Equally, Clissmann argues that in the journalism there is not 'an impression of a greater organization and symmetry in O'Brien's approach' and that his 'stylistic achievements were sporadic, due primarily to financial pressures which forced him to spend a good deal of this time in hack journalism.' Clissmann argues that his best writing was all before 1945, maintaining that 'Cruiskeen Lawn' was bitter and repetitive after 1945 mainly because the period of 1945 to 1953 were years of disappointment for him due to artistic frustration and illness. Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* pp. xii, 22-3

[17] Sheridan, 'Brian O'Nolan: A Postscript'*,* p. 240

[18] Costello, and Van de Kamp, *Flann O'Brien: An Illustrated Biography* pp. 95-6. Equally, Cronin's biography portrays an image of O'Nolan as a dissatisfied writer who is downbeat over the lack of publication of his early fiction and who was jealous over more successful popular authors from Joyce to Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone with the Wind* which topped the literary book sales chart the week *At Swim-Two-Birds* was published. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 100-1

> [i]n the 'De Me' piece he had spoken of the 'compartmentation of his personality for the purpose of literary utterance' as a desirable aim for the writer. In this book, for the first time, aspects of the author's own personality seemed to have escaped from their compartments and to be hanging out all over the place.[19]

The after-life of critical appraisal of O'Nolan's earlier work is in contradiction with his local reception of his new fictional production and pseudonymous personae at the same period.

More analysis needs to be completed to fully re-assess the connections between O'Nolan's earlier and later work, and between his journalism and fiction writing to test the validity of these points, especially as *The Dalkey Archive* is essentially a revision of O'Nolan's *The Third Policeman* manuscript. In particular, an analysis of O'Nolan's weekly column entitled 'Bones of Contention' under the pseudonym of George Knowall for the Carlow based *Nationalist and Leinster News* from 1960 to 1966 needs to be completed to explore the relationship between his metropolitan and country authorial selves. Martin Green, in his anthology of these articles, describes the quizzical and enquiring humorist George Knowall as 'a country relation of the Myles of Dublin' who was 'erudite, urbane and informative' and was 'always mindful' of his local Carlovian readership. Because George Knowall is seen as the 'licensed jester' of this Carlow based newspaper, further research needs to be completed to explore O'Nolan's portrayal of a different journalist pseudonym in 'Bones of Contention' rather than simply viewing him as a sub-standard version of Myles na gCopaleen.[20] Instead, a study of 'Bones of Contention' would reveal how O'Nolan traces how Ireland began to

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[19] Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 227

[20] Green, Martin, 'Introduction', in *Myles Away from Dublin*, ed. by Green, Martin, (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1990), pp. v-ix (pp. viii, vii). Cronin, on the other hand, views 'Bones of Contention' in a negative light, stating that '[i]t was discursive and pedestrian rather than funny or astringent and he made shameless use of the *Encyclopaedia Britiannica* in writing it. It seemed crazy that he should be doing it at all for he now has an international reputation.' Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* p. 220. Equally, O'Nolan wrote as John James Doe in the column 'A Weekly Look Around' for *the Nationalist and the Southern Star* based at Skibbereen.

secularise during the 1960s.

The anecdotal and comic nature of O'Nolan's drama, radio and television work needs to be re-assessed within the light of new forms of technology and modernity which were introduced to Ireland during his lifetime.[21] In particular, a number of short article pieces could be completed on O'Nolan's stage drama in comparison with his television and radio plays. The historical and cultural presence of O'Nolan's pseudonyms needs to be explored to assess both historical and recent adaptations of O'Nolan's fiction for the stage and in film, and of the continuing presence of the character of Myles na gCopaleen in Irish culture.[22] Additionally, O'Nolan's impact on the Irish and international historical imagination needs to be investigated much more thoroughly. While his fiction has often been identified as crucial to the development of the postmodern novel since the 1960s, there has been little sustained comparative research between O'Nolan and other mid-twentieth century American, European and Irish authors. The influence of O'Nolan on his contemporaries and future writers needs to be assessed, particularly as a number of recent Irish authors including Patrick McGinley and Desmond MacNamara, alongside Irish-American authors such as Gilbert

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[21] Cronin notes that O'Nolan turned his attention to the new medium of television in Ireland during the early 1960s. In 1962 he wrote plays for RTÉ television which included 'The Boy from Ballytearim', an adaptation of a stage play, 'Flight', 'The Time Freddy Retired', the series 'Th' Oul Lad of Kilsalaher' and 'The Dead Spit of Kelly', and a dramatization of his short story 'Two in One' which had appeared in *The Bell*. The short story was about a narrator Murphy and a taxidermist Kelly. The narrator murders his boss Kelly and wears his skin in order to cover up for Kelly's disappear. However, ironically, he is arrested for his own murder in the skin of Kelly. Cronin argues that 'these [television productions] are extended anecdotes rather than plays in any real sense' and maintains that O'Nolan was writing them as 'another assertion of his belief in himself as a hard-bitten literary journeyman who could turn his hand to anything and was now turning it to television in a coolly exploitative way.' O'Nolan equally offered his services to Guinness and the Irish Distillers Group, firstly by putting in a bid to write television advertisements for Guinness, and secondly, but writing to the Irish Distillers Group suggesting that he could write a history of the Irish Whiskey Distilling Industry for them. See Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* pp. 222-3. See na Gopaleen, Myles, 'Two in One', *The Bell, XIX:8* (July 1954), 30-4

[22] This could include an analysis of the depiction of O'Nolan and his pseudonymous identities in the play *Improbable Frequency*, Annie Caulfield's radio biography of O'Nolan, and the adaptation of *At Swim-Two-Birds, The Dalkey Archive* and *The Third Policeman* on stage and screen. See Riordan, Arthur, and Helicopter Bell, *Improbable Frequency* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2005) and Caulfield, Annie, 'Your Only Man: Based on the Life of Irish Writer Flann O'Brien', BBC Radio 3, 2009

Sorrentino, have drawn heavily on his work for inspiration as ways to comment on their contemporary historical experiences.[23]

A comparative study of Irish journalists in the *Irish Times* is necessary in relation to O'Nolan's use of the pseudonym Myles na gCopaleen. As part of the development of the newspaper's liberal challenge to forms of conservative nationalism, the *Irish Times* contained a number of pseudonymous feature columns such as the *Irishman's Diary* which was co-authored by a number of Irish journalists under the umbrella pseudonym of 'Quidnunc' which means 'What now?'.[24] These journalists used this pseudonym as a way to avoid libel prosecution by the state due to stringent censorship, particularly as Griffin notes, such authors 'chose anonymity if they felt that their authorial persona conflicted with their daily one.'[25] O'Nolan's choice to separate his real self from his authorial selves was a common strategy amongst literary writers and journalists during the post-independence period of Ireland and should be placed within this context. Such a comparative literary-historical examination of a number of pseudonymous columns from the *Irish Times* would offer a crucial socio-political study of forms of political literary journalism in mid-twentieth century Ireland. Through these journalists' exploration of the role of the comic and satiric journalist and the flexibility of their style in their columns, a surreal view of Irish society was recorded which

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[23] The intertextual importance of O'Nolan for Irish American and Irish artists needs to be traced. Montresor's essay on Sorrentino's 'intertextual indebtedness' to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and *At Swim-Two-Birds* in *Mulligan Stew* is one of the few examples of research in this area. Montresor, 'Gilbert Sorrentino: At Swim in the Wake of His Gene Pool', p. 5. See Shea's comparative essays on O'Nolan and McGinley: Shea, 'Patrick McGinley's Appropriation of Cúchulainn: Revisions in *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*', , Shea, 'Patrick McGinley's Impressions of Flann O'Brien: *The Devil's Diary* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*',

[24] Equally, Smyllie wrote as 'Nichevo' for the 'Irishman's Diary' while Alec Newman, Lionel Fleming and Patrick Campbell wrote as 'Quidnunc'. For examples of satiric journalism from the *Irish Times*, see Campbell, Patrick, *The Campbell Companion: The Best of Patrick Campbell*. ed. by O'Connor, Ulick (London: Fontana, 1987) and Foley, Donal, *Best of Man Bites Dog* (Dublin: Irish Times, 1974)

[25] Griffin, Robert J., 'Introduction', in *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Griffin, Robert J., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 1-17 (p. 8). Genette also argues that anonymity is often employed by authors as a pre-cautionary measure to avoid persecution, citing the example of Walter Scott's use of pseudonyms, fictional authors and imaginary preface-writers. Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* pp. 43-4

tracked key social changes which occurred during the period of decolonisation in Ireland. Equally, the *flâneuresque* reading of O'Nolan's column could be extended to examine their depiction and tracing of Dublin city and its politics in these dialogic columns.

However, this thesis could also be extended in relation to other forms of pseudonymous and 'minor' writing in a number of other colonial and postcolonial contexts, and in relation to earlier Irish literature such as Swift's pseudonymous writing. Just as this thesis positioned O'Nolan's work as a 'minor' form which was responsive to national issues, comparative postcolonial links could be made between such 'minor' Irish writing and other writing from former colonies. Because forms of print capitalism produce an imagined sociological space which is called the nation, such forms of 'minor' postcolonial writing need to be investigated in order to determine how the fictive and arbitrary nature of their national constructions are exposed through pseudonymous and 'minor' forms of literary and journalistic writing. A particular focus on comparative models of study of the use of language within these contexts under Deleuze and Guattari's framework would be useful to articulate the relations between various minority discourses such as ethnic and feminist studies. As Lloyd and JanMohamed argue, such forms of minority experience share the experience of an antagonistic relationship with a dominant culture which forces minorities to play the role of the ontological, political, cultural and economic Other.[26] The concept of 'minor' literature can provide a means to develop strategies to examine common forms of marginalization across the postcolonial world. The contemporary world of modern Ireland could also be a focus of 'minor' literary studies due to the growth of literature by migrants living in Ireland since the 1990s.

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[26] JanMohamed, and Lloyd, 'Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?' pp. 1-2

7.3 Sweeny in the Trees: re-positioning the Irish artist

O'Nolan's writing career is characterized by an anxious questioning of previous forms of modernist, imperial and nationalist forms of writing and representations of the author's role and the type of journalistic and fictional texts he or she produces. He relies on his stylistic and 'minor' inventiveness within forms of literary canon and major significations of language and culture to self-reflexively question simple dichotomies in his contemporary postcolonial Ireland. This results in his use of the personal symbol of King Sweeny who maintains a transitory form of resistance and agency to forms of domination within liminal forms of subjectivity, historical time and linguistic and literary styles where no one language, style or political position can remain natural or dominant. Like similar protagonists in O'Nolan's texts, Sweeny, as both author and character simultaneously, is destined to undergo an endless circular torture in his 'in-between' subject position as a bird-man in a number of historical time frames. As Tymoczko notes, Sweeney is a personal symbol for the Northern-Irish poet Seamus Heaney who has argued in his own 'translation' of *Buile Suibhne* that Sweeney can be read as a metaphor for the position of the Irish artist in his contemporary world.[27] Heaney writes that

> Sweeney is also a figure of the artist, displaced, guilty, assuaging himself by his utterance, it is possible to read the work as an aspect of the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political, and domestic obligation.[28]

This reading of Sweeny as a metaphoric symbol of an artist who stands for freedom in

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[27] Tymoczko reads Heaney's translation within the context of the Northern Irish troubles and Heaney's autobiography. She reads his translation autobiographically as, like Heaney, Sweeney flees violence (of the dominant image of Cú Chulainn, who is associated with defending Ulster), and lives in the refuge of nature and ends his travels in Southern Ireland. Suibhne is a symbolic other to Cú Chulainn in this reading. Heaney translated *Buile Suibhne* in April 1973, and published his translation in 1979 with Field Day. Tymoczko, Maria, 'Wintering out with Irish Poetry: Affiliation and Autobiography in English Translation', *The Translator, 6:2* (2000), 309-17

[28] Preface to Heaney, Seamus, *Sweeney Astray* (New York: Farrar Straus Grioux, 1984)

creative forms of imagination which challenge dominant, major discourses is supported by McMullen's reading of Sweeny in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. McMullen maintains that 'Sweeny challenges the emblem of the priest's Christian devotion and earthly authority. If the Word is God, language becomes monologic and absolute, its repository the unchanging, because scripted, holy text.'[29] O'Nolan's texts aim to free language and generic forms of scripted subjectivity and ideologies within his postcolonial environment, just as King Sweeny challenges St. Ronan's form of Christian devotion which impacts upon his Celtic values.

Just as Sweeny acts as a personal symbol for the author, so all the author-characters in O'Nolan's texts struggle in their role as artists to find suitable styles to express themselves within post-independence Ireland. King Sweeny and Finn MacCool are both kings who are known for their fiery tempers and who lose their authority due to the competitive nature of different author-characters in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. When Sweeny is resurrected in the text during the other characters' pilgrimage to witness Orlick Trellis's birth, a dialogic space is created between different antagonistic representations of Ireland from Celtic mythology to cowboy narratives. The travelers, who include the cowboys Slug and Shortly, the devil the Pooka MacPhellimey and his rival the Good Fairy, and the poet Jem Casey, first hear Sweeny's 'voice descended on the travellers, querulous and saddened with an infinite weariness, a thin voice that was occupied with the recital of these staves:

> Sweeny the thin-groined it is
> in the middle of the yew;
> life is very bare here,
> piteous Christ it is cheerless.
>
> Grey branches have hurt me
> they have pierced my calves,

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[29] McMullen, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition', p. 80

> I hang here in the yew-tree above,
> without chessmen, no womantryst.
>
> I can put no faith in humans
> in the place they are;
> watercress at evening is my lot,
> I will not come down. (ASTB, 125)

Sweeny is represented, through his liminal bird-man position, amongst the trees as he recites lays about nature and his perpetual torture to roam the world without company. As a Christ-like figure who has a bloodied, prickled body, Sweeny is symbolically on the cross while hanging from the tree but, unlike Christ, he refuses to 'come down' because he has no faith in his contemporary world (ASTB, 67).

However, Sweeny is literally wrenched from his position in the Celtic past as he plummets to the ground in great pain, like Icarus from the sky, into the environment of the travellers who tell a number of different stories simultaneously as they journey to the Red Swan Hotel.[30] The competitive nature of their stories becomes particularly apparent when the various travellers try to define or describe Sweeny through their various linguistic discourses. The cowboys Shorty and Slug have their guns at the ready to shoot Sweeny and put him out of his misery. Meanwhile, the provincial and bourgeois Good Fairy accuses Sweeny of probable drunkenness. When the Pooka states that he knows 'the gentleman' who 'is not all in it', the Good Fairy asks '[d]o you mean the Sweenies of Rathangan, inquired the Good Fairy, or the Sweenies of Swanlinbar?', and this questioning results in a long list of possible Sweenies he could be. This scene from the text is characterised by a number of parallel and competing versions of who Sweeny may be which are placed alongside Sweeny's continuing recital of lays. This results in a number of tangential narrative digressions from Slug's anecdote about his

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[30] This scene in *At Swim-Two-Birds* is a palimpsestic translation of a scene from *Buile Suibhne* where Suibhne's kinsmen, who initially do not recognise him, try to entice him down from the trees .O'Keeffe, James G., ed., *Buile Suibhne (the Frenzy of Suibhne) Being the Adventures of Suibhne Geilt: A Middle-Irish Romance*. O'Keeffe, James G. (London: Irish Texts Society, 1913) pp. 17, 23

uncle who has pneumonia to the Good Fairy's moralistic lecture on the evils of alcohol. (ASTB, 127-8) However, Sweeny remains defiant to the characters as they try to coax him out of the tree and into their own interpretative frameworks. At the end of each of the 'discordant verses' he provides, he recites that 'I will not come down' and demands that they 'take your hands away!' because 'your fingers torment by arms.' (ASTB, 127-9).

This is emblematic of O'Nolan's own writing style and use of pseudonymous author-character identities who are in a perpetual motion of self-creation and constant re-transformation. Like O'Nolan, who refused to reveal his true authorial persona and political position behind his masks, Sweeny will continue to recite even if this results in his continuing isolation and agony. Sweeny states that 'I personally maintain by watch / on the tops of mountains' just as Myles na gCopaleen keeps his eye on his reader and the world at large (ASTB, 128). O'Nolan's fiction and journalism are characterised by their spatial and linguistic deterritorialization of the Irish national and literary canon within his postcolonial context. Like Sweeny in the trees, O'Nolan and his work remain in a liminal position in order to offer a social critique of his environment.

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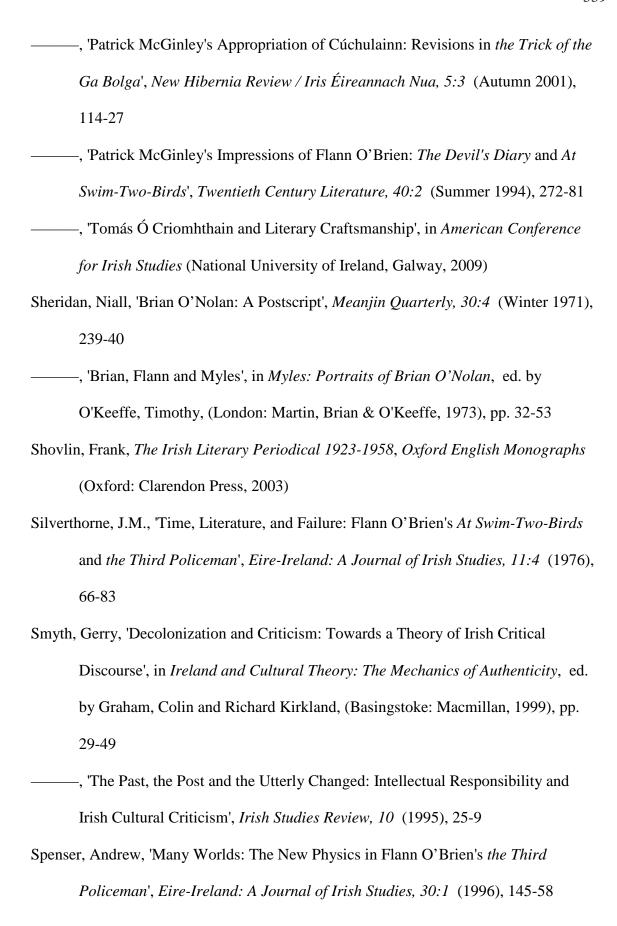Riggs, Pádraigín, and Norman Vance, 'Irish Prose Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, ed. by Connolly, Claire and Joe Cleary, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 245-66

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