POSTNATIONALISM, HYBRIDITY, AND UTOPIA IN PAUL DURCAN’S POETRY: TOWARD AN IRISH MINORITARIAN LITERATURE

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Introduction

I first became interested in Irish literature and culture when I began to understand that Ireland and Korea have many things in common regarding their culture, history, and politics. Divided into the North and the South at the end of colonialism, both countries have suffered and withstood political conflict and civil wars. It is often believed that their peoples like singing, dancing, drinking, and even fighting. They also regard themselves as the saddest nation in the world because of colonial experiences, regardless of whether those images have been constructed by colonial authority and their nationalists. Among other similarities, a concept of nation is a key to understanding of Ireland and Korea. Because the Koreans strongly believe that they have retained a purely homogeneous ethnic group of nation for over five thousand years, the concept of nation based on blood characterizes their national identity. Contrary to other European countries such as Britain and France, in which their nations are defined as a community of the civic, ethnicity for the Irish, in particular for Gaels, also serves as an important standard in defining national identity. Although Ireland and South Korea are considered a first world country based on capitalist economic system, they still retain past and/or ongoing colonial influences because most contemporary problems can be traced back to the era of the end of colonialism when they defined the concept of nation and established the nation-state. In focusing on debates on the concept of nation, as a citizen of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), I have conducted comparative researches on those two countries. Irish literature reminds me of political and ideological conflicts in Korea; Korean history becomes a useful tool to read Irish literature in which many characters have struggled with defining what the nation is. Gaining mutual inspirations from the comparative perspective, in this dissertation I will investigate the concept
of nation through the eyes of contemporary Irish poet Paul Durcan, whom I first became interested in back in 2010, when I read his poem “The Bloomsday Murders, 16 June 1997.”

Durcan belongs to the so-called “blank generation” who grew up in Ireland between the 1960s and the 1980s. Richard Kearney in *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays, 1976-2006* (2006) defines them as a “new breed of urbanized and internationalized youth” (321). As they consciously differentiated themselves from their fathers’ generation, Durcan and his contemporaries represented new concepts of national identity different from the ideologically rigid ones accepted by previous generations primarily marked by Gaelic-Catholic nationalism. Durcan was born in Dublin in 1944 to John James Durcan and Sheila MacBride Durcan. His relationship with his father was problematic inasmuch as he remembers his father as becoming a violent and oppressive person after he was appointed a circuit judge. Although he studied law and economics at the University College Dublin (UCD) to please his father, he lost his interest in those studies when he met John Jordan, a lecturer in literature at UCD who later became a poet. Probably because of his neglect of his studies, he was hospitalized by his family, primarily by his father, at the age of nineteen in psychiatric institutions in which he was subjected to several electric shock and heavy sedative treatments. It is not a surprise that his disturbed relationship with his father has become one of his crucial poetic motifs. Along with his contemporaries of the blank generation who struggled with their fathers’ outmoded legacies, mainly inherited from the Irish nationalists who founded the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland and formed their obsession with Irishness as distinguishable from the identity of British colonizers, Durcan has continually searched for a way out of his father’s influence and the identity politics of the nation-state.
The identity politics of Ireland championed by most Irish nationalists like his father is one of the primary concerns for Durcan. The Irish neutrality during World War II and the IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland were outcomes of the obsession with identity through which Irish nationalists celebrated their difference from the rest. Identity politics, however, presupposes an exclusion of the other to confirm one’s own special existence. The obsession with a certain identity can bring about violence. That is the point at which Durcan began his lifelong journey as a poet. In reflecting on his contemporary, Irish poet Seamus Heaney, recipient of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature, who writes “The end of art is peace” (l. 25) in “The Harvest Bow,” Durcan has persistently sought ways in which he can “abandon the obsession with identity” (“Passage to Utopia” 330) to bring an end to the violence of ideological warfare. Since he published his first collection of poems, Endsville, coauthored with Brian Lynch in 1967, Durcan has energetically challenged the violence of identity politics through the means of poetry, which he sees as an alternative to violence. In particular, his encounter with fellow Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967), who greatly influenced Durcan’s poetry on account of Kavanagh’s staunch refusal to romanticize the rural Irish, shaped his fundamental concept of identity. The main question for Durcan throughout his poetic career of about fifty years is, thus, how to find a way out of a rigid concept of national identity established by the Roman Catholic, middle-class, nationalist majority group in Ireland. Wrestling with this question led him to search for other homes abroad, for versions of utopia; and it has served to classify him as a “minority” artist because of his own staunch refusal to romanticize the Irish, their chauvinism, their provincialism, and most importantly, their violence.

It sounds strange when Durcan is termed an Irish minority poet, if we consider his well-established reputation as a major contemporary poet, a reputation he has garnered over the last
forty years. Not only has he received major awards such as the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award in 1974, the Irish American Cultural Institute Poetry Award in 1989, and the Whitbread Prize in 1990, he was also appointed the third Ireland Professor of Poetry (2004–2007)\(^1\) and is a member of Aosdána, an Irish association of artists established in 1981 and sponsored by the Arts Council of Ireland. It would seem more appropriate to call him a minor poet only if he were unnoticed by literary critics or if he occupied a certain limited political circumstance as the nineteenth century Irish nationalist poet James Clarence Mangan did in the time of British colonial domination, in light of which David Lloyd has reevaluated that poet’s significance of reunifying the oppressed people. Although Durcan has already achieved high status as a “major” Irish poet, the reason for investigating of Durcan and his poetry in terms of a minoritarian literary tradition is that the concept of “minoritarian” that I borrow from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari has specific socio-political connotations. Accordingly, it would be better to regard him as a minoritarian poet, rather than as a minor poet, because the minoritarian concept can convey the sense of a poet as one who maintains an unconventional spirit distinguishable from the majoritarian grain.

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari discuss the notion of minority in comparison to that of majority. The difference between minority and majority is “not simply quantitative” (105). For instance, women cannot be considered as a majority although they make up more than half of the entire population. Majority, for Deleuze and Guattari, stands for “a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it” (105). An example of a majority in terms of the constant standard is probably “the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard

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\(^1\) A poet of distinction is chosen to represent the Chair as Ireland’s Professor of Poetry every three years. John Montague was the first Chair (1998–2000), Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill the second (2001–2003), and Paul Durcan the third (2004–2007).
language” (105). In short, a majority can be defined as a group of people with the necessary dominant power to establish norms and conventions; if someone cannot accept or live up to those standards, Deleuze and Guattari regard him or her as representative of a minority. The people in third world countries can thus be considered minorities because so-called first world countries have long dominated world history, economics, and politics. The hegemonic first world countries, however, are simply not homogeneous enough to be defined as a single majority. As for the colonial experiences of the Irish, the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century modern Irish can be described as a minority people in a minority country in Europe. Even if Europe as a whole can be regarded as a majority in relation to the rest of the world, the men of Ireland and other small European countries under imperial authority probably did not believe that they were the majorities despite their condition of being “the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language” as Deleuze and Guattari suggest above. Although modern Ireland can perhaps be identified as an enthusiastic co-partner and a beneficiary of British imperialism so that it may sound plausible that Ireland was one of the major European countries, the homogeneous economic categorization of Ireland within the boundaries of the British empire can be easily refuted when we look back at the socio-economic history of modern Ireland. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels once acknowledged in *Ireland and the Irish Question* (1972), British colonial rule turned Ireland into a purely agricultural country through severe laissez faire (132). Modern Ireland, between the Act of Union in 1800 and the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1949, retained minority status in economy and politics among other European countries. In that sense, the Deleuzean standard of majority/minority seems inappropriate to the colonial state of modern Ireland.
If Ireland under British colonialism formed a minoritarian group marked as inferior subjects of the Commonwealth, postcolonial Ireland became a newly established majoritarian group itself because the Irish were able to establish their own national sovereignty and identity. Although it seems natural that the once-oppressed Irish would insist that their national identity be distinguishable from the previous colonial culture and ideology, they produced new minoritarians within the independent nation who were excluded from the requisite obsessive Irish identity. In the second half of the twentieth century, in particular in the 1990s, Ireland began to be recognized as one of the major European countries based on economic development when it acquired the sobriquet “Celtic Tiger.” Nevertheless, in spite of its status as a majoritarian culture, Irish society since the establishment of the Irish nation-state has produced many minoritarian groups that include economic, cultural, religious, and ideological outcasts. Those who are excluded from the conventional standards such as Catholicism or Celtic legacies or those who refuse to accept them have to be marked as minority types. That is the point at which Durcan can be considered a minority or, more properly, a minoritarian in his consistent iconoclastic tendencies, despite his Catholic faith and consistent use of the English language as an adult-white-heterosexual-male. Minorities have always existed in every society regardless of whether or not they are European-adult-white-heterosexual males. Rather, the difference between a majority and a minority depends on who has power through which a stable and unitary authority can be established. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest,

[t]hat is why we must distinguish between: the majoritarian as a constant and homogeneous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming. The problem is never to acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant. (A Thousand Plateaus 105-06)
They explain the differentiations between the majoritarians and the minorities by arguing that when a system becomes calcified or territorialized, making it “a constant and homogeneous system,” it can be called majoritarian. On the contrary, if a person cannot meet the demands or refuses to be territorialized by the homogeneous system, he or she can be called a minority or a minoritarian. More important, when Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between minorities and minoritarians, the former refers to already dominated systems under the established hegemony, while the latter conveys resistant energy in relation to the power of the status quo. If a minority can be understood as an oppressed and territorialized person or group that falls into a malaise as described by James Joyce in *Dubliners* (1914) due to the existence of overwhelming authorities, a minoritarian has more potential to deterritorialize himself/herself from those authorities. Importantly, then, the concept of the minoritarian suggested by Deleuze and Guattari thus contains more positive political meanings than that of the term minority. Based on the very political significance in the concept of the minoritarian, we can examine Durcan’s poetics of unconventionalist spirit. Because Durcan challenges a so-called “official” Irishness, a majoritarian Irishness that Irish nationalists have constructed and defined since the nineteenth century, Durcan suggests minoritarian perspectives that withstand that majoritarian ideology in search of more flexible concept of identity.

Durcan writes as a minoritarian of “The native who is an exile in his native land” (“Ireland 1977” l. 2). His writings explore questions such as these: what causes an Irish native to live as an exile with a perpetually alienated heart? What standards have the Irish people accepted that Durcan cannot accept and that leave him relegated to a minority? Given that he was sent to psychiatric institutes by his father, his feelings of alienation can probably be attributed at least in part to psychological factors regarding his relationship with his father. A psychoanalytic reading
of his poems shows that Durcan’s minoritarian tendencies can be traced back to his childhood and his personal relationship with his parents in the limited realm of his family. His oppressive and authoritarian father probably caused him to resist social norms. The rebellious son denied his father’s belief in the conventional concepts of nation and national identity, which have long preoccupied the Irish mind. If his father’s values reflected the order of established society, Durcan’s resistance has formed a minority trend. The differences between majority and minority, for psychoanalysts, are thus attributed to the father-son conflict. When the son enters the “symbolic order,” he is forced to accept regulations and laws his father and the established society requires through language. The father becomes the source of power and law; his defenseless son has no choice but to accept his father’s authority and live in the territory of the majoritarian society. The so-called father’s voice and authority, however, tend to be overestimated when psychoanalysts treat the father as God. Unlike that general description of omnipotent images of the father, Irish fathers, at least, have often been portrayed in modern literary works as economically and spiritually impotent because of British colonialism. As they are considered by their children as those who are drawn to alcohol and/or defeatism under the devastating effects of colonial economy, they have shown relatively less effective patriarchal authority than those who usually appear in western psychoanalytic accounts that reveal how fathers oppressively exert patriarchal power in their families. The psychoanalytic interpretation

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2 Jacques Lacan in *Ecrits* (1966) theorizes the three stages of the psychological development of human subjects regarding the concept of the selfhood: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary is a prelinguistic stage on which an infant cannot differentiate itself from its environment. In recognizing its mirrored image in the mirror as itself, it develops a sense of itself as a whole. Images, rather than words, enable the child perceive itself on this stage. The Symbolic is the world of language. As the child learns a language, primarily through its parents, it enters the symbolic order in which it accepts the rules and prohibitions. The concept of the selfhood is already defined by the established norms and systems the parents or society require, such as the Oedipal prohibition that the son cannot possess his mother because she belongs to his father. The son’s desire begins to be regulated and channeled into certain ways that father’s or society’s authority directs. Lacan thus argues, “Man’s desire is always the desire of the Other” (*Seminar XI*, 235). As a result, the son must seek substitutes for his mother and enter an endless replacement of the desire of the mother. That is why Lacan defines desire as lack.
of father-son conflict requires more sophisticated considerations for the specific circumstance in Ireland by taking in an environment wider than just the domestic realm. The discussion about majoritarian and minoritarian conflict in Ireland must necessarily be expanded to the historico-political sphere, as Durcan’s self-image of an exile can then be more comprehensively understood.

Conflict between the majoritarian group and minoritarian one with regard to the concept of nation can easily be found in contemporary Irish history in the Troubles (1969-98) in Northern Ireland frequently referred to as “religious” conflicts between the Catholics and the Protestants. Although the religious debate has been aggravated by British tactics that effectively forestalled unified nationalist resistance by the Irish, the root of the Troubles can be attributed to rigid identity politics between the Anglo-Irish and the Gaels, both of whom have claimed to be genuine heirs of Ireland. By claiming to be the majority of nation, the two groups have long retained contrasting viewpoints on national identity. As to the question, “What is Irish?” the Irish Free State government, which was established in 1922 and gained political autonomy after the War of Independence (1919-1921) against British colonialism, constructed a stringent national identity based on an agricultural self-reliant economy, Gaelic ethnicity and language, and culturally conservative Catholicism. In particular, with the aid of strong state apparatuses, such as the Church⁴ and the courts, the Free State started to define its cultural Irishness through Censorship Acts that banned free publications and films in the 1920s. It was a crucial moment when the newly established nation-state demarcated a legitimate culture from an illegitimate one,

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⁴ Louis Althusser argues, in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1971), the church can serve as an ideological state apparatus that infuses the ruling class ideology into the consciousness of the people (141). Nevertheless, as Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge in A Thousand Plateaus, “even religious formations like Christianity, Islam, certain prophetic or messianic movements” (360) can transcend ideological influences of the state. They can represent somewhat deterritorializational flow with the exteriority to the state power.
and, hence, a major literature from a minor literature. Whereas the major literature served as founding ideology of the nation-state, the minor literature tried to escape from the territorializing forces of the state. If a majoritarian work serves to produce “docile bodies” fit for the state ideology, as Michel Foucault suggests in *Discipline and Punish* (138), a minoritarian work produces the opposite, and though it is excluded from the state sanctioned canon, it unceasingly implements its critiques of state ideology and state apparatuses by critiquing and casting doubt upon the newly invented national identity. Irish minoritarian literature thus challenges the state hegemony and provides an alternative perspective on Irish identity politics.

Following the tradition of Irish minoritarian literature, Paul Durcan has undertaken the critical task of challenging the identity politics of the state. By finding fault with his father or the obsession of his father’s generation with a distinctive Irishness expressed through the Gaelic language and ethnocentrism, Durcan plainly exposes a morbid enthusiasm for Irish national identity. Since the Catholic Church is complicit with state ideology, and, in particular, has intensively and extensively affected both Irish public and private lives regarding social order, abortion, divorce, and even contraception, the Church-state alliance becomes the foremost object of Durcan’s criticism. Most national myths were also created by the dead generations on the verge of the birth of the nation-state, which relentlessly infuses citizens with bloody sacrifice and martyrdom for the nation, mirroring the martyred Christ in Catholicism. In his shattering of the nationalist myth of Irish identity, Durcan adopts a postnationalist viewpoint. As Declan Kiberd in *Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* (1995) suggests two models of freedom for the Irish in the postcolonial era, “the return to a past” and “the reconstruction of a national identity” (286), Durcan seeks the later. In an attempt to find a more flexible concept of nation, he neither prioritizes a pre-colonial Gaelic era nor romanticizes their western culture,
represented as the essence of Irishness by nationalists in that the people of the west tenaciously resisted colonial power. His reconstruction of Irish identity, rather, transcends religious, ethnic, and geographic boundaries of nation as James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922) once epitomized the concept of nation: “A nation is the same people living in the same place” (*U* 12. 1422-23); “Or also living in different places” (*U* 12. 1428). Durcan’s postnationalist project culminates in his pursuit of hybridity. By escaping from the notion of a monolithic identity, whether it refer to sex, family and social life, or a nation, Durcanesque metamorphosis can create a new group of people beyond current psycho-biological and socio-cultural categorizations. By rendering his poetic speakers as a woman or an animal, he searches for identities beyond both Irish boundaries and other human borders. Through various metamorphoses in his speakers, in whom incompatible elements of the real and the surreal coexist, Durcan’s radical experiments of identity can be read in terms of magic realism, which will be discussed in chapter 4 in detail.

In order to demonstrate the ways in which Durcan censures the Irish nation-state ideology, the concept of minor/minoritarian literature⁴ must be investigated. Louis A. Renza’s “*A White Heron*” and the Question of Minor Literature (1984) thoroughly examines the tradition of minor literature by covering discourses from Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, and Fredric Jameson to Deleuze and Guattari. Reflecting on that minor tradition, David Lloyd applies, in *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (1987), the concept of minor literature to the Irish context. Lloyd enquires into the historical significance of minor writing, such as James Clarence Mangan’s, at the time of the emergence of that Irish nationalism aimed at “creating a politically unifying concept of Irish

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⁴ In this study, I use the term, “minor literature,” as a synonym for “minoritarian literature.” Before Deleuze and Guattari differentiated “minoritarian” from “minor” in *A Thousand Plateaus* (originally published in 1980), they had already theorized the concept of minor literature in *Kafka: toward a Minor Literature* (originally published in 1975). As I want to emphasize its political implication in the term, “majoritarian,” I apply it to Durcan’s poetry. For the previous studies of minor literature, I keep using their original term, “minor.”
identity” through “the virtual reconstitution of Irish literature” (3). By emphasizing historicity and the political functions of minor literature in the specific Irish context of colonialism and nationalism, Lloyd contends that minor literature endangered the stability of the nationalist argument. In the excesses of prioritizing historicity, however, he loses sight of theoretical approaches of minor literature. Although Lloyd considers that Deleuzean works belong to minor literature, and are significant inasmuch as they call into question the hegemony of the majority, he ignores the productiveness of Deleuzean theory itself, considering it “impressionistically and largely only synchronically” (5), in his project of the contextualization of minor literature. In addition, Lloyd’s minor literature lacks a positive definition. He rather theorizes it in a negative way by detaching it from major literature defined with more tangible characteristics, such as nationalistic ideology or ethic. Lloyd’s minor literature thus becomes that which is excluded from the canon. In contrast to this reactionary notion of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari, in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986), suggest more positive characteristics for a minor literature that is “rather that which a minority constructs within a major language” (16). Contrary to a major literature which follows a vector that goes from content to expression, minor literature precedes content with its deterritorialized language which breaks previous forms and significations. Minor literature also reflects the political concerns of each oppressed individual. The father-son conflict is no longer limited to a domestic sphere but is closely related to other “commercial, economic, bureaucratic, [and] juridical” (17) conflicts which, thus, form new triangles. The close familial complicity with state power establishes a theoretical foundation of a Deleuzean concept of anti-Oedipus, which requires a more political reading than a psychoanalytic one within the boundary of a family.
With that political immediacy, minor literature finally produces an active solidarity among people with its expression of utopian desires. Although in his appropriation of the concept of minor literature Lloyd fails to notice the theoretical richness in Deleuzean philosophy as suggested above, his approach is significant because he contextualizes that concept against a specific historico-political background of colonialism as Deleuze and Guattari theorize minor literature by focusing on Franz Kafka’s extraordinary state as a Prague Jew writing in German. The third characteristic of minor literature is that, it becomes necessarily linked to the forging of the collective consciousness of the oppressed nation under dominant authorities. Deleuze and Guattari suggest:

But above all else, because collective or national consciousness is “often inactive in external life and always in the process of break-down,” literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; 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. (Kafka 17)

When the author of minor literature aspires to alternate communities for his/her oppressed nation, the concept of Deleuzean minor literature may not necessarily be related only to anti-colonial nationalism. Although Lloyd effectively appropriated the political functions of that notion in a specific Irish circumstance, he fails to notice that Deleuzean concepts of resistance, deterritorialization, and minor literature lie in their power to overcome binary oppositions between master and slave, and the colonizer and the colonized. The artistic responsibility of an
author of minor literature can be compared to the Joycean manifesto passionately expressed in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916): “Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (275-76). When Joyce indicates “my race,” he must refer to the Irish people who have been so cruelly persecuted by the British. The very words of “my race,” in effect, seem contradictory to his iconoclastic tendencies as an individual artist: “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church” (A Portrait 269). Joyce definitely does not want to be territorialized in the name of nation but searches for a way out. Although Joyce talks about a collective longing of “the uncreated conscience” of his people, that collective longing is not necessarily reducible to nationalism or in any political projects for the nation-state. In other words, if Joyce’s works can be considered minoritarian literature precisely because they reflect utopian desire for the oppressed group of people, his works do not fall into the rubric of nationalism or the construction of the nation-state. As Durcan’s poetry is replete with collective consciousness of a group of people discriminated against by nationalist identity politics of the nation-state, his postnationalist literature resonates with the Joycean minoritarian spirit.

Although minor/minoritarian literature deals with the miserable lives of the oppressed and their utopian hope, it suggests a way distinguishable from that of the Irish Revivalists such as William Butler Yeats. Gregory Dobbins in Lazy Idle Schemers: Irish Modernism and the Cultural Politics of Idleness (2010) makes a distinction between the two literary groups that can be called Revivalists and modernists. If the literature of Revivalism refers to the works that served to form a new nation-state, Irish modernism, as in the works of Joyce and Beckett, pronounced its counter-Revivalist tendencies in particular after the establishment of the Irish
Free State (1922). Whereas the former was encouraged by a serious work ethic for “the imminent realization of nationhood” (Dobbins 8) based on a progressive concept of historicity, the latter refused to accept that teleological logic. Although Dobbins does not use the term “minor literature,” his conceptualization of Irish modernism has basically the same functions as minor literature, in that those writers consider political desires of the oppressed, not in a systematically planned way, but in a revolutionarily experimental way. Deleuze and Guattari, in fact, have directly mentioned Joyce and Beckett as representatives of their models for minor literature:

As Irishmen, both of them [Joyce and Beckett] live within the genial conditions of a minor literature. That is the glory of this sort of minor literature – to be the revolutionary force for all literature. The utilization of English and of every language in Joyce. The utilization of English and French in Beckett. But the former never stops operating by exhilaration and overdetermination and brings about all sorts of worldwide reterritorializations. The other proceeds by dryness and sobriety, a willed poverty, pushing deterritorialization to such an extreme that nothing remains but intensities. (Kafka 19)

Deleuze and Guattari compared Joyce with Beckett in an attempt to show two types of expressions of deterritorialization in minor literature. Beckett, for them, as Kafka did, chose a deliberately impoverished English and French language “in the direction of deterritorialization” with “a new intensity” (Kafka 19). On the contrary, Joyce intended to “artificially enrich” the English language and to “swell it up through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of a hidden signifier” (19), the same approach as members of the Prague school used to write in German. This approach, however, they argue, “implies a desperate attempt at symbolic reterritorialization, based in archetypes […] and will find its political result only in
Zionism and such things as the ‘dream of Zion’” (19). It sounds plausible that Deleuze and Guattari find in Joyce complex resources of symbolism created by many signifiers as illustrated in *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Because Joyce’s texts are teeming with motifs borrowed from numerous exterior sources, such as allusions to Greek mythologies, they criticize his symbolic reterritorialization that can be led to national origins, via exotic ones, a Zionism intended to construct a nation-state. Although Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of Joyce can easily be refuted by Joyce’s antipathy against the nationalist political invention of the nation-state, their argument is still significant in that they consciously differentiate a literature intended to form the nation-state, another power against former colonial power, from a true minor literature intended to deterritorialize itself from that political project. As Dobbins argues, if Yeats and other Revivalists with their consistent use of English were reterritorialized in the realm of the nation-state, Beckett and Joyce with their minor literature deterritorialize from the nationalist collective desire for statehood.

My argument for minor/minoritarian literature presupposes that Irish modernism, distinguishable from the literature and the politics of the Revival, is closely related to the Deleuzean theory of minor literature not only because Beckett and Joyce share the same historio-political circumstance of colonialism, but also because they represent the same political function, deterritorialization. Minor literature and Irish modernism do not necessarily aim at constructing the nation-state although it represents the collective political desire of an oppressed people. In that sense, Fredric Jameson’s thesis on modernism and third world literature provides a further discussion about the relationship between minor literature and nationalism and the nation-state. When Jameson implies in “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” (1986) that a third world literature arises from a circumstance in which the people of the native land
have experienced colonial occupation, Irish literature can also be read as a third world literature based on the Irish colonial experience. As he insists that “all third-world texts are necessarily […] to be read as […] national allegories” (“Third World Literature” 69), Irish literature as a third world text can theoretically be reduced to a national allegory. Although it is undeniably that the Irish have a collective experience of British colonialism, this historical fact does not necessarily guarantee that all third world literature should be read in terms of “nationalism as the peculiarly valorized ideology” (5) as Aijaz Ahmad argues in “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’” (1994). Collective experiences of the people of any given culture in times of anti-colonial struggles have not always been, in effect, congruent with nationalism. Ahmad argues that in this period literature represents various themes, ranging from the barbarity of feudal landowners to multiple crimes against peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, rather than a weaving into homogeneous nationalism (21). By representing heterogeneous themes, such as socialism, feminism, and cosmopolitanism, works of Irish modernism transcend the monotonous theme of nationalist struggle. It is worth noting that David Lloyd in *Ireland after History* (2000) maintains that those various movements have been occluded “by the [nationalist] narrative of political institutions and state apparatuses, that is, modernization of Ireland” (37). Jameson’s reading of a so-called third world literature as a homogeneous national allegory or representation of a nation, instead of a divergent collectivity, thus consciously or unconsciously champions the ideology of the nation-state established by the cultural production of nationalism. Jameson’s theorization of a third world literature, strongly based on the people’s experience in times of colonialism reduced to national allegories, is probably appropriate to Revivalism, not to Irish modernism and minor literature which have tried to transcend nation-state ideology. A nationalistic third world literature can be understood as a minor literature in that it represents
collective conscious of the oppressed under colonial hegemony. However, not all minor literature necessarily represents anti-colonialist and nationalist themes channeled to the nation-state as reflected in Irish modernism.

Although it was born in the time of colonial experiences, Irish modernism/minor literature can be summarized neither by a unitary concept of national allegories nor Irish nationalism opposed to British imperialism. Irish nationalism, in particular, was to some extent contaminated by British colonial authority. While the works of the Revivalists formed a canonical “major” literature in conjunction with Irish nationalism, they were, in effect, unwittingly intertwined with British cultural hegemony. The nationalist movement that emerged together with Revival literature to create a politically unified concept of national identity was itself “as dependent on the apparatuses of the British state for its dissemination as it was on the English language and culture which informed its articulation” (Lloyd, Nationalism and Minor Literature 3). When Yeats was engrossed in the folklore and mythology of the ancient Celt, Irish experience and culture were redefined by an imperial perspective through the medium of the English language through his tasks of collection and translation. If Yeats tried to appropriate the English language to resuscitate the unheard voices of the oppressed nation, the Victorian imperialist, in the same manner, reappropriated the translated experiences of the Irish. Irish nationalism was by no means “purely” anti-colonial but inevitably swayed by British cultural hegemony as long as it adopted the English language. When it comes to the double strategy of colonialism – conciliation and coercion – the Irish Literary Revival can be understood as attached to the former. It is important to note that the Anglo-Irish elites, such as Yeats, became uprooted in terms of history and economy in modern Irish history. They had fallen since the nineteenth century as they lost their land – their fundamental base in the Ascendancy – through
the Land War and the Land Acts. Partially to provide themselves with privileged positions in
leading the Irish community at least culturally, aside from their commitment to the grand cause
of national struggle for national liberation, they launched the Irish Literary Movement. Because
the activists’ distinctively aristocratic manner⁵ produced class conflicts, Terry Eagleton argues
that Irish modernism thus ironically had an “overwhelmingly conservative tenor” (299). By
allowing the propitiatory movement, the British government forestalled unified rebellion, that is,
trans-ethnic, religious, and class resistance. The Revival was accordingly born out of class
grounds in the name of Irish nationalism, yet it ended up serving to consolidate the ideology of
British colonialism. Revivalist literature, despite its emotional grounds, ironically became not
truly nationalistic but strategically unpatriotic, in that it failed to assemble a unified national
emancipation movement due to class antagonism. In Eagleton’s argument, however, there seems
to be a categorical fallacy. When Eagleton draws a conclusion that Irish modernism was
politically conservative, he indiscriminately seems to regard Irish modernism in the same light as
the Irish Literary Movement, which was deeply rooted in the class conscious concept of Irish
nationalism already adulterated by British hegemony. If Irish modernism can comprise the
Revival and the works of Beckett, Joyce, and other as presupposed in Eagleton’s argument, those
two groups must be distinguished. If the works of the Revivalists or “early” modernists can be
called a major/majoritarian literature in their pursuit of the statehood of nation, those of “late”
modernists can be understood as a minor/minoritarian literature in their attempt to deterritorialize
themselves from ideology of the statehood. Unlike majoritarian nationalist writers, minoritarian
authors have represented heterogeneous themes different from conventional Irish nationalism,

⁵ The Anglo-Irish were descendents of the English Protestants, who colonized Ireland in seventeenth-century
primarily by Oliver Cromwell. Under Cromwell’s regime, most of the land owned by Irish Catholics was
confiscated. Instead, new settlers from England, the Anglo-Irish, owned the land. They kept English culture and
language, which distinguished them from the native Gaels. In particular, their use of the English language had a
dominant influence on Irish society because they held official positions in socio-economic areas.
detached from tasks of forming the ideology of the state. The concept of minor literature, then, despite its revolutionary energy of deterritorialization from the miserable status quo, does not set its ultimate goal in the establishment of the nation-state because the new state can lead to a reterritorialization as it oppresses its people with fatal identity politics.

The nation-state unceasingly tried to dominate its children through the censorship acts and regulations that represented the father’s voice in Irish nationalism. Against that reterritorializing force of the state, Irish literature of the blank generation in its refusal of a father-nation-state authority can be understood through Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of anti-Oedipus demonstrated in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983). What Deleuze and Guattari mean by “anti”-Oedipus is their critique of the concept of the Oedipus complex and psychoanalysis that define human desire in terms of lack. According to the Freudian theory, a son’s desire for his mother is blocked by his father who has greater physical strength. Unfulfilled with that primal desire, the boy endlessly substitutes other things for what he really wants; hence comes the psychoanalytic definition of desire as lack: “Desire is a relation of being to lack” (Lacan, *The Seminar II* 223). Human desire, accordingly, is limited to the scopes of individual and familial structures. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari consider desire as “a process of production” (*Anti-Oedipus* 26). Whereas the psychoanalytic desire is defined in the familial relationship, “father-mother-me,” the Deleuzean desire is “social rather than familial” (Bogue 83). The desire of the child is repressed within the boundary of the nuclear family in capitalism, which is considered an active oppressive agent for Deleuze and Guattari. Because psychological repression makes an individual a subservient body in which social regulations and morality are easily educated and enacted, the docile son becomes a docile citizen who accepts a miserable socio-economic condition of capitalism. A capitalist society necessarily represses deterritorial
flows of desire, which has potential to threaten the established structure of capitalism. For Deleuze and Guattari, the psychoanalytic definition of desire as lack is thus problematic in that it justifies capitalist ideology: “The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class. This involves deliberately organizing wants and needs amid an abundance of production” (Anti-Oedipus 28). The complicity of the nuclear family with exterior power structures of the state apparatuses, bureaucracy, and in particular capitalism, becomes a critical theme in Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus. The reason to challenge authority of a son has different implications in psychoanalysis and Deleuze. The former attributes the origin of the Oedipus complex to the son’s frustrated desire by his father, which must be successfully resolved through defense mechanisms such as repression and identification unless he produces neurosis. On the contrary, the latter finds the grounds of criticism of the son’s father in a more socio-economic sphere, that is, his complicity with state capitalism: They argue, “It’s not Oedipus that produces neurosis; it is neurosis that produces Oedipus, which is the market value of neurosis” (Kafka 10). Whereas psychoanalysts find the origin of individual neurosis in the Oedipus complex or the triangle structure, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that the restricted desires which cause neurosis in a capitalist society produce the Oedipus conflict.

My approach to Paul Durcan’s poetry via the Deleuzean concept of anti-Oedipus can help us locate a tradition of Irish minoritarian literature that emerged after the establishment of the nation-state. The Deleuzean philosophy is by no means new to Irish literature. It is noteworthy to mention that Declan Kiberd in Inventing Ireland appropriates the Deleuzean concept of anti-Oedipus for modern Irish literature before the coming of the nation-state. In his analysis of J. M. Synge’s The Playboy of the Western World (1907), Kiberd argues that the father image in modern Irish literature no longer had that dominant voice which once forced sons to confess and
thus repent their guilt. Instead, the father tended to be overcome by his children. By creating “a true morality” (Kiberd 388) through debilitation of the father’s presence, anti-Oedipal literature in Ireland can withstand the state morality and hegemony that were founded by the father’s generation, the father’s bloody sacrifice, and the father’s masculinity. A pertinent creative point of Deleuze and Guattari’s writings lies in the way a traditional notion of an Oedipal structure can be applied to other social realms. Whereas a traditional psychoanalysis delimits its discourses within a domestic realm, the Oedipal triangle, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, demonstrates that the familial triangle cannot stand alone but is closely related to exterior power, such as the social economy, bureaucracy, and jurisdiction, that “operate beneath and, indeed, in the familial triangle” (Kafka 14). A minor literature thus connects an individual to a political immediacy beyond the domestic scope of Oedipal anxiety. This is why I want to expand the realm of the origins of Durcan’s minoritarian spirit to more socio-political realms in the beginning. Lacking the specific representativeness or identity that has underpinned canonical Irish major literature, Irish minor literature seriously and/or humorously questions the nation-state identity and ideology. The Deleuzean theory of anti-Oedipal minor literature can be imposed on the reading of Durcan’s poetry threefold: Durcan’s recognition of his father’s complicity with state power, his critique of the nation-state and nationalism, and his search for an alternate identity. The Deleuzean notion of becoming-animal (other), in particular, can provide a productive reading of various transformations in Durcan’s poems. As Deleuze and Guattari read the becoming-animal of Franz Kafka’s Gregor as a flight from the bureaucratic and commercial triangle as well as the familial one, becoming-animal/other in Durcan’s poetic speakers can be interpreted as his desire for “a way out” (Kakfa 34) of a callous conception of identity.
Engaging those theoretical backgrounds, my study of Durcan’s poetry consists of four main chapters: Chapter 1. “Durcan and a Minoritarian Tradition”; Chapter 2. “Durcan’s Anti-Oedipus”; Chapter 3. “Postnationalism in Durcan”; and Chapter 4. “Durcanesque Hybridity.” In Chapter 1, in following the tradition of Irish minor literature, especially of Patrick Kavanagh and Francis Stuart, Durcan expresses his minoritarian with his non-conformist perspective and his story-telling distinctive from the romantic descriptions of the Revivalists. As a non-conformist minoritarian, Durcan shares a feeling of loneliness with his predecessors, mainly caused by his personal separation from his parents and wife. His hospitalization in a mental institution and his divorce have formed part of the source of his loneliness. In addition to his personal relationships within the boundaries of his family, what causes him to feel like an alien in his native country is Irish ethnocentrism based on strong identity politics initiated by the state. Durcan thus tries to articulate the lonely voices of socio-cultural minoritarians produced by a bigoted cultural nationalism and oppressive state censorship. In that culturally and politically inflexible society, Durcan finds his responsibilities in believing that poetry must be rooted in reality. With his verbal honesty, Durcan represents true images of the reality distorted by majoritarians’ political propaganda. In addition, as he is tortured by rigid identity politics, he longs for ways in which he can find his own identity and a new home outside the familiar but imperfect nation-state. Filled with utopian desires, Durcan pursues deterritorialization from the inflexible identity politics of Ireland.

“Durcan’s Anti-Oedipus,” deals with Durcan’s critique of his father and the nation-state ideology. If traditional Oedipus ended up failing to overcome his father’s authority as he was inflicted by guilty conscience and still dominated by his father’s indelible authority, anti-Oedipus Durcan successfully challenges his father and state power. As Deleuzean minor literature
emphasizes a close power relationship between the familial triangle structure and the exterior socio-political ones, Durcan acutely recognizes the father-state complicity. Not only does Durcan challenge his father’s overwhelming authority especially in his personal status as a state judge, but he also criticizes the censorious state power that continually disciplines its citizens. State apparatuses, such as the Church and legal systems, are preoccupied with ethnocentric nationalism and obsessed with materialism. If Durcan blindly criticized those authorities, he would play the same role as Oedipus because all his reactionary critiques would signify his helpless state bound to power, which defines the Oedipus complex. Although Durcan decides to choose a different way from that which his father chose, he still expresses his sympathy toward his father. It is a crucial moment at which anti-Oedipus Durcan expresses ambivalence toward his father who is an oppressor and, at the same time, a scapegoat exploited by the state. With his acute recognition of the merciless state which eventually rejects his father, despite the latter’s loyal service, Durcan finds the violent nature of the state which is concerned with a mere void concept of nation irrelevant to individual lives in reality.

Based on his critical attitude toward the nation-state, in Chapter 3. “Postnationalism in Durcan,” I show that Durcan exposes the myth of Celticism and Irish nationalism. Against the grain of a nationalist construction of Celtic Irishness, he shows how that construction depends on a superstitious obstinate attachment to trite affects of tradition, such as the Gaelic language. Although he takes a critical attitude against nationalist myth-making, he reinterprets the nation’s past and finds a utopian aura in some localities. As a postnationalist, Durcan does not believe in certain types of Irishness fixed in historical time frames. With his ahistorical utopian longings, Durcan refuses to accept the nationalist logic of progressive historicity based on a strong work ethic intended to establish the nation-state. Instead of that work ethnic for the nation, Durcan
suggests the value of idling through which he can freely imagine alternative communities, hybrid Irelands. In addition, because he does not limit the concept of nation to certain geographical boundaries, he searches for alternative identities in exotic places, such as Russia, Brazil, and Asia Minor. His feelings toward these foreign places allow him to overthrow conventional Irish identity and to feed his utopian impulse. If Durcan’s postnationalist utopian hope can serve as a deterritorialization from rigid identity politics, the violence caused by that identity politics is the reality he has to painstakingly relate as a contemporary poet. Against the intransigent insistence on a certain Irishness, he plainly decries unjustifiable IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland on the one hand, and censures an ideological appropriation of nationalism with which the Church, the courts, and the academy are complicit in the Republic of Ireland on the other, to the extent that the Irish state ignores injustice around the world immersed in its own domestic concerns. Irish ethnocentrism can be traced back to a traumatic experience of colonialism under which the oppressed consolidated their collective identity and strong masculinity. Despite those justifiable causes, Durcan reveals how postcolonial Irish society committed hypermasculine violence toward women and social minorities. Against the aggressive culture and ideology, Durcan suggests alternative viewpoints, such as an aesthetic of dancing, and new models for Irish men and women, through which he glimpses and imagines his postnationalist Ireland.

If Durcan’s postnationalist approach to a construction of new Irish identity is intended at a social level, Chapter 4. “Durcanesque Hybridity” is about Durcan’s radical experiments on identity at a personal level. As the term “hybridity” indicates, Durcan carries out his identity experiments by transcending boundaries of genre as well as those of sexuality and species. Durcan’s two collections of ekphrasis, literary descriptions of visual works of art, Crazy About Women (1991) and Give Me Your Hand (1994) in particular, are significant because he
intermingles the two different genres of poetry-time and painting-space, through which he generates a new sense of historicity, that is, ahistoricity. In addition, his ekphrasis combines the public and the private when Durcan reinterprets the figures in the paintings in a certain contemporary circumstance. If he achieves a stylistic hybridity through his ekphrasis, his attempt to deterritorialize from rigid identity politics culminates in several speakers’ metamorphoses, that is, becoming-other. According to Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “becoming” is an expression of a deterritorialization of rigid identity. When two different subjects conduct double deterritorialization, that is double becoming, to escape from their boundaries of identity, they enter a block of in-betweenness. The new third block has no resemblance to the two previous subjects, but it is a hybrid without origins: “there is no identification between them, they are instead drawn into an asymmetrical block in which both change to the same extent, and which constitutes their zone of proximity” (306). When Durcan’s speakers metamorphose into woman, animal, and even something imperceptible, he not only creates new hybridities, but also calls into question any single unified concept of identity. Durcan’s experiments of becoming-minoritarians thus can establish a new minoritarian literature distinguishable from traditional major literature replete with majoritarian nationalist identity politics.

Durcan has received not nearly as much attention as Heaney, who started out as a minoritarian and has garnered global academic and critical attention for decades now. Durcan, however, is being studied and reviewed more widely now, not only in his native country but beyond its borders. In particular, because of Durcan’s constant task of blurring boundaries of national identity and human subjectivity, his poetry has attracted critics’ attention since the 1970s along with the flow of postmodern studies of hybridity and plurality. Most studies on Durcan thus have emphasized his critique of strong identity politics and state apparatuses. For
example, Edna Longley in “Paul Durcan and the North: Recollections” (1996) maintains that Durcan’s poems on the sectarian violence in the North “intertwines church and state in a corrupting mutual hypocrisy. […] Such poems make Northern violence central to Durcan’s critique of the Republic and make the Republic central to Northern violence” (108). Some scholars like Kathleen McCracken also have investigated Durcan’s aesthetics, especially his ekphrasis, poems about paintings, in regard to the poetic speaker’s narrative and identity. Although those studies well describe the ways in which Durcan calls into question the nation-state hegemony, previous critics of Durcan have not comprehensively examined the interrelationship between his attitudes toward his father, his critiques of the state apparatuses, and his diverse speakers’ transformations. The latest investigation on Durcan in the first decade of the twenty-first century is that of Erik Martiny, who has started to focus on the relationship between Durcan’s anti-Oedipal tendency and metamorphosis. Although Martiny does not explicitly discuss Deleuzean philosophy in his analysis, he offers a significant reading of Durcan with regard to the holistic interrelationship between several of Durcan’s topics. Along the lines of previous studies, especially Lloyd’s contextualization of minor literature in Irish circumstance and Kiberd’s rediscovery of the anti-Oedipal tradition in modern Irish literature, I will delve into the origin of Durcan’s critique of the nation-state ideology and identity politics from the perspective of Deleuzean anti-Oedipal minor literature. By so doing, the previous fragmented studies on Durcan can be rearranged in a new order moving from the anti-Oedipal to the critiques of nationalism and the state apparatuses, and to his becoming-other.

Since publishing his first collection of poetry, Durcan has been a passionate writer for almost fifty years. It seems almost impossible to cover such a prolific writer’s work in a single project. As a matter of chronological convenience, I shall limit my investigation to twentieth-
century works with one exception. The reason why I include *Cries of an Irish Caveman* published in 2001 is that it contains several themes of metamorphoses, becoming-other, a highlight in Durcan’s radical experiments on identity politics. More important, Durcan was elected Toscairí in a 2002-2004 term, a committee member of Aosdána, an Irish association of artists supported by the state. Although the fact that he accepted that state position does not necessarily imply that he no longer retains his minoritarian spirit, his acceptance of the official position provided by the state can situate the minoritarian poet at a crossroad. Durcan obviously continues his lifelong journey toward deterritorialization from the rigidity of Irish identity in his twenty-first century poems; however, his interpretation of capitalism in Ireland and the life of his mother can be considered relatively new topics for Durcan in comparison to his previous poems. This investigation of Durcan’s minoritarian literature is focused more on how the Irish majoritarians’ identity politics has been formulated via Irish nationalism and the nation-state, and how Durcan attempts deterritorialization through his critique of the state apparatuses and ethnocentric ideology, and through his search for utopia and alternate identity.
Paul Durcan himself has a biographical background as a minoritarian. In his interview with Mary Dalton, Durcan introduces his family history tracing it back to his grandmother on his mother’s side, Eileen Wilson. She was, in fact, in historically crucial moments in modern Ireland especially because of her relationship with Maud Gonne and the MacBrides. She married Joseph MacBride, whose brother was John MacBride, a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising (later executed), who married Maud Gonne. Eileen Wilson surprisingly had the same father, Colonel Gonne, as Maud Gonne, which means she was a half sister of Gonne. She had five children, one of whom was Durcan’s mother, Sheila MacBride. For Durcan, his grandmother Eileen was “one of the most important people in [his] life” in the sense that “She is an innocent victim” (qtd. in Dalton 23). In her victimization, Maud Gonne and William Butler Yeats were in the center. Durcan argues that his grandmother was defamed in a biography of Maud Gonne written by Nancy Cardozo. According to the biography, Durcan’s grandmother was raped by John MacBride in Paris. Outraged, Gonne arranged the marriage of Eileen to Joseph MacBride, John MacBride’s brother. Durcan, however, considers that story libeled his grandmother because the biography does not suggest any evidence. More important, as is widely known, Yeats fell in love with Maud Gonne, so he disliked her eventual husband, John MacBride, to the extent that he described him in “Easter, 1916” as “A drunken, vainglorious lout. / He had done most bitter wrong / To some who are near my heart” (ll. 32-34). Although Durcan confesses that he reveres Yeats as an artist, he still harbors antipathy against Yeats, as his grandmother did, because he defamed John MacBride in the poem, in which most of the information about MacBride and his

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6 Eileen’s mother Margaret Wilson stayed in Russia after she gave birth to Eileen, persuaded by Maud Gonne (Jordan 34). Durcan’s poems like “Trauma Junction” and “Estonian Farewell 1983” reflects that family history.
8 In fact, Durcan’s grandmother referred to John MacBride as “such a gay man” (qtd. in Dalton 24) rather than a rapist.
family was from Gonne. As a result, the Yeats-Gonne industry has made two scapegoats, Durcan’s grandmother Eileen and John MacBride, who were excluded and defamed in modern Irish history. Durcan worries about appropriating an event in the past according to ideological purposes:

In the 1960s in Ireland, with the nightmare coming back, what’s called “revisionism” began to happen. Of course, historiography of its very nature is all about the renewal of history every day, the renewal every day. What I’m talking about is scholars, politicians, terrorists using history to turn and twist it to their own advantage. On the one hand, you have the Provisional IRA using the 1916 leaders as gods of their pantheon, Pearse and MacBride and others. On the other hand, you have certain journalists and scholars taking these people and trying to denigrate them and their achievements. (qtd. in Dalton 24)

Because of ideological exploitations of the past and the people, there have been many victims and scapegoats. As the majoritarians describe and define some people in certain ways, they can easily turn them into either national heroes or betrayers. That is how they generate numerous minorities sacrificed by a grand historiography. As Yeats defined MacBride as a “drunken, vainglorious lout” and a Maud Gonne biography describes him as a rapist, Irish history remembers him in the ways in which he was portrayed. That is why Durcan is disturbed by that ideological appropriation of people like MacBride and his grandmother, which incessantly victimizes and produces minorities; hence comes Durcan’s minoritarian spirit that runs against the grain of the majoritarian ideology.
**Durcan’s Minoritarian Predecessors**

Durcan’s minoritarian perspective can be discussed in terms of his seeing in a different way, his non-conformist life, and his distinctive poetic style of story-telling, which identifies him as different from traditional poets who rely on a romantic and nostalgic description of Ireland. Based on those unconventional principles, Durcan vividly resuscitates the lonely voices of socio-cultural minoritarians generated by bigoted Irish ethnocentrism, cultural nationalism, and state power. In defense of the minorities and minoritarians, Durcan establishes his poetic responsibilities as rooted in reality, in searching for his own identity and a new home. Before investigating Durcan’s minoritarian tendencies, I want to glimpse a minoritarian tradition through the eyes of Kitaj, Kavanagh, and Stuart, all of whom had crucial influence on him. Durcan, in particular, confesses that there are two artists who changed everything for him; they are Kitaj and Kavanagh (qtd. in Dalton 24).

**R. B. Kitaj**

Kitaj’s legacy on Durcan can be summarized as seeing in a different way when he visited Kitaj’s Artist’s Eye Exhibition at the National Gallery, London, in 1980. Durcan reminisces about Kitaj’s teachings, for example, “what is most avant-garde in art is also the most traditional” (qtd. in Dalton 24) or “the limitless significance of the word ‘affection’” (24). Among others, Kitaj is famous for his unconventional ways of painting, in particular, his attaching memoranda on to the paintings.⁹ Contemporary majoritarian critics censured him mainly because his direct comments on his works can definitely delimit the significance of his art within the boundary of language. Despite the danger of the authorial intention as articulated through the written word,

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⁹ See Fig. 1. (Appendix)
Durcan appropriates the combinations of paintings and poems resulting in two collections of ekphrases, *Crazy About Women* (1990) and *Give Me Your Hands* (1994), through which one of his artistic aims can be achieved. Kathleen McCracken observes:

If Kitaj’s fictional characters redefine the painter’s role as that of a novelist whose raw material is the image rather than the word (Livingston 34), then Durcan’s role as poet is to take the painting as his raw material, translating it into a language which mediates between image and word. (“Canvas and Camera Translated” 24)

There is a transformation between a painting and a poem, image and word in Durcan’s ekphrasis. Against the majoritarians’ literary convention bound in one realm, Durcan’s radical and minoritarian viewpoint of art can transcend rigid boundaries of art, creating a new hybrid art.

If Durcan’s seeing differently was radicalized by Kitaj, in particular, in regard to art, his iconoclastic perspective had already sprouted in his 20s. When he attended University College Cork, he met an influential professor of archaeology, M. J. O’Kelly, who taught him to “see Ireland in terms of distribution maps, megalithic tombs, stone circles, to look at prehistory from all these different angles” (qtd. in Dalton 24). The prehistoric topics before the coming of Celtic culture have played crucial roles in shaping Durcan’s minoritarian perspective. Whereas the Irish majoritarians have believed or accepted that the Celts and Celtic culture are their original ancestors since the Celtic Renaissance, minoritarians like Durcan call into question the myth of Celtic origins.¹⁰ That myth was, however, consciously constructed by the nationalists like Yeats and Douglas Hyde in the nineteenth-century in an attempt to differentiate themselves from

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¹⁰ Carmel McCaffrey and Leo Eaton in *In Search of Ancient Ireland* (2003) explain that the word “Celtic” was originally from the Greeks who called the people who lived to the north of Greek Keltoi around 600 B.C, and the word generally began to describe the people who spoke the Gaelic language. (53). It is generally believed that the Celts first came to Ireland around 500 B.C. “in one massive invasion,” which is accepted by “few Irish scholars” (54).
colonial power and to create a unitary sense of national identity and self-respect. Not only was the term “Celtic” not used in the English language prior to the 1700s, but the leaders of the cultural nationalists also heedlessly accepted the writings about the Celts, mainly written from the sixth to the twelfth centuries by Christian monks, as a historical foundation “to create an Ireland that possibly never existed – or at least not as they saw it” (McCaffrey and Eaton 52). As the question, “How truly ‘Celtic’ is Ireland?” has drawn contemporary Irish archaeologists and historians’ attention by cross-examining the legitimacy of the majoritarian-nationalist discourses, Durcan with his critical stance against Celtic Ireland sees against the majoritarian grain. Unlike the majoritarian nationalists fixated on Celticism, Durcan’s looking backward to Irish prehistory before the so-called Celtic invasion around 500 B.C. can stand for a historically minoritarian perspective to shatter an ideological mythologizing of Celticism.

Patrick Kavanagh

As for the Celticism espoused by the nineteenth-century nationalists, the works of Yeats’s early years show how he emotionally cherished the value of primitive Celtic culture as a leading representative of the Celtic Revival. It is worth paying attention to Yeats’s romantic pastoralism rooted in the Revival because Kavanagh’s anti-pastoral/romantic legacy can be compared with Yeats’s romantic primitivism. Whereas Kavanagh resisted the institutionalized national identity by asserting “I do not believe that there is any such thing as ‘Irish’ in literature” (qtd. in O’Brien 15), Yeats in “The Literary Movement in Ireland” believed, Robert Garratt aptly summarizes, that “the greatness of Irish literature came from its peasantry, whose simple and hard lives, unbroken religious faith, and traditional beliefs fostered a lively poetic imagination, a passion, and a profound sense of the spiritual” (151). He tried to find the genuine identity of the Irish people in the peasantry and turned to his childhood in Innisfree, a privileged zone
surrounded by nostalgia and a sense of escape. That concept of the Irish rural district formed Yeats’s earlier attitudes based on an assumption that pure and incorrupt childhood existed independently outside cruel reality. By conflating childhood and the rural landscape, he created an innocent Irish landscape in which conflicts were resolved and innocence prevailed. Declan Kiberd, however, argues that Yeats trapped himself in an imperialist strategy of infantilizing the native culture because, when he described the rural landscape through the image of childhood, the childlike Ireland became a subject of amusement for Victorian imperialists (103). Yeats’s dream of childhood in Sligo, against his expectations, was already contaminated with colonial politics through his invention of a childish Ireland. Yeats changed his attitude from romantic primitivism to modern products, Sinead Garrigan Mattar observes, in which what was idealized was not the thing most pure or noble, but the thing most brutal, sexual, and contrary (4). For example, in “Easter, 1916,” considered a turning point in his evaluation of the armed nationalist movement, Yeats describes the leaders of the Easter Rising who risked their lives for the sake of Irish independence as those who have brought “A terrible beauty” (l. 80) by awakening the spirit of romantic Ireland with regard to primitive Celtic legends based on sacrifice and rebirth.

Nevertheless, the portrayal of the Irish “as savage, barbaric, lazy, and politically incompetent” can justify, as Sinead Mattar argues, the premise that “they were not only incapable of self-rule but also unworthy of extraordinary aid, even during the crisis of the Great Famine” (11). Either way, Yeats chooses to describe Ireland as a childlike innocent land or conjures it up as a vigorous primitive. As such, he ends up binding in British imperialist prejudices against the Irish as incapable of self government.

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11 Yeats in “September 1913” lamented the loss of a noble spirit crushed by snobbish materialism of the contemporary Catholic middle-class: “Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone” (l. 7).
Unlike the Revivalists’ sentimental views of rural Ireland, Kavanagh considered the Literary Revival and its primitivism championed by the revivalists “a thoroughgoing English-bred lie” (qtd. in O’Brien 23). For him, Irish primitivism or pastoralism was a by-product of British colonialism and he developed a different literary genre: Irish naturalism. In his rendering of a desolate socio-economic panorama, Kavanagh in “The Great Hunger” differs from Yeats’s revivalist pastoralism that blindly sentimentalized the rural land and aspired to the state ideology of a puritanical Free State. Directly opposed to the myth of the noble peasant and the mythology of the Celts, Kavanagh’s poetry represents an anti-pastoralist tradition. Pastoral poems deal with rural life, that is, shepherds and idyllic landscapes through which urban people anguished by hectic and isolated life can regain inner tranquility as described in the Romanticist poet Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey.” In contrast, anti-pastoral poems unceasingly reveal that rural life is a form of poverty-ridden imprisonment in which farmers are mired in hard labor. That is the point at which an idealized peasantry and the fantasy of Celtic primitivism can be shattered. Primitivism, for Kavanagh, is nothing but a myth created by outsiders who scarcely know about the “authentic” life of agrarian peoples. The peasantry is by no means the origin of an ideal Irish culture as generally believed by majoritarian revivalists:

The travellers stop their cars to gape over the green bank into his fields:

*There* is the source from which all cultures rise,

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12 Kavanagh’s assessment of political aspects of the Revival resonates in Terry Eagleton’s argument. According to Eagleton, the Revival came about under the British hegemony and supplied a suitably edifying pedigree which could act as an emollient for political injustice (99). Through the Revival, in which Irish primitivism lay, British colonialism gained a conduit to access Irish culture in order to capitalize on it as well as to further aggravate and maintain the ongoing class conflict between the Anglo-Irish and the Gaelic peasantry.

13 Joe Cleary in *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (2007) divides modern Irish literature into two periods. The Revivalist literature grounded in primitive Celtic culture can be located in the period between the Land Wars (the 1870s-90s) and the establishment of the Free State (1922). The following decades between independence and the end of the twentieth century were not in modernism at all but rather in a naturalism which refused the idealism of the Revival and focused on the miserable socio-economic conditions in Irish rural reality (96-97).
And all religions,

*There* is the pool in which the poet dips

And the musician.

Without the peasant base civilisation 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 [...] (XIII. ll. 18-27, emphasis in the original)

The travelers in the poem bring to a hasty conclusion that the peasant is the source of Irish culture, religion, and civilization. While indicating “*There*” (l. 18) as the essence of Irishness, they not only rivet Irish identity on a specific place, but also fetishize the grass to the extent that they “feel renewed” (l. 24) by a simple touch of the natural object. As a result, the travelers who originally come from a city rather than from a rural district, as most Revivalists did, heedlessly homogenize the Irish essence in the name of peasantry. Judging from demographic complexities in rural classes, it is difficult to designate peasantry as the essence of Irishness. According to Edward Hirsh, the Irish countryside was populated by diverse groups of small farmers, laborer-landholders, landless laborers, and itinerant workers (1117). By simplifying demographic compositions of rural districts as “the peasantry,” the revivist travelers attempt to establish their view of the authenticity of Irishness, which is a myth created by the majoritarian revivist in their homogeneous search for national identity regardless of wretched reality.

Contrary to the idealized community forged by primitivism, real lives in rural Ireland for Kavanagh were saturated with an overwhelming routine, as expressed in the work’s opening line,
a biblical parody: “Clay is the word and clay is the flesh” (I. l. 1),\textsuperscript{14} which reflects the inescapable hard labor in the daily life of an Irish peasant. That clay-ridden life was such “a wet sack” (I. l. 59) that it became stultifying enough to be exploited by “the familiar Irish trinity of mother, church, and land” (Culleton 219). The protagonist, Maguire, is emasculated and even feminized by his mother to the extent that he becomes “more woman than man” (XI. l. 10) as he is intimidated by his mother’s venomous voice, in contrast to majoritarian writers’ pastoral depictions of virtuous masculine labor and strong farmers. In addition, in Kavanagh’s naturalism or savage realism, as Terence Brown defined it, the Catholic Church, referred to as one of the essential elements of Irish identity, suffocates Maguire with harsh doctrines by repressing his individual instinct, joy, and creativity, and served as a major source of Ireland’s ills (105). Exhausted by grinding labor and traditional authorities, Maguire suffers from chronic fatigue and desolation, rather than vitality, the true reality of the peasant. By so describing rural life, Kavanagh divulges how the reality of Irish peasant life is as languid and paralyzed as that of Joyce’s Dubliners. Whenever Maguire searches for health, wealth, and love in an attempt to escape or resist unbreakable reality, he ends up returning to the awful routine or futile masturbation. Nothing was left for the rural peasantry but suffocating nets of authority. Kavanagh from a minoritarian perspective plainly disapproves of the mystified rural life the Revivalists impetuously romanticized. The native land and its culture tend to be fetishized by cultural nationalists who define national identity through newly invented symbols, whether they be natural or cultural ones. In contrast, for those who have postnationalist tendencies like Kavanagh, national distinctiveness characterized by urban nationalists is based on sentimental conjectures that overlook the harsh reality of the natives.

\textsuperscript{14} “In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (The Holy Bible, John. 1.1); “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1.14).
Along with his anti-pastoral poetics, Kavanagh heavily influenced Durcan with his distinctive poetic style as an artistic forefather. In an interview with Mary Dalton, Durcan summarizes Kavanagh’s legacy in three ways:

Patrick Kavanagh taught me at least three things: one, that life was fundamentally good; two, that there was nothing that was not fit subject matter for a poem; and three, that poetry was most nearly poetry when it was most nearly prose. Years and years later, on one of my trips to the Soviet Union, I discovered that Pushkin had the same belief about prose and poetry in the Russian language. (24)

Among other Kavanagh’s precepts, the third is worth noting in that the prose-like poetry approach can challenge a traditional concept of poetry. Whereas a traditional poem has its typical formality, such as rhyme, meter, and metaphor to express the poet’s state of mind, a prose poem often violates that formality. Instead, it chooses narrative style as used in novel and drama to reveal the conditions of reality. For example, in “The Great Hunger” when Kavanagh depicts Maguire’s futile life, he illuminates the miserably labor-ridden conditions in rural Ireland. When Durcan’s poetry takes the prose style, that stylistic distinction from traditional poetry is dramatically achieved by story-telling. Story-telling can theoretically serve as a crucial style in the discussions of representing the voices of the oppressed and the minoritarian. The majoritarian art is highly likely to be textualized, canonized, and coded in an official language, whether

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15 Durcan reminisces about Kavanagh’s teaching about a poet’s apprenticeship for twenty years: “Like a pregnant woman, you spend a lot of time waiting, when something is taking root, is being born” (qtd. in Dalton 24). That poetic apprenticeship is reflected in Durcan’s “Waterloo Road.”

16 Eamon Grennan observes the two-fold influence of Kavanagh on Durcan: “It affects the way the poems take shape, and it affects the way Durcan sees, takes in, and speaks back to the world. From Kavanagh comes a trust for the actual and the ordinary, as well as the courage to see that love can inhere in the actual and the ordinary. An originating text could be Kavanagh’s ‘The Hospital’” (60). For Grennan, the difference between the two poets lies in that, whereas Kavanagh “often relying formally on the compact enclosure of the sonnet to give coherent and satisfying shape to his experience,” Durcan is “thoroughly committed to the open form, letting the material give shape to the poem” (60).
displayed in the museum or library. On the contrary, minoritarian story-telling, already excluded from the canonization, has little space in public but is passed around from mouth to mouth. If a traditional work of art has definite standards and boundaries within which it is confined, a story-telling seeks a way out; it is, thus, not held to a preset ethnic or national identity. In addition, according to Deleuze, because a minoritarian author may have no great talents or superior genius in comparison to a majoritarian artist, he or she “is not in a condition to produce individual utterances,” but “is in a situation of producing utterances which are already collective” (Cinema 2 221) through the genre of story-telling. More important, when a story is related and reiterated, story-telling does not stand for a return to the myth of the past, which can turn into a new standard, territorialization, but is directed toward becoming “the people to come. (223). The revolutionary poetic use of story-telling thus serves to represent a useful means for minoritarian writings that opposes the established norms and standards of the majoritarians and searches for alternatives.

As story-telling becomes Durcan’s primary poetic method as inherited from Kavanagh, a story usually unfolds in Durcan’s poetry ranging from his private accounts to public ones. Because that orality represents an unconventional minoritarian style, Durcan’s poetry has not been welcomed by traditional poetry readers or by critics familiar with the conventional versification of Yeats and Heaney who won Nobel Literature prizes. For the established tastes, “Durcan’s verse is too loose, extravagant and adventurous,” argues Bruce Woodcock (133). If symbolism has preoccupied British/Irish poetry since Romanticism, Durcan’s less symbolic style

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17 Durcan’s story-telling comes not only from Kavanagh’s influence, but also from his biographical background: “All my family came from the west of Ireland, where story telling was still very much a part of everyone’s life. I don’t mean necessarily formal storytelling. In many ways Mayo in the ‘40s and ‘50s was still a medieval society. […] people spoke in the old story telling way, so that when people spoke to you, in fact it was a story” (qtd. in Knowles 23-24).
or anti-Yeatsian symbolism may not fit the majoritarian British literary critics’ inclinations. Although Durcan does not prevent himself from using any symbols, he, at least, tries to move away from the conventional use of symbols to sustain the status quo as expressed in Yeats. For example, although the Yeatsian symbol of Byzantium can generally be read as an ideal place in which “religious, aesthetic, and practical life were one” (Yeats, *A Vision* 279), the so-called Unity of Being, that symbol serves to maintain the hegemony of the majoritarians in that Yeats does not offer any way to change reality. Despite Yeats’s minority status as an Anglo-Irish Protestant in the Free State, the reason why his poems can be considered majoritarian is that he consciously evades the harsh conditions of reality in the name of art. By acknowledging that “That [Ireland] is no country for old men” (“Sailing to Byzantium” l. 1) and “An aged man is but a paltry thing” (l. 9), he passively accepts the reality from which he is gradually excluded by the Catholic majoritarian nationalists of the Free State. In the sense that his symbol can suggest, at best, a place for refuge, he connives with the majoritarian standards of the state. On the contrary, despite his majoritarian status as a Catholic in the Republic of Ireland, Durcan’s symbolism can offer a minoritarian method to challenge the stymied reality. In “O Westport in the Light of Asia Minor,” Durcan suggests a symbol of the sun – “Black at the edges, pure red at the center” (l. 34) – which can expose a falsely constructed national myth of the Celts, a product from the nineteenth-century of the majoritarian nationalists. In short, the functions of symbols appropriated by those two poets differ greatly. If Yeatsian symbols end up impotently accepting unchanged reality by complying with the status quo, Durcan’s symbols are filled with a revolutionary minoritarian spirit intended to bring about a transformation of the majoritarian power structure.
Although Durcan used some symbols in his early writings, he decided to distance himself from symbolism.\(^\text{18}\) As Colm Tóibín introduces an anecdote that happened during Durcan’s travel to Russia in 1983, Durcan was advised by Anthony Cronin\(^\text{19}\) not to use a simile:

“[Durcan said] Look, they look like tents.” Cronin replied: “Paul, would you ever stop saying that things are like things. They either are or they’re not.” He [Durcan] has never, he says, used the word ‘like’ since that day. His journey to Russia was crucial for him in many ways. (19)

Instead of adopting rich symbolism for his poetry, Durcan focuses more on a story-telling technique. The transition from symbolism to a more rigorous pursuit of story-telling can possibly be read politically in regard to the postcolonial situation. Bernard McKenna observes, Durcan “attempts to construct an Irish poetry that is free from the Anglo-Irish tradition, headed by Yeats, that tends to overwhelm young developing artists to strangle their unique poetic voices” (70).

Although it is hard to define Durcan solely as a postcolonialist poet, Durcan’s orality in its minoritarian tendencies revives the lost voices behind the official Anglo-Irish poetic tradition. As the combination of poetry and story can represent a hybrid, Peggy O’Brien argues that Durcan’s story-telling becomes “a true post-colonial product” (94), in that the concept of hybridity serves as a crucial term in postcolonial studies to challenge rigid boundaries between colonizer and colonized, by which the authority of the former can be called into question. Nevertheless, Durcan is not necessarily read as a straightforward anti-British poet. His literary shift from a Romantic tradition to an oral tradition rather produces “an alternative bilateral link, sidestepping the

\(^{18}\) Although symbol can be understood as anything which signifies something in the broadest sense, so that all human writings by nature are symbols, symbol in a literary discourse is “applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself” (Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms 311).

\(^{19}\) He is a contemporary Irish poet and a founding member of Aosána.
rippling colonial relationship with England” (Boey 353-54). The main concern for Durcan is not to eradicate colonial influences from a binary standpoint. He is instead open to appropriate a poetic technique from a British poetical tradition if it fits to his minoritarian literature.

As Durcan willingly appropriates a British poetic style, he confesses that he has been greatly influenced by T. S. Eliot when it comes to musicality of poetry. Whereas traditional poets focus primarily on their expressions of feelings and thoughts, Durcan, inspired by Eliot,20 considers primarily the audience in his belief that “Poetry of its very nature is born of speech. It’s a spoken art – sound, music is of its very essence” (qtd. in Dalton 24). Although traditional poets also admit that musicality is an essential element in poetry, they often disregard the innate poetic nature of speech that presupposes the presence of the audience. Because the main objective of speech is the audience, poetic speech and musicality can be closely conjoined via the audience.

Durcan as a storyteller, unlike self-immersed romantic poets, “understands the supreme importance of the audience” argues Maurice Elliott (306). At the heart of his poetic musicality, his consideration for the audience is alert, so “the whole aura of an energy of restraint […] sustains audience and poet in a dramatic tension” (Elliott 305). “November 30, 1967” can be an example of how Durcan is concerned with the audience as he narrates a story about Kavanagh’s death. If a conventional poet describes the death of the beloved, he or she will let all natural objects lament the death to express his or her deep sorrow. Due to the poet’s pathetic fallacy,21

20 “What the recording of a poem by its author can and should preserve is the way that the poem sounded to the author when he had finished it. The disposition of lines on the page and the punctuation (which includes the absence of punctuation marks, when they are omitted where the reader would expect them) can never give an exact notation of the author’s metric. The chief value of the author’s record, then, is as a guide to the rhythms” (qtd. in Dalton 24). Although Eliot talks about recording poetry, Durcan considers poetry reading the way in which a pianist gives a recital in front of the audience.
21 John Milton in his pastoral elegy “Lycidas” laments the death of Edward King. In mourning for Lycidas, the willows, hazel groves, woods, and caves shows heartfelt sympathy to the dead. Milton’s pathetic fallacy demonstrates how deeply the poet becomes self-centered in his writing. In a similar way, W. H. Auden in “In Memory of W. B. Yeats” draws on natural phenomena to express his melancholy when he looks back at Yeats’s life.
however, there is little space for the reader to join the lamentation. On the contrary, Durcan offers the reader more space to ponder:

I awoke with a pain in my head

And my mother standing at the end of the bed;

“There’s bad news in the paper,” she said,

“Patrick Kavanagh is dead.” (ll. 1-4)

Instead of pouring out his own sense of loss, Durcan narrates the day of Kavanagh’s death as described in a short story. Despite its narration from the first person point of view, the reader can have his or her own space to observe that situation, at least as a third person, in comparison to conventional elegies that force the reader to identify himself or herself with the speaker in the poem. Durcan’s story-telling detaches the reader from the poet, so that a dramatic tension between the poet and the reader or the audience, as Elliott suggested above, can be created. Durcan’s speaker surrenders to his reader his own right to occupy the poem, as the speaker says: “By accident I happened to tune in / To the conversation at the table from me; / […] / ‘He was pure straight, God rest him, not like us’” (ll. 9-11). Through story-telling, Durcan, the author of the poem, gives more chances to his reader to interpret his feelings. Durcan’s speaker, conscious of the audience, does not need to express all his sorrow by himself, but the story allows the reader to participate in that mourning as the story unfolds.

Kavanagh’s artistic influences on Durcan, as discussed thus far, are significant inasmuch as Durcan’s poems reflect Kavanagh’s prose style as well as his anti-pastoral/romantic poetic tradition in opposition to Celtic nationalism that aspired to state authority. Among other
minoritarian legacies of Kavanagh to Durcan, it is worth mentioning that Durcan broods on the relationship between Kavanagh’s life and power of the state, in particular, state censorship. The publication year of “The Great Hunger” (1942) can be understood in terms of authoritative state ideology. Kavanagh was persecuted by the Irish secret police that imposed censorship on the poem because of its descriptions of obscene and anti-“Irish” characteristics as defined by the Free State. Because the new government of Eamon de Valera\textsuperscript{22} implemented isolationist policies on the culture and economy in defense of homogeneous Irishness, and precisely because Kavanagh runs against the grain of Irish nationalism, Kavanagh’s work became a major target of majoritarian nationalist criticism. In reminiscence of his minoritarian aesthetic forefather, Durcan comments on the state censorship of the work:

> What the innocent Kavanagh did not know was that a file on him was kept in the Áras\textsuperscript{23} and it reads: “author of some very obscene poems in English papers … untidy and not altogether clean … enter a caveat on his social card.” How about that – “enter a caveat on his social card!” From 1943 until his death in 1967 Kavanagh was never again permitted to visit Áras an Uachtaráín. (Paul Durcan’s Diary 142)

Durcan notices that Kavanagh was a scapegoat sacrificed to a bigoted state ideology and cruel surveillance on art. That state power that takes control over individual and art, thus, becomes a major object of Durcan’s criticism.

\textsuperscript{22} He was the Prime Minister of the Irish Free State from 1932 to 1948. After the establishment of the Republic of Ireland, he was elected the third President (1959-1973).
\textsuperscript{23} Áras an Uachtaráin is the official residence of the President of Ireland.
Francis Stuart

As for the oppressive restrictions of the state, Francis Stuart serves as a Durcan’s minoritarian model in his critical attitudes toward the nation-state ideology and the state apparatuses. Stuart in his autobiographical novel, *Black List, Section H* (1971), exemplifies the spirit of a minoritarian literature by putting himself at odds with all consensus viewpoints of his contemporaries. Although this novel may be read as a story of a former IRA gunman who flew to Germany in the 1940s to presumably support for Nazism out of his “pro-German and anti-British feelings” (Molloy 136) as he was once involved in IRA activities for anti-colonial resistance, Stuart articulates his innermost non-conformist spirit against any territorializing forces of the new Irish nation-state. Married to Iseult Gonne, the daughter of Maud Gonne, the protagonist, “H,” joins the republican cause with the MacBride family during the Civil War, in the belief that he can see some radical ideas in the war as also found in the Russian Revolution. He is soon, however, disappointed with politics because “art, religion, and politics would still be run by those who at best used them to give power, prestige, and a good living” (*Black List* 90), all of which, for him, are “high-toned conformism” (90). Submissively conforming to the state authority, the majoritarian artist can gain economic and political shelter. On the contrary, the protagonist, by forsaking secure position under the authority, preserves his acute sense of minoritarian spirit untamed by the majoritarian standards. He believes that

A poet must be a countercurrent to the flow around him. That’s what poetry is: the other way of feeling, and looking at the world. […] If society honours the

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24 Stuart and Iseult eloped to London in 1920 due to strong objections from the parents on both sides. Given that Yeats tried to win Iseult’s love only after he failed to marry Maud Gonne, he was probably an eyesore to Stuart. That negative relationship between Stuart and Yeats may have influenced Stuart’s iconoclastic attitude toward Yeats, a so-called established national poet. Interestingly enough, a similar troublesome relationship with Yeats can be found in Durcan’s grandmother’s history, which informed Durcan’s antipathy toward Yeats.
poet, he’s tempted to say what those in authority expect from him. […] But the poet will only come out with the sort of truth that it’s his task to express when he lacks all honour and acclaim. (18-19)

Francis C. Molloy observes that, compared to those majoritarian authors like Yeats who accepted the honor and acclaim provided by authority, the protagonist refuses to become a mere spokesman for the established values of society and wishes, like Kafka or Proust, to resist social norms as he recognizes that a post-independent Ireland in the 1930s was filled with a sense of “the drabness of life and the short-comings of the Irish democratic system” (135). In addition, in sensing that his creative spirit as a true artist will only be awakened if he feels pain through being rejected by others, he pursues situations that will further alienate him not only from family but gradually from society in general. He believes that the artist should be radically isolated in suffering and make contact with the outcast as did Christ, in whom violence and peace are conjoined through the suffering of the scapegoat. The noble non-conformist spirit thus characterizes Stuart’s minoritarian attitude. The very concept of the Christ-like artist has been probably germane to Durcan’s search for utopia via his lifelong journey as Durcan considers Christ the ultimate example of a minoritarian: “… I think of the protagonist of the New Testament – the acceptance of loss and death, the refusal to take out insurance policies, the challenge to all of us to leave home, to go on journeys” (“Passage to Utopia” 330). In his refusal of conventional honor and acclaim that majoritarian society can bring, Stuart becomes a minoritarian model of a true poet for Durcan.

Parallel to the ways in which Christ was rejected by his nation, in particular, the Israelite nationalist leaders, Stuart put that minoritarian theory into practice as he was excluded by the state and so-called majoritarian nationalist literary critics. In a reminiscence of Stuart as a
scapegoat, Durcan in “The Stoning of Francis Stuart” vividly describes how mainstream literary critics and writers, obsessed with nationalist ideology, castigate him. On one St. Patrick’s Day, which has been politically appropriated by Irish cultural nationalists, completely bare and dragged out into public, Stuart stands in front of “The chief critics of Ireland” (l. 50) with “Each with an arty stone” (l. 52). Although they have no exact reasons, probably due to Stuart’s non-conformist spirit and anti-nationalist agenda, they unanimously commit a collective violence\(^\text{25}\) of criticism toward him. As the crowd throws stones of criticism at him, he is portrayed as Jesus crucified by his own people:

He staggered and fell,

Half stood up and crawled

Waved his hands in the air,

Vomited. Shat. (ll. 69-72)

As he wished, Stuart was rejected dramatically and suffered from the violence of the majoritarian critics of “a totally united Ireland” (l. 182). Although “none of them / Had ever read Stuart’s books” (ll. 187-88), all his works, such as *Redemption* and *Black List*, are burned to form a bonfire. If Stuart serves as an example of the minoritarian figure of Christ, by enduring extreme isolation and becoming a scapegoat through which he fulfilled his own literary mission, the speaker, who has watched the whole process of the stoning of Stuart, plays the role of Peter who denied Christ and then helplessly witnessed the whole process of Jesus’ death:

I found myself staring

\(^{25}\) Refer to René Girard’s *Violence and Sacred* (1979), which demonstrates that human culture is founded on a collective violence derived from mimetic desire and ritual sacrifice.
At the faces of the critics

As each of them took

Their turn to stone him. (ll. 73-76)

Similar to the way Peter was too cowardly to rescue Jesus, the speaker cannot help watching passively as Stuart is stoned to death. After the crucifixion, however, as Peter became a major leader who preached the lessons of Jesus, Durcan probably received the non-conformist minoritarian spirit from Stuart after vividly witnessing Stuart’s death dealt by majoritarian critics. Stuart thus became an artistic forefather of Durcan in terms of being the model of a Christ-like non-conformist.

**Origins of Durcan’s Loneliness**

**Familial Relationships**

What the non-conformists Christ and Durcan, as well as Kavanagh and Stuart, have shared is a sense of loneliness, the fundamental feeling of a minoritarian. Durcan’s loneliness can be found in his personal relationships with his parents and wife. His biographical information indicates that, while at college, Durcan was sent by his family to a psychiatric hospital where he was subjected to electric shock treatments. On account of that experience of being deserted by his parents, Durcan describes them as those who cannot be reached. The parents and the child are completely alienated from each other:

She [the child] is inside the sea
And they [the parents] are outside the sea.

Through the night, stranded, they stare

At the drowned, drowned face of their child. (“Parents” ll. 16-19)

The parents cannot save their drowning daughter from the sea. Sympathetic with a deep sense of helplessness, the speaker delivers the girl’s primal feeling of isolation, the separation from the parents. On the other hand, Durcan’s separation from his wife takes up again his major theme of loneliness. As shown in his several poems about his wife, Nessa, Durcan misses her and has good memories of her. After the divorce, he portrays himself as “a middle aged country man / With a clerical position in the city waterworks / With no close friends or relations or acquaintance” (“In the Tram,” ll. 6-8). Because he has no power to “cope with the isolation” (l. 4), the speaker feels an irresistible urge toward suicide: “Or in my overcoat with the velour collar / Go for a late night swim in the River Dodder / With stones in my pockets” (ll. 11-13). Caused by the separations from his parents and wife, Durcan’s loneliness can account for much of his sense of isolation. His broken personal relationships thus form part of his fundamental minoritarian spirit.

_Socio-Political Factors_

If part of Durcan’s feelings of isolation and loneliness come from his broken personal relationships within his family, another source of his minoritarian tendencies lies in socio-political factors. In the voice of a dying bird, Durcan in “Memoirs of a Fallen Blackbird” describes how a minoritarian has to face his death alone. Although “A thin rake of a young man”

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27 After Jack Butler Yeats’s *In the Tram* (illustrated in Durcan’s *Crazy About Women*).
makes a shallow grave for him, the speaker despondently expresses his desertedness. The main reason why he feels loneliness is that “They come no more to be with me” (l. 4). Although it is uncertain who they are, they may refer to his family, in particular, his parents or wife as his broken relationships demonstrated above. In addition, the identity of “They” can be interpreted politically. The previous poem, “Fermoy Calling Moscow,” listed right before “Memoirs of a Fallen Blackbird,” ends in “O they will never knock Mrs Crotty down” (l. 16, emphasis in the original); and the subjects “they” are identified in the first three lines: “Gunmen terrorise the tribe; / Parliamentarians dissemble and bribe; Churchmice and churchmen scratch heaven” (ll. 1-3). As “they” refers to the agents of sectarian violence, politicians, and priests, who have been persistently shown by Durcan as Irish evils, Durcan’s feelings of isolation can probably be discussed in terms of a rather broader social realm than merely those narrow domestic spheres that include his parents and wife.

As the speaker in “Dun Chaoín” deplores, “I am not welcome in this place” (l. 10), an Irish-speaking village, Durcan frequently states that he does not fit into the culturally and racially strict communities of Ireland. In that inflexible society and in regard to identity, the two characters in “Nights in the Gardens of Clare” reflect on how a minoritarian life amid ethnocentric Irish natives is miserable. In this poem, Durcan introduces a conversation between two lovers, Donal and Soledad. Donal is a silversmith in County Clare, and Soledad is the daughter of a captain from the Spanish Armada. When the Armada went aground at Lurga Point in September 1588, there were some survivors who settled in Ireland and have ever since been called “Black Irish” due to their black hair and dark complexions. As Donal consoles his lover, “Soledad, you’re so far away from home” (l. 175), her status as a foreigner in Ireland aptly resonates with Durcan’s minoritarian position in Ireland. Even if Soledad stays with her lover,
she feels threatened as she remembers how the Irish natives cruelly and collectively abused her when she was captured alive after the shipwreck: “They stripped me naked and hung masks of devils / From my buttocks and they painted faces on my breasts, / With marker pens they drew eyes on my breasts” (ll. 9-11). The main reason the Irish natives commit collective violence toward that exotic minority is due to their headstrong ethnocentrism:

The native Irish are obsessed with heads,

The native Irish are all heads, or rather,

They see themselves as being bodiless heads,

Their men are so full of their own heads

They think they have brains in their private parts. (ll. 12-16)

Soledad observes the natives from an outsider’s view and sees that the Irish are preoccupied with heads, which can mark a fundamental difference between the natives and foreigners. In particular, as Soledad has a different hair color – the aboriginal Irish is, supposedly, blond and the Spanish dark – hair color can display a basic standard to distinguish outsider from native.28 Although the outsiders’ bodies look almost the same as the natives’, the natives obsessed with heads ignore the bodies that have more similarities. That is the point at which Soledad feels excluded from the

28 Although the natives in the poem insist on their physical differences from the Spanish, genetic research has proved that there is a close ethnic link between the Irish and the Spanish, in particular those who are in northern Iberia. Contrary to the previous belief that the origin of Celtic ethnicity came from central Europe, Brian McEvoy, in “The Longue Durée of Genetic Ancestry: Multiple Genetic Marker Systems and Celtic Origins on the Atlantic Facade of Europe” (2004), argues that Atlantic European peoples, such as the Irish and the Spanish, shares similar genetic markers distinguishable from those of the central Europeans: “Here, we present both new mtDNA data from Ireland and a novel analysis of a greatly enlarged European mtDNA database. We show that mtDNA lineages, when analyzed in sufficiently large numbers, display patterns significantly similar to a large fraction of both Y-chromosome and autosomal variation. These multiple genetic marker systems indicate a shared ancestry throughout the Atlantic zone, from northern Iberia to western Scandinavia, that dates back to the end of the last Ice Age” (693).
majoritarian Irish. That image of an intransigent Ireland is closely linked to de Valera’s nation-state, which seriously restricted individual freedom on religious and ethical grounds. The sixteenth-century character, Soledad, speaks to the authority of de Valera in the twentieth-century, whose “eyes are always shut, thin obdurate man” (l. 148) toward the courting couples around his statue. Because of his strong “puritanical” (l. 138) morality, many young lovers like Donal and Soledad have to be expelled. Soledad admonishes de Valera: “Open your eyes, behold your children free / To stay at home, work at home, play at home, / Nights in the Garden of Clare” (ll. 149-51). Ireland was and is no longer home for Soledad and Durcan not only because she was a foreigner, but also because there is no freedom to stay, work, and play in twentieth-century Ireland. Durcan thus exposes how Irish society generates social minorities/minoritarians through repressive regulations on the citizens as well as on its outsiders. Through the voice of a racial minoritarian, Soledad, Durcan not only reveals traditionally deep-rooted Irish ethnocentrism, but also calls into question the oppressive state censorship as imposed on Stuart and Kavanagh.

As Durcan finds his minoritarian status in his relationship with family, Irish ethnocentrism, and the political rigidity of the state, he calls into question the injustice of the nation-state that oppressively discriminates against its citizens. In other words, the power of the state centers and impels Durcan’s minoritarian spirit. The speaker in “Goodbye Tipperary” converses with a minority lady who was “From birth a creature of religion’s war and exile” (l. 11). Because her father was a Scottish Protestant and her mother an English Catholic, she has lived as a religious exile. Her status as an exile rouses the speaker’s sympathy because he also feels that he has been excluded from his own country: “So that while I was telling her about our Irish tolerance / Of everything except women and freedom of conscience” (ll. 14-15). In that very country that has no freedom of conscience due to state censorship, he has to say goodbye to
the town of Tipperary. As he suddenly hears banging on the door and shrieking voices, he has no choice but to leave his native land: “Goodbyes got somehow wrung” (l. 29). Similarly, in “Going Home to Russia,” Durcan’s speaker feels suffocated by the censorious state policies and decides to leave Ireland for another home. The speaker on his way to Moscow waits for an Irish immigration officer at the airport. Excited about leaving Ireland and “Savouring the moment of liberation” (l. 18), he expresses, in the poem, his acute feeling that the state surveils every movement of individual citizens:

“Good luck,” he [an immigrant officer] mutters as if to a hostage or convict,

Not knowing that he is speaking to an Irish dissident

Who knows that in Ireland scarcely anybody is free

To work or to have a home or to read or write. (ll. 9-12)

Because the nation-state has played tyrannical oppressor to its citizens by preventing them from working, owning a home, reading or writing, the speaker willingly reveals that he is an Irish dissident. Through several socio-cultural regulations, citizens are treated as hostages or convicts just as the immigration officer abusively treats him. As for that oppressive Ireland, Boey observes in his analysis of this poem, “Ireland is pre-glasnost Russia, in the grips of oppression and censorship, while Russia is an Ireland of possibility, the place where an Irishman can feel at home” (367). It is an irony that Ireland anachronistically returns to the era of tyrannical state authority while its opponent, Russia,\(^\text{29}\) opens its gates to foreigners. Accordingly, harsher than

\(^{29}\) Russia, in particular, the Russian communists were consciously or unconsciously rejected by the Irish majoritarians, mainly because communism was considered a foreign influence, whether it was good or bad, by the nationalists in the 1930s, who frantically searched for so-called genuine Irishness. Gregory Dobbins points out “a conception of Irish difference heavily derived from a conservative understanding of Catholic morality and hostility to foreign influences like jazz, dancing, or socialism” (Lazy Idle Schemers 14)
the dictatorial government of Russia, Ireland becomes a prison to escape for Durcan. Rather, Russia is the place in which he can feel at home and liberated from the censorious state surveillance of the Irish state.

Under the overwhelming state censorship, Durcan considers himself a prisoner on parole. In “Doris Fashions,” he describes the overall atmosphere of Irish society in which citizens are treated as prisoners under strong censorships and state apparatuses. While Durcan’s speaker is waiting for a prison van to pick him up to take him to prison again, he glimpses his own face reflected on the window of a shop across the street. That image is so strange to him – “Hurted, hurtful, / All that ice, and all that eyebrow” (ll. 11-12) – that he averts his eyes from it. That is, however, at a moment of epiphany when he recognizes his desire for his own identity as he notices the name of the store: “That there is that much / To be salvaged from the wreckage of the moment – / That Doris Fashions” (l. 15-17). Through the impression the name gives him, the speaker can rediscover his self-image that has been lost as a prisoner. As he has long wandered in search of his own identity – “All my life I’ve dreamed of having a motto of my own – / My own logo – my own signature tune” (ll. 26-27) – Doris Fashions becomes his new identity found at the height of state oppression. That is why he believes in “Doris, and in Doris only” (l. 36), never in politicians like “John O’Donoghue” (l. 38), a former member of Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish Parliament. Durcan refuses to be defined by the state, the nation, or any politics because they have created socio-political minorities/minoritarians by territorializing them through oppressive regulations.

If Durcan feels like a minoritarian because of the state censorship that prevents him from expressing his own thinking and identity, he also becomes a self-exile when the state coerces him
into cultural nationalism. The speaker in “The Beckett at the Gate” is incessantly investigated by culture-obsessed people:

Why had I let myself

Be bothered and browbeaten

By all those cultural groupies

Going on, and on, and on,

“Have you not seen Barry McGovern’s Beckett?

Have you not been to the Beckett at the Gate?” (ll. 101-05)

The majoritarians incessantly ask if the speaker has seen the play. Contrary to those majoritarians frenzied with the theater, the speaker differentiates himself from them by saying “In any case, I am not mad / About going to the theatre” (ll. 19-20). Because of that collective cultural pressure of society, he feels “like a stranger in a new city, / And urchin in a New Jerusalem” (ll. 212-13). In the theater, what draws his attention to is not that must-see drama, but a lady who sits next to him. During the performance, he can only remember how she tried to attract him by leaning her head on his shoulder and brushing her hair against his cheekbone. He is not interested in the play anymore, but looks for her after the curtain comes down. In short, what he is concerned about is not that play unanimously acclaimed by the cultural majoritarians, but his extremely private relationship with a lady he happens to meet in the theatre. Giving a kick in the air, he despairingly murmurs the majoritarians’ interrogations again, “Have you not seen Barry McGovern’s Beckett? / Have you not been to the Beckett at the Gate?” (ll. 104-05). He
feels isolated and lonely again as he faces the cultural nationalists’ collective pressure that poisons his private realm.

Responsibilities of a Minoritarian Poet

Revelation of Tragic Reality

In that ethically, politically, and culturally rigorous society, the minoritarian poet, Durcan, finds his poetic responsibilities. He believes that poetry should be rooted in reality; the two realms of art and reality can be linked via epiphany: “And, anyway, what does it mean, that word ‘Epiphany?’ Poetry. An old word for poetry. Meaning a glimpse of reality; just a glimpse of reality; enough of a glimpse to keep us going until the next day” (Diary 3). Poetry, for Durcan, serves an epiphany, rather than a mere combination of symbolic words, through which a glimpse of reality can be revealed. If poetry can shed light on obscure reality, people can continue their lives. Here lies a basic function of poetry; that is to reveal the truthfulness of reality. Durcan’s major poetic responsibility is, thus, to disclose reality, whether it be harsh or absurd, from the perspective of those who are “we outsiders” (Diary 3), as the three Magi, the outsiders to the Israelites, found the Epiphany. Through his use of language, a poet can reveal the truth hidden behind unjust reality. Durcan in “Tribute to a Reporter in Belfast, 1974” compares a poet’s responsibility to that of a news reporter, Liam Hourican, who vividly depicted the violent and miserable reality of Northern Ireland during the Troubles:

Poets, is not this solitary man’s own uniquely

30 The differences between epiphany and symbol will be discussed in detail in chapter 3 in regard to a deterritorialization from a logic of representation intended to reveal singularities.
Utilitarian technique of truth-telling,

This finely apparent effort of his

To split the atom of a noun and reach truth through language,

To chip-carve each word and report

As if language itself were the very conscience of reality. (ll. 1-6)

A poet, for Durcan, is the one who believes in language that can represent “the very conscience of reality” (l. 6), as a reporter can candidly describe an event in reality with his candid use of language. In that sense, the journalist in the poem can be considered a true poet – “A poetry more / Than poetry is” (ll. 7-8) – in his earnest report of tragic reality in Northern Ireland. Durcan, however, laments the situation in which contemporary poets, perhaps including himself, cannot fulfill their poetic duties in comparison to the journalist.

In a country where words also have died an unnatural death

Or else have been used on all sides for unnatural ends

And by poets as much as by gunmen or churchmen.

Day and night his integrity of words has sustained us. (ll. 22-25)

If a poet and a journalist can share one thing in common, that is their utilization of words. Whereas the journalist, Hourican, fulfills his responsibilities with “verbal honesty” (l. 21), poets in Ireland have brought about an unnatural death of words. Because they have willfully manipulated words as sectarian gunmen and ideologically biased churchmen have taken advantage of words for illicit political reasons, the Irish majoritarian poets have debased their
words to into mere propaganda, in which Durcan finds the death of poetry. For the sake of “unnatural ends” (l. 23), whether they be Irish Republicanism or Unionism, poetic words were sacrificed to ideological conflicts during the Troubles. As a result, many poets in Ireland have lost the basic function of poetry to reveal the truth of reality through their epiphanic recognition of contemporary society. By carrying out a poet’s duty, the journalist, Hourican, unlike the majoritarian journalists and artists, struggles with “his integrity of words” (l. 25) against the world of deception and lies. In paying tribute to him, Durcan comes to a resolution that a poet should take a different path from that of a majoritarian, who is easily swayed by that ideological obduracy that brings about the death of words and poetry. In the true spirit of a minoritarian poet, Durcan assumes his poetic responsibility for revealing the truth of reality with the honesty of his words.

In the belief that a poet has to honestly reveal the real world, Durcan in “Cissy Young’s” articulates a reciprocal relationship between poetry and reality. In a public house, Cissy Young’s, the speaker senses his minoritarian position “Branded by the dominant males / Of the Irish tribe ‘a hippy’” (ll. 9-10). Seeking a more private location, he sits in a remote place in the bar, “As distinct from the public bar” (l. 14) crowded by the majoritairans of the so-called Irish tribe. In that private space, he reads the work of an eighteenth-century Irish philosopher George Berkeley31 and finds significant lessons in it:

That year in Cissy Young’s reading Berkeley

Was a foundation year in my life as a writer […]

Learnt the relationship between soul and body; […]

31 A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710).
Learnt that reality is poetry, poetry reality;

Learnt the way of all things;

Learnt the existence of God. (ll. 21-37)

As he accepts the main thesis of Berkeley’s subjective idealism – “To be is to be perceived” (l. 41) – Durcan erases an uncompromising boundary between poetry and reality. As Berkeley insisted that the outside world was composed of ideas, and hence there is no difference between the mind and reality in that both are states of ideas, Durcan learns that his mind, which composes poetry, is inseparable from the outside. Whereas traditional poetry sets a poet’s mind aside from agonizing reality as shown in Wordsworth’s Tintern Abbey or in Yeats’s Innisfree, Durcan sets his poetry deeply rooted in reality whether cruel or kind. If some traditional poets shut their eyes to injustice in reality as they build their own ivory towers and evasions in the world of poetry, Durcan learns how to willingly face and embrace harsh reality through his poetry; that is why he has consciously observed the Troubles in the north in comparison to majoritarian southern poets. As he actively joins the world through his poetry, Durcan in “Recife Children’s Project, 10 June 1995” finds a role model in Father Frank Murphy who founded a children’s project in Recife, Brazil, and has energetically participated in many issues for children for over thirty years. As they talk about poetry, the speaker finds that, for the father, “poetry is reality, reality poetry” (l. 33). Although he neither carries a gun nor prattles about the politics and religion in which sectarian paramilitary groups and politicians in Northern Ireland have been fanatically engaged, Durcan considers him a “Revolutionary hero of the twentieth century” (l. 41) because Father Murphy deeply values the importance of reality. A sense of reality embedded in poetry serves as
a crucial element for a minoritarian poet such as Durcan. His poetic responsibility thus can be fulfilled in truthfully relating reality.

A poet’s responsibility for looking into reality, in particular into the injustice of reality, emboldens Durcan to become a non-conformist, a true minoritarian. In imagining his last day, the speaker in “A Cold Wind Blew in from Lake Geneva” leaves his two lessons to his daughters: “Provincials to the Wall / And – Never Conform” (ll. 30-31, emphasis in the original). If a provincial can be read as a minoritarian, “the Wall” can be understood as a majoritarian standard, by which a minoritarian poet like Durcan feels frustrated due to its unbreakable obduracy. Despite that impediment, the speaker does not want to conform to the majoritarian way that may guarantee him a sense of complacency when he keeps silent to injustice of reality. A true minoritarian poet, however, has the courage to directly face tragic reality, as the speaker in “Cain and Abel” discovers an immoral relationship between his wife and his brother. In the voice of Cain, Durcan says, “I was sick of the pair of them / […] Poetry! / Poetry! To behold her eyes gaping at him / […] / Was enough to make me puke my roast lamb” (ll. 27-36). Not only does he adopt a minority voice, provided that Cain has conventionally been considered the wicked due to his murder of his brother Abel, but Durcan also criticizes that adultery of injustice by vomiting what he has. Poetry, for Durcan, must candidly face social corruption, rather than being stuffed into a lukewarm poetry recital. Ritualized in the feeble applause of the audience as depicted in “The Poetry Reading Last Night in the Royal Hibernian Hotel,” poetry starts to lose its power to face reality when it pursues compensation for nominal honor. A true poet, for Durcan, as Stuart insisted earlier, should be ready to abandon honor and acclaim provided by the majoritarians in order to sincerely and outspokenly observe and report reality.
Expression of Utopian Desires

In the sense that a minoritarian author faces the absurdity of the world, he always longs for a negation of the status quo to find a way to fulfill a desire for utopia. Francis Stuart in his article, “A Special Kind of Writer” (1981), evaluates Durcan, along with Wordsworth and Kavanagh, as a poet who seeks his failed utopia:

In the periods of doldrums, of national disillusion and marked civic corruption (there is always some degree of these) a special kind of writer seems to arise with his own perception of a kingdom of heaven which illuminates the murk. (27)

In times of socio-political crisis, which is susceptible to detection by minoritarians, Durcan glimpses utopian society out of his poetic responsibility. Finding a way out of territorializing force in reality is thus a crucial goal for the speaker in “The Death by Heroin of Sid Vicious.” Caught like a bird – “Caught me out in the intersecting arcs of the swirling searchlights” (l. 4) – the speaker appears as a defenseless prisoner. Although he tries to escape from the supervising eyes of Sid Vicious on “the watchtowers of the concentration camp” (l. 3) in hoping for “the clutch of luck” (l. 1), he is found and imprisoned again. Despite having been caught, he and his colleagues try another escape:

Unique and we broke for cover, crazily breasting

The barbed wire and some of us made it

To the forest edge, but many of us did not

Make it, although their unborn children did. (ll. 8-11)
No authorities can prevent those socio-political minoritarians from seeking a way out. The desire for deterritorialization is a fundamental characteristic of Durcan’s minoritarians. Even if they are captured under the oppressive circumstance of “The barbed wire” (l. 9) of the concentration camp, they finally fly to the forest in search of their freedom. Although not all of them succeed in that escape, they persistently long for a way out as the speaker concludes with “There – but for the clutch of luck – go we all” (l. 14). By repeating the first line at the end of the poem, Durcan emphasizes the desire of the minoritarians to escape from the territorializing forces in an oppressive reality like a prison. Expressing the will to escape thus becomes Durcan’s pivotal poetic responsibility as a minoritarian poet.

When Durcan’s minoritarians are oppressed, they fervently express their will to deterritorialize themselves from overwhelming power. As the title indicates, in dedication to the six Loreto nuns who died in June 1986, Durcan’s “Six Nuns Die in Convent Inferno” portrays an old nun who seeks a way out of the fire. With typical images of social minorities, the speaker describes herself as “the ultimate drop-out, / The delinquent, the recidivist, the vagabond, / The wild woman, the subversive, the original punk” (ll. 19-21). Completely isolated from the world outside, “Never to know the love of a man or a woman; / Never to have children of our own; / Never to have a home of our own” (ll. 56-58), she and the other nuns have lived like social outcasts. They are helplessly territorialized in the convent, in which there are “No fire-escapes outside, no fire-extinguishers inside” (l. 41). She can never escape from the fire; all she can do to escape from the fire is pray, that is daydream, a means of deterritorialization. A dream can bring her a sense of deterritorialization from the crisis: “Dreaming what would befall us if there were a fire” (l. 40). In her dreaming of “failed utopia,” she continuously seeks a way out of inescapably miserable reality. By dealing with “victims of society, escaping through delusion and fantasy”
(Gahern 112) as described in the poems, such as “The Haulier’s Wife Meets Jesus on the Road Near Moone,” “Brother, Can You Spare a Valium?” “The Rose of Blackpool,” Durcan is seriously concerned with escape routes for them. Durcan’s dream and imagination, the functions of which will be discussed in chapter 4, are frequently used as means of deterritorialization out of territorializing forces like rigorous religion, chauvinistic nationalism, and oppressive state apparatuses. Through dreaming of deterritorialization, Durcan earnestly expresses his poetic responsibility in search of a way out, utopia, another home.

Durcan’s pursuit of deterritorialization can also be expressed in his search for another home even if he knows he may not arrive there. In “‘Windfall,’ 8 Parnell Hill, Cork,” Durcan searches for the meaning of home. The speaker happily says that he is going home because he believes that he has the freedom at home of enjoying the scenery outside, sitting and watching TV with his children while his wife is smoking and drinking a cup of coffee. Owning a home is, for him, a “windfall” (l. 21) as he names his home exactly that. In addition, residing at home brings him “tranquility” (l. 6) and “ecstasy” (l. 20). Ireland, however, provides him no sense of home:

Down here in the dark depths of Ireland, […]

In a country where all the children of the nation

Are not cherished equally

And where the best go homeless, while the worst

Erect block-house palaces – self-regardingly ugly –

Having a home of your own can give to a family
A chance in a lifetime to transcend death. (ll. 29-37)

Contrary to the cozy and comfortable atmosphere at the speaker’s home, Ireland is no longer a home for him because it restlessly produces social minorities such as the children discriminated against. As Yeats anticipated the end of the world in “The Second Coming” by noting of his contemporaries – “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity” (ll. 7-8) – Durcan glimpses the gloomy reality of Irish contemporary society in which good people become homeless while bad ones, rather, selfishly build their fortresses. The nation-state as the people’s home has lost its fundamental role to the extent that it continuously represses and evicts its family members abroad. As a result, the speaker confesses:

I find myself now without a home

Having to live homeless in the alien, foreign city of Dublin.

It is an eerie enough feeling to be homesick

Yet knowing you will be going home next week;

It is an eerie feeling beyond all ornithological analysis

To be homesick knowing that there is no home to go home to. (ll. 107-12)

Dublin, in which Durcan was born, is not a home for him. He feels like an alien and the alien atmosphere of the city makes him long for another home. Because he knows that Dublin cannot provide the tranquility and ecstasy that he felt at home in the past, there is no place for him to return to. As the speaker feels like a “Homeless in Dublin” (l. 117), Durcan always wanders in search of a home. That is another part of the origins of Durcan’s loneliness and minoritarian spirit and, at the same time, another motive of finding an alternate home. Although the poet tries
to console himself by closing the poem – “We’re almost home, pet, don’t worry anymore, we’re almost home” (l. 127) – he seems to realize that he will never be able to reach home, at least not yet. Durcan becomes an everlasting wanderer, an ultimate minoritarian.

Durcan’s state as a perpetual wanderer is illustrated in “Ireland 1977.” Because of serious identity politics, mainly caused by paramilitary gunmen, politicians, and religious leaders, who formed the so-called Irish identity, there is no one to negotiate for Durcan, at least to have a conversation with him. In extreme dejection, the solitary speaker in “Ireland 1977” confesses:

“I’ve become so lonely, I could die” – he writes,

The native who is an exile in his native land:

“Do you hear me whispering to you across the Golden Vale?”

Do you hear me bawling to you across the hearthrug? (ll. 1-4)

Epitomizing Durcan’s minoritarian spirit, the line, “The native who is an exile in his native land” (l. 2), can best represent how Durcan has been excluded from the Irish mainstream and has become an everlasting wanderer in his own country. Although he was born in Ireland, he has no choice but to leave his native land as an exile because his words, regardless of whether he speaks softly or loudly and passionately, cannot be heard by the majoritarians or they do not care. There is an invisible, unbreakable wall of ideology between the Irish majoritarians and Durcan. A restless exile, Durcan, is rejected in his own land; that is why he longs for another home while at home. In “Self-Portrait ’95,” Durcan describes his state of everlasting migrant minoritarian:

“When he [Durcan himself] was in Copacabana, he was homesick for Annaghmakerrig; / When he got back to Annaghmakerrig / He was homesick for Copacabana” (ll. 2-4). Although he
arrives in some place, he soon feels lonely and unsettled in that place. As the title indicates, Durcan’s self-portrait is thus an example of a lonely minoritarian wandering around home in search of home.

Durcan in *Paul Durcan’s Diary* (2003) summarizes his minoritarian spirit in terms of a migrant mind:

> In the beginning of time […] we humans here in Ireland were all travelers […] But in time, we became lazy and we repressed the wandering parts of our souls and we erased certain fundamental human values and we placed greater and greater importance on “settling” until we have now reached the stage where we call ourselves “the Settled Community.” But actually we – the Settled Community – are very unsettled. Truth to tell, we are “the Unsettled Community.” […] we need urgently to find our Traveller roots – to go back to our original Traveller feelings and let go of our property mania and all the connected and related manias. (Diary 24)

As the ancient Irish traveler’s virtue was “Immortal Freedom” (24), Durcan aspires to a migrant mind unsettled to one place. Territorialization in a settled community for him can lead people to self-destruction described as “to rugby and kicking one another to death or to drugs or drink or to overdosing on the Internet or to money, money, money or to ‘uniting Germany’ or ‘uniting Ireland’ or some such hocus-pocus” (24). Although not all kinds of territorializations are bad, and, in the same way, not all deterritorializations are good, given that territorial forces basically hamper the free flow of desire, territorialization can result in fatal obsessions with cultural or ideological stagnation, in which the Nazi regime, for example, territorialized its people and
brought about historic destruction. That is the reason why Durcan decides to become a non-conformist minoritarian writer, an unsettled poet: “Alas other writers, all of them ‘Settled Writers’ – ‘Settled Novelists’ and ‘Settled Poets’ – thought I was joking” (25). In his minoritarian migrant mind, which can truthfully reflect reality, there is no absolute Irish identity, no concept of home or of nation artificially constructed by an oppressive state authority. As Durcan commemorates President Mary Robinson’s election in “The Mary Robinson Years,” new Irish home is open “For all the exiles of the Irish diaspora” (l. 2). Overcoming a bigoted concept of Irishness plays a key role in Durcan’s minoritarian literature. In quoting biblical verse – “The just shall flourish like the palm tree” (Psalms 91:13) – as the preface to the poem, Durcan hopes for an Ireland in which there is no discrimination or violence caused by the territorialized concept of nation, and in which all minoritarians including Irish emigrants like Irish-Americans, Irish-Australians, and Irish-Britons can feel at home. In defense of the minoritarians, who have long been excluded and discriminated against by the majoritarians, Durcan pronounces his minoritarian poetic responsibilities as his predecessors fulfilled them throughout their lives.
Chapter 2. “Durcan’s Anti-Oedipus”

As discussed in the previous chapter, the rationale behind Durcan’s minoritarian spirit lies in his loneliness caused by the separation from his parents and wife, and the oppressive powers of extreme nationalism and the rigid identity politics of the nation-state. In particular, Durcan’s descriptions of his conflict with his father are significant in that the father-son conflict in general can represent, in modern Irish history after the Act of Union (1800), progressive energy by which sons have denied those fathers who connived with colonial power or oppressive state apparatuses. As Christina Hunt Mahony observes, one of Durcan’s main literary motifs is “Rejection of the father or fathers, or the nation as defined by the father” (277). Durcan is critical of his father and his father’s authoritative insistence on national identity. In addition, when Durcan finds his father’s complicity with the state apparatuses – Durcan’s father was a circuit judge of the Republic of Ireland – he starts to sense the violence of the apparatuses. By preventing Irish individuals from enjoying freedom of expression, apparatuses such as the courts, the Church, and cultural institutions become powerful oppressors through their censorious regulations. Durcan exposes the fact that they are prejudiced by ethnocentric nationalism and/or obsessed with materialism and reveals their hypocrisies. In addition, Durcan conveys ambivalent feelings regarding his father because he realizes that his father was deserted by the state despite his lifelong devotion to the state as a state judge as his father was left in a lonely hospital on his deathbed. If Durcan were dedicated only to overcoming his father’s authority and found his poetic responsibility in that, his poetry would remain within the stage of the Oedipus complex. With his acute recognition of the violence the state committed upon his father, however, Durcan transcends simple Oedipal anxieties. When he begins to acknowledge that the oppressive power of the state apparatus always lurks behind his father, Durcan can establish an anti-Oedipal
tradition in which he not only challenges the violence of his father and the state, but also can recognize the miserable condition of his dying father abandoned by the state as well as his father’s complicity with the state.

The relationship between father and state, in particular the father’s complicity with state power, is a major thesis in Deleuze and Guattari’s theorization of Anti-Oedipus and minor literature. In capitalist societies, the Oedipal family structure, papa-mama-me, serves to restrict individual desires in the domestic realm. Human desire for Deleuze and Guattari, as Ronald Bogue aptly summarizes, “is concentrated in the nuclear family, and hence individualized, and that only a residual and ‘commodified’ desire invests the larger social domain, which is [already] regulated by the economic relations of capital” (88). As a result, individual desires are territorialized in the family structure in which the father’s authority, the father’s voice in psychoanalytic terms, dominates the son’s desire to escape. Psychoanalysis, however, exclusively focuses on that family structure without considering exterior powers. That is one of the reasons that Deleuze and Guattari are opposed to psychoanalysis, which reinforces that restrictive domestic structure. One of the ways to escape that restriction is to enlarge Oedipus to the point of absurdity whose effects are as follows: “the discovery of a contrario of other triangles that operate beneath and, indeed, in the familial triangle” (Kafka 14); “the a posteriori outlining of paths of escape of the orphaned becoming-animal” (14). The first effect, in particular, is significant because Deleuze and Guattari indicate that the family structure, which is considered the whole world by psychoanalysts, is closely linked to external power: “one discovers behind the familial triangle other infinitely more active triangles from which the family itself borrows its own power, its own drive to propagate submission,” (11), or “‘the too well-formed family triangle’ is really only a conduit for investments of bigger power” (11). In short, behind the
familial triangle, other triangles of power, the state apparatuses, have already existed; that is the point at which Durcan acutely recognizes the father-state complicity. Not only does he challenge the father’s oppressive authority as Irish modernists have already shown, but he also detects the state power outside the familial boundary that incessantly subdues and disciplines the children of the Irish Oedipus.

**An Anti-Oedipal Tradition in Irish Literature**

The incongruent relationship between father and son has been a classic theme in a Freudian Oedipal structure in which the father or the father’s voice dominates the son, and the son fails to escape from his father’s authority. In Greek tragedy, *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus is tormented by his patricide and physically blinds himself out of guilt, which is a self-punishment. Although he “successfully” eliminates his rivalry, his father, he is still under the father’s authority, the father’s voice. Despite the father’s irresistible influence, Durcan and his contemporaries from the 1960s to the 1980s have consciously distinguished themselves from their father’s generations or have been earnestly opposed to their father’s legacies. If traditional sons were subject to their fathers’ authority, these new sons have raised their resistant voices against those fathers. They no longer fear the father’s voice, but overcome guilty consciences. They are no longer children of Oedipus but a new generation of anti-Oedipals. Those anti-Oedipal tendencies through which sons triumph over fathers, however, are not new to Irish history. According to Declan Kiberd, there was already an anti-Oedipal theme earlier in modern Irish literature as he discusses in his analysis of Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*: 
What was written, again and again through the Irish revival, was an *Anti-Oedipus*, which saw the ancient tale not as awful tragedy but as happy comedy. True, the children of Oedipus felt the pangs of fear and guilt which assailed the scattered offspring of Old Mahon – but Christy’s comic patricide becomes the basis of a true morality, and it is his insurgency which makes History possible. […] The fathers in *A Portrait* and *The Playboy* are so unvital that they can scarcely see their sons at all. (*Inventing Ireland* 388, emphasis in the original)

The father’s image in modern Irish literature, including some works of the Literary Revival, had no longer a dominant voice that made sons confess their guilt. Instead, the fathers tended to be challenged by their children as shown when Christy in *The Playboy* attempted to murder his father twice. Christy’s patricide can be read as a simple expression of the Oedipus complex to overcome his unbearable father who is described as “snoring,” “raging,” “cursing,” and “damning” man (Synge 25). The major difference, however, between the ancient Oedipus and the Irish Oedipus, Christy, is that whereas the former was tormented by a guilty conscience after the murder, the latter was not. Christy was rather proud of killing his father; even the villagers praised his courageous deed. In that regard, as Kiberd indicates, there was a sense of comedy rather than one of tragedy in that peculiar Irish Oedipus, namely the anti-Oedipus. Although there may have underlain a danger of re-Oedipalization, in which the revolutionary murder could result in the advent of some new fathers or authoritative figures (Kiberd 389), Christy’s and Stephen’s searches for true fathers by no means resolved themselves into substitute authority figures. By resisting both an authoritative father who invoked guilty consciences in his children and alternative ones, the anti-Oedipus created a new tradition in modern Irish society. Kiberd

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32 Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses.*
goes on to say that in societies on the verge of revolution, the relationship between father and son can be reversed. The fathers turn into an object of their son’s criticism “either because they [the fathers] had compromised with the occupying English in return for safe positions as policemen or petty clerks, or because they had retreated into a demeaning cycle of alcoholism and unemployment” (380). The Irish fathers, as a result, were often described as defeated men, whose wives had to win the bread for the entire family, and the fathers became enfeebled because mothers took over the patriarchal power in the absence of fathers in the family. They also became powerless because priests, the Fathers, had already usurped the secular father’s authority. Fathers in Synge, Joyce, or O’Casey share those features. Christy’s father, Mahon, in The Playboy is an incompetent drunkard as he tries to make Christy marry a widow in order to get some money for his drinking. Simon Dedalus in A Portrait loses his patriarchal authority as he drinks and sentimentalizes his former youth. In a similar way, Mr. Boyle in Sean O’Casey’s Juno and the Paycock, another drinking father, pays little attention to domestic affairs but only to national ones without any relational or economic contributions to his family. Their incompetence could perhaps be excused in the actual colonial situation in which the domestic economy of Ireland was devastated to the extent that one-third of the population starved to death, another-third emigrated, and the remainder had to endure miserable socio-economic hardships under colonialism. Sons and daughters, however, did not simply justify their fathers’ defeatism. For example, by sharing feelings of grudge against their fathers, Christy and Pegeen in The Playboy consider their fathers unbearable. Stephen in A Portrait leaves his home and parents, although he returns to Ireland to achieve almost nothing as described in Ulysses. Notwithstanding, as Kiberd argues, Christy’s comic patricide or Stephen’s flight can become the basis of a true morality and
that insurgency impels modern Irishmen to proceed through their anti-Oedipal transition in contemporary history.

If sons in the Revival and the modern period had managed to overcome their father’s authority with anti-Oedipal energies, there was the father’s revenge in the post-liberation state. The Irish Free State started to discipline the rebellious children of Oedipus. The creativities of the new generations were also systematically held in check through strong identity politics that culminated in the Censorship Act of films in 1923 and of publications in 1929. In addition, diverse socio-ethical regulations were enacted regarding divorce, abortion, and contraception. Accordingly, many artists and intellectuals had to leave their newly liberated country in search of freedom of expression. Against the despotic father’s voice of the nation-state, new generations since the 1960s have called into question Éamon de Valera’s status as the father of the nation. For example, de Valera in Neil Jordan’s film, *Michael Collins* (1996), is satirized through an emasculated image when he disguises himself as a prostitute, and by his greed for power when he eliminates his political rival, Michael Collins. As Elizabeth Cullingford observes, the film serves as “the re-invention of Ireland’s paternity, the undoing of de Valera’s right to be called ‘the father of us all’” (8-9). In the same manner, contemporary novelist Roddy Doyle in *A Star Called Henry* (1999) portrays de Valera, not as the father of the state, a politically constructed figure through his famous photo titled “The last man to surrender” (156) to the British army at the end of the Easter Rising. However, because of that propagandistic image of de Valera, in which the protagonist Henry also appears, Henry distances himself from him by refusing to call his nickname: “I never called him Dev” (156). Doyle rather suggests alternative father images different from de Valera. James Connolly who teaches the protagonist how to read during the

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33 According to the 1937 Constitution of Ireland, divorce was banned: “No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage” (Article 41. 3. 2)
Dublin Lockout takes over the educational role of a father. More important, regarding his own father, the protagonist describes his father as a heroic figure. Contrary to the modernist descriptions of incompetent and drunkard fathers, his father is reliable and diligent in supporting his family as he “never slept. He guarded us all day and waited. And he went to work every evening” (44). In addition, because his father saves his two children from death, the protagonist Henry remembers him as his hero. Although Doyle suggests a father figure, that image is completely different from the ones of many modernists’. Doyle searches for an alternative paternal image to shatter the politically constructed father image of de Valera. The brink of the Free State, for Doyle, is the time when revolutionary sons and daughters were able to disclose the insincerity and hypocrisy of the forged father of the nation.

Those critical attitudes toward father and the nation-state reflect one of the main streams of contemporary Irish culture. Since the Celtic Tiger boom in the 1990s, many writers and film directors have reinterpreted the age of de Valera. Answering to that peculiar phenomenon, Joe Cleary in *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (2007) maintains that it is an expression of nostalgia:

[It] was a nostalgia for a time where there were still battles to be fought, still alternative futures to be struggled for […] a peculiarly post-modern, post-revolutionary nostalgia for a lost time of meaningful historical conflict when the nation could imagine that it still had weighty, decisive historical choices left to make. (211)

After achieving national independence and economic development, Irish society lost the revolutionary energy that it had maintained since the colonial invasion. Irish people then asked
whether there was any new future left to imagine. Although Cleary furthers the discussion to develop his postcolonial thesis in defense of “a non-modern aural and visual landscape still immune from the noisy routines of industrial agriculture” (230), contemporary criticism about the age of the birth of the nation-state can be directly related to the anti-Oedipal tradition now introduced. In their denial of the domineering father, Irish sons have enthusiastically expressed a sense of deterritorialization, a line of flight, not only from the father’s incompetence but also from the father’s oppressive authority. In particular, along with the sons’ critique of fathers, they challenge the ideology of the nation-state as they reevaluate the image of de Valera as the official father of the nation. Because their fathers or the men of their fathers’ generation, including de Valera, founded the nation-state and its apparatuses, the ideology of the state is called into question. Hence, that is the point at which a significant connection between the father and the state can be found.

**Durcan’s Criticism of His Father**

Durcan’s anti-Oedipal tendencies can be found in his recognition of his father’s oppression. He plainly pronounces, “Every child has a madman on their street: / The only trouble about our madman is that he’s our father” (“Madman” ll. 1-2). Durcan’s father, John James Durcan (1907-1988), frequently appears in his poems as an oppressor who takes control over or tries to attack his son as he “is waiting to ambush” (“Poetry, a Natural Thing” l. 14). In “Sport,” Durcan portrays himself as a helpless son who has to live up to his father’s expectations. The speaker is selected to play Gaelic football for a mental hospital in which he has been hospitalized by his father. His father attends the game to “observe” (l. 14) him from the sidelines. When the
speaker plays as goal keeper, his father praises him for his spectacular saves. Nevertheless, that encouragement given by his father becomes oppressive to the speaker:

It was my knowing
That you were standing on the sideline
That gave me the necessary motivation –
That will to die
That is as essential to sportsman as to artists. (ll. 44-48)

The father’s observing eyes on the sideline cause the necessary motivation of will to die in the mind of the speaker. Then, the reader may ask why the speaker seeks the will to die in the face of his father’s encouragement. Given that Durcan is not in favor of Irish Revivalism or cultural nationalism, the speaker is probably reluctant to play that game, made popular by the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) in the late 1880s. In addition, the day is his “twenty-first birthday” (l. 4) when his own autonomy as an individual adult should be confirmed. The speaker is, however, still under the patriarchal authority as an everlasting child. In short, the speaker is territorialized threefold: physically in a mental hospital, culturally in a Gaelic football game, and psychologically in his father’s authority. The three territorializing forces mainly come from his father who “had hopes for me [the speaker]” (l. 2) in sport, and surveils him now. The more the father encourages him during the game, the more the speaker feels the pressure of those oppressive powers surrounding him. The harder he plays, the deeper he is territorialized in those authorities. The speaker, in the end, “In your eyes […] achieved something at last” (l. 58)
through his saves during the game to live up to his father’s overwhelming expectations. Durcan’s father thus acts as a tyrant who forces his son to obey his orders.

The father’s oppressive power is well represented in “Study of a Figure in a Landscape, 1952.” As Durcan notes about this poem, “after Francis Bacon,” he has a motif in Bacon’s painting by using the same title of Bacon’s.⁴ In the original painting, there is a naked man squatting in the middle of long grasses in a forest. As Bacon’s typical descriptions of a figure in his paintings illustrate, the lines of the man’s body, especially his head, are blurred, that is what Deleuze in Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (2003) calls “the head without a face” (19), which signifies meat, “the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility” (21). More important, what meat gushes is pity:

Pity the meat! Meat is undoubtedly the chief object of Bacon’s pity, his only object of pity, his Anglo-Irish pity.⁵ […] Meat is not dead flesh; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, color, and acrobatics. Bacon does not say, ‘Pity the beasts,’ but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. (21)

The aura that Bacon’s “Study of a Figure in a Landscape, 1952” creates is a sense of pity for minorities, those who endure sufferings and pain.⁶ Although Durcan has probably not read Deleuze, Durcan’s reflection of the original painting in his own poem definitely appropriates the theme of sufferings and pity caused by father. Durcan introduces a conversation between son and

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⁴ See Fig. 2. (Appendix)
⁵ Francis Bacon was born in Dublin in 1909.
⁶ Bacon often appropriated the motif of the Crucifixion in which a minority’s sufferings are represented. Refer to his paintings, such as Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion.
father in which the father authoritatively interrogates his son regarding his bowel movement;
interestingly enough, the man in the original painting seems to sit on a toilet, of which image
Durcan appropriates:

– Did your bowels move today?

– Yes, Daddy.

– And what time did your bowels move today?

– At eight o’clock, Daddy.

– Are you sure?

– Yes, Daddy. (ll. 1-6)

The speaker’s father presses on with questions about the speaker’s bowel movement many times
as if he were a prosecutor or a judge – Durcan’s father was, in fact, a circuit judge. When the
speaker puts “Daddy” at the end of every short answer, he seems to feel as if he were standing in
front of a judge and making a statement in a courtroom. As the father repetitively questions the
bowel movement despite the son’s consistent answers, the son finally but forcibly confesses that
he is not sure about the movement. At the same time, he suddenly begs, “[…] but please don’t
beat me, Daddy. / Don’t be vexed with me, Daddy” (ll. 16-17). Threatened by probable violence
if he cannot live up to his father’s expectations, he turns out to have lied about the bowel
movement. His father does not physically punish him. Instead, he “benignly” but solemnly
delivers a judge-like verdict: “– Constipation is the curse of Cain. / – Yes, Daddy. / […] / If your
bowels do not move, you are doomed” (ll. 34-40). The boy’s father as ultimate authority not only
diagnoses and judges the son’s body, but also regulates it with a specific instruction:
– Are you in your starting blocks?

– Yes, Daddy.

– When I count to three, leap from your starting block.

– I can’t Daddy.

– Can’t, can’t.

– Don’t, Daddy, don’t Daddy, don’t Daddy, don’t. (ll. 49-54)

By making the son ready to run off toward a bathroom, the father dominates the helpless body of his son. When the father sets his son in imaginary starting blocks, he imposes a race on the son that causes “the strain of competition [which] gives way to a terror of failure and punishment” (O’Brien 86). The speaker’s body is already under control as a Foucaultian docile body. His body must be operated according to his father’s weird belief, “Constipation is the curse of Cain” (l. 34), in which a mere physical phenomenon gives rise to a metaphysical, religious judgment. The father’s politics of the body thus exerts territorializing forces that control individual bodies in which religious doctrines and juridical punishment are already reinforced through the father’s patriarchal authority. However, when the speaker says, “I can’t Daddy” (l. 52), he expresses his unwillingness, or at least his inability, to observe his father’s orders, although he anticipates punishment: “don’t Daddy, don’t” (l. 54). Although he weakly expresses his resistance to that authority enacted from the position of the judge, he is still intimidated by father’s power to dominate his body.
Dangerous State Apparatuses

As the poem above illustrates, the father’s oppression and violence can be linked to the power of the state. The complicity between father and state plays a pivotal role in Durcan’s anti-Oedipal minor literature. As for that complicity, Edna Longley observed:

A judge and stalwart of the Catholic-bourgeois Fine Gael party, Durcan’s father figures as an exaggerated epitome of the patriarchal roles assumed by state and Church: censor, fascist, landlord, sports-fanatic, (hypocritical) Irish-language fanatic, Abraham who would kill his deviant son, or destroy his mind, “saint and murderer.” (*The Living Stream* 65)

Although Longley furthers her discussion about “matriarchal utopia” (66) in Durcan’s resistance to the father’s authority, she acutely points out the father’s patriarchal power in tandem with the state and the church. The violence of Durcan’s father can often be described through his position as a state judge: “The President of the Circuit Court / Of the Republic of Ireland, / Appointed by the party of the Fine Gael” (“Poem Not Beginning with a Line by Pindar” ll. 15-17). There is a close relationship between the father’s authority and the power of the state. The father justifies IRA terrorism in expressing sectarian violence. By juxtaposing the IRA and his father appointed by the state, the young speaker insinuates that they are the same in their violent mentality. In that close relationship between his father and the state juridical system, the father’s violence can be read as the state’s. As his father approves of the terrorism, the state can connive with the IRA. In addition, the religious ideology of the Catholic Church is deeply rooted in that violence against the Protestants. Hence the powerful alliance consolidates his father, the state, and the IRA, which reveal “the roots of fascism in Ireland” (l. 34) via the Church. As Durcan notices his father’s
complicity with state power, he turns his critical attitude toward the state apparatuses. According to Louis Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1971), the ideological state apparatus serves to reproduce the relations of production of a society. Because the reproduction of the relations of production causes individuals to become submissive to the established order and to the ruling ideology of the state, the state apparatuses become a major target of Althusser’s criticism. Since “The Repressive State Apparatus functions ‘by violence,’ whereas the Ideological State Apparatus functions ‘by ideology’” (145), the ideological state apparatus, in particular, ideology becomes the main concern for Althusser. By interpellating individuals as subjects, ideology territorializes individuals under state power. Although there are some weaknesses in his argument, his insight is still significant in that he recognizes the family as an ideological state apparatus along with churches, schools, and courts (145). In other words, as discussed so far, there is a close link between the family, in particular, the father, and the ideological state apparatuses. The family and the father can serve as an active ideological state apparatus that sustains the status quo of the ruling-class ideology. In the era of capitalism, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, a family willingly restricts individual desires within its domestic realms and territorializes them, by maintaining the established power exterior to the family. Because of the regulations inside and out, the resistance of an individual within a family should necessarily be considered in terms of the state power outside the family. In other words, anti-Oedipal struggles are not limited to the family, but expand to a critique of state power, especially,

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37 For Althusser, there are two types of state apparatuses: the repressive state apparatus such as police authority and the ideological state apparatus such as the church and education.

38 ‘Ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’” (Althusser 174).

39 Stuart Hall in “The Problem of Ideology” points out two weaknesses in Althusser’s thesis. His theorization is too orthodox, on the one hand, and it is too functionalist, on the other: “If the function of ideology is to reproduce capitalist social relations, how does one account for subversive ideas or for ideological struggle?” (32).
the state apparatuses. Hence comes Durcan’s critique of the state apparatuses by which the state ideology is inculcated in individuals.

The Church-State Alliance

The Irish Catholic Church and its people have long been involved in politics. After the Penal Laws⁴⁰ at the end of the seventeenth-century were imposed on Irish Catholics as well as on Protestant dissenters, they were seriously discriminated against in overall socio-political areas. As Irish antagonism toward the English dramatically accumulated, the rebellion of 1798 led by the United Irish Men, whose leaders were Theobald Wolfe Tone and Edward Fitzgerald, inspired by the French Revolution, broke out and was severely crushed by the English authorities. In response to the rebellion, the Act of Union in 1800 approved of the amalgamation of Ireland with Britain. As for the Act of Union, Irish Catholic Church initially was not officially associated with Irish nationalism. In Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy (1997), Kearney observes that

[…] it [the Catholic hierarchy] feared the nationalist-republican ideas being imported into Ireland from the French Revolution were anti-Catholic. The fact that these ideas were also anti-British meant, logically, that a tacit alliance of interests bound Maynooth⁴¹ and Westminster together: the Catholic hierarchy actually approved the abolition of the Irish parliament and union with Britain in 1800 […]. (7)

⁴⁰Because of the dispute over the annulment of the marriage of King Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII proclaimed the separation of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church and the Act of Supremacy in 1534. If anyone refused to acknowledge the King as “the only Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England,” they were executed for treason. As a result, on the pretext of struggle against Catholic conspiracies, Catholics in Ireland suffered serious social discriminations, such as deprivation of the right to vote or to own land.
⁴¹Maynooth is a representative town of the Irish Catholic hierarchy, which has St. Patrick’s college referred to as “National Seminary for Ireland.”
In following a common strategy, “my enemy’s enemy is my friend,” the Catholic hierarchy came to reject French revolutionary ideas but ironically to accept the Act of Union with Britain. Despite the hierarchy’s tactics, the lives of Catholics did not dramatically improve after the Penal Laws. In an attempt to ameliorate the living conditions of Irish Catholics, Daniel O’Connell led the campaign for Catholic Emancipation, which was largely achieved in 1829, and the Penal Laws were finally abolished in 1920. As O’Connell successfully organized the mass-based movement, he furthered his political goal of repeal the Union by appealing to the collective national consciousness of Catholics. “Tens of thousands of labourers, fisherfolk and farm workers walked to hear him,” Kiberd observes, and, thus, O’Connell “achieved an ideal rapport with the Irish peasantry, a rapport that would be the envy and aspiration of many writers of the Irish Renaissance” (Inventing Ireland 20-21, emphasis in the original). That was a crucial moment when Catholics achieved a “corporate identity and a sense of their own massed power” (Kiberd 21), based on O’Connell’s strategic combination of improvement of the socio-political environment for Catholics (repeal of the Penal Laws) and national aspiration for an independent state (repeal of the Act of Union). As the Catholic masses were disappointed by that stymied revolution, they soon became desperate due to the Great Famine in the 1840s, which was caused by potato blights. The responsibility for the famine was often attributed to British colonialism during which the exploitative free trade policy with Ireland after the Union already exhausted the soil of Irish farmland. As a result, many of the Catholics who made up majority

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42 Marx in Ireland and the Irish Question referred to O’Connell as a “political juggler” because he “led the Irish people by the nose and deceived them for thirteen years by means of the word ‘Repeal’” (48). The Irish bourgeois liberals including O’Connell, according to Marx and Engels, tried to use the Catholic agitation for repeal of Union in the name of the national movement “solely as means for exerting pressure on the English Government to make it grant small concessions to the Irish bourgeoisie and landowners” (419). Although they set up the Repeal Association in 1840, they ended up compromising with the English ruling classes, so that the revolutionary word ‘repeal’ was emasculated.

43 Marx and Engels observed that the land was becoming unproductive due to absentee landlords: “Amount to pay rent to absentees, and interest to mortgagees (1834), over 30 million dollars. Middlemen accumulated fortunes that
of the victims of the famine believed that “God sent the potato-bligh, but the English caused the Famine” (qtd. in Kiberd 21). Against that harsh socio-economic background, Irish Catholics deliberately assembled their collective consciousness regarding Irish national identity. Based on the collective sense of identity against colonial power, as national aspiration of independence soared up, Catholicism took advantage of the people to represent a unifying collective identity as wholly Catholic for a newly emerging nation-state.

If the Catholic Church contributed to forming a national collective identity based on Catholic antagonism against Britain on the one hand, the Church drew on an ethical ground to construct that collective consciousness on the other. Seamus Deane notes that when the Church adopted a view from the 1870s of the First Vatican Council’s “identification of modernism as the enemy of all that was Christian” (210), anti-modernist Catholicism started to take control over Irish cultural spheres. The Church began to promote its conservative ethics, such as its emphasis on celibacy and temperance. In particular, the late marriage tradition after the Famine resonated with sexually conservative Catholicism. David Lloyd in *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity 1800-2000: The Transformation of Oral Space* (2011) explains the post-Famine economy in which

the small family farm rather than the large capitalist enterprise emerged as the dominant form of land-holding, while grazing rather than grain production became the principal agricultural activity. In cultural terms, the most striking impact of the Great Hunger and of the post-Famine emergence of these small...
family holdings was the institution of primogeniture and its concomitant effect: an economically prudent emphasis on late marriage on the part of the oldest son and high rates of migration or emigration on the part of younger children. (85)

More important, when the Free State of the de Valera regime (1932-1948) affirmed strong Catholic values for Irish identity, the combination of the Church and the State, that is the Irish Catholic nation-state, was born:

By 1932, the year of the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, celebrating 1500 years of Christianity in Ireland, and the year in which Eamon de Valera assumed power, the alliance between an anti-modernist Church and an introverted state and culture had been consolidated. (Deane 211)

That close relationship was reflected in the 1937 Constitution of Ireland: “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” (Article 44. 1. 2). Since that time, the Irish Catholic Church has officially regarded as a majoritarian identity in Irish politics. The Church became the most active agent in socio-ethical issues such as contraception, abortion, and divorce through which the state has continually tried to discipline Irish citizens. From that background, the Church in its complicity with the state appears as an oppressive authority outside the family circle. The Church as a state apparatus thus becomes a major object of anti-Oedipal criticism for Durcan.

When Durcan challenges the authority of the Church, he does not mean that he denies all the systems of the Church. Durcan maintains a stance within the official realm of the Irish Catholic Church as an active Irish Catholic. In addition, he appropriates the style of
“confessional poetry” for his writings. The main point of his criticism is, as Eamon Grennan observes, “the various life-denying hypocrisies-in-residence of Church and State” (48). The hypocrisies of the Church can be found in two ways in Durcan’s poems: its materialism and sexual corruption on the one hand, and its collusion with the state ideology on the other. Although the Free State and the Republic of Ireland have claimed to stand for anti-modernism to distinguish themselves from secular cultures of foreign influences, the Irish Catholic priests are often described as filled with material and carnal desires. In “Tullynoe: Tete-a-Tete in the Parish Priest’s Parlour,” Durcan introduces a conversation between two nuns on the day of a priest’s funeral. They evaluate him as “a grand man” several times. Durcan, however, exposes the hypocrisy of the priest as he overhears some secrets of the dead. The priest turns out to be a hypocrite; the nuns say, “he had the most expensive Toyota you can buy” (l. 19) or “he used to have an Audi” (l. 11). He even had a wife and an illegitimate son, who became a doctor. As a result, the priest is not a grand man at all but the one contaminated with secular materialism and sexual corruption. That plot of the poem may remind the reader of Joyce’s “The Sisters,” in which a young narrator observes Father Flynn’s funeral and, in particular, the conversation between two sisters. At the end of the story, he finds that the priest may have suffered a mental breakdown that resonates with the term “paralysis” (1) that runs through the fifteen short stories in Dubliners. Like Joyce, Durcan talks about the death of the priest, paralysis of church authority due to the very secularity it has regarded as its enemy. Moreover, when the two sisters in that poem assess the dead priest as a grand man, “Ah, but he was a grand man” (l. 24), despite his suspect deeds, they are also contaminated by the very materialism with which the priest was engrossed. Here lies the corruption of the whole church. The problem is not only that of one individual priest, but also of others like the nuns within the church.

44 Durcan portrays two snobbish nuns in “High-Speed Car Wash” who adore a Peugeot, an expensive French
Catholic priests are also described as filled with sexual desires. In “Bishop Robert Clayton and His Wife Katherine,” the speaker exposes his simultaneous pious duty and sexual concupiscence: “I hold the Gospel in my left hand. Her thigh in my right hand” (ll. 25-26). In addition, Durcan in “The Archbishop Dreams of the Harlot of Rathkeale” reveals the hidden lust of an archbishop in his surrealistic dream: “I see her walking down the road at evening / Wearing a red scarf and black high-heel shoes; / She is wearing nothing else and the sun” (ll. 1-3). In the same manner, as the title indicates, the poem, “Cardinal Dies of Heart Attack in Dublin Brothel,” exposes the religious hypocrisy of a cardinal who desires the beauty of the body of a prostitute:

My soul is borne up on wing of flame

In which I think again of the aged cardinal’s submission

To that lovely, ephemeral woman

And of her compassion which, by all accounts,

Was as tender as it was fiery.

I depart the church, feeling restored in body and soul. (ll. 17-22)

The Church has no more authority over an individual as it loses the morality to which it has clung. In desiring the physical, fleeting beauty of the body, which the Church has disdained, the old cardinal exposes how the Church has lost its spiritual authority. Because there is no power but hypocrisy in the Church, the speaker ironically feels “restored in body and soul” (l. 22), when he leaves the church. The Church has already handed over its role of restoration of the body and soul of an individual to the speaker. Durcan thus satirizes “the loosening clerical grip

vehicle, in which the speaker and his girlfriend make love.
on public mores,” as David Wheatley observes, and notices “the collapse of Church authority” through the “removal of legal sanctions on contraception, homosexuality, and divorce (though not abortion)” (253) by the 1990s. His farewell to the church thus can signify his rejection of another “father,” the Father of the Church. Durcan overcomes the Father, the Church in his anti-Oedipal desire. When he challenges the Church, his critique is not simply focused on its moral corruption. Because the Church has a great influence on legislation of the nation-state, in particular on the laws that regulate the bodies of the citizens, Durcan’s questioning of hypocritical morality of the Church undermines the legislative authority of the Church. In addition, provided that the Church and the State found fundamental bases of Irish nationalism, his critical tasks can be also read as a political challenge to hegemonic nationalists.

If Durcan criticizes the church for the secular desires and the body politics, its conservative ideology complicit with the state also becomes a major target for his criticism. Just as Althusser regards the church as an ideological state apparatus that submits individuals to state power, Durcan in “Irish Hierarchy Bans Colour Photography” finds a close political alliance between church authority and state ideology. In the voice of a news announcer, he introduces a meeting of the Irish Hierarchy that decides to ban the practice of color photography. As the meeting is held “in their nineteenth-century fastness” (l. 3), the decision sounds not only anachronistic but also archaically obstinate in its ivory tower without any recognition of new demands from the people. What is worse is that the churchmen provide a groundless reason for their decision:

Colour pictures produced in the minds of people,

45 Irish nationalism has broader connotation than the Church, in that many nationalist movements tried to transcend religious differences as the 1798 Rebellion demonstrated. As the Catholic Church took initiatives for forming collective national consciousness since the late nineteenth-century, the Church and Irish nationalism has become almost inseparable.
Especially in the minds (if any) of young people,

A serious distortion of reality;

Colour pictures showed reality to be rich and various

Whereas reality in point of fact was the opposite;

The innate black-and-white nature of reality would have to be safeguarded

At all costs and, talking of costs, said Fr Marksman [the spokesman]. (ll. 13-19)

The main reason that the hierarchy decides to issue the ban is that color pictures can cause “a serious distortion of reality” (l. 15). Because they believe that reality consists of a black and white dichotomy, the heterogeneity and pluralism of color pictures will distort reality. For them, there have been only two groups of values since the nineteenth century: secularity and holiness, the modern and the anti-modern, materialism and spiritualism. That serious distortion of reality, however, comes from the distorted perspective of the hierarchy within itself when it judges reality in a rigid binary polarization. As long as it is secluded from colorful reality in its old fastness, it has nothing to do with real individual lives.

Making matters worse, the hierarchy justifies its decision by insisting on an economic ground:

That colour photography was far costlier than black-and-white photography

And, as a consequence, more immoral;

The Hierarchy, stated Fr Marksman, was once again smiting two birds with one boulder;
And the joint hegemony of Morality and Economics was being upheld. (ll. 22-25)

The hierarchy states that color photography is more expensive than black and white one. Therefore, it is “more immoral” (l. 23). Their absurd logic gives rise to “the joint hegemony of Morality and Economics” (l. 25). The moment when the color picture turns into an immoral thing can be understood in terms of state ideology. As the Irish nation-state was founded along with a self-reliant economy policy, the color picture under the niggard state can be considered wasteful in comparison to the black and white one. Because wastefulness can also become detrimental to the national economy, the logic of the color picture’s immorality is justified. In fact, that logic under de Valera’s regime led to a conclusion that poverty, the lack of material affluence, could be seen to have its advantages in terms of encouraging a spiritual life.\textsuperscript{46} There is, however, absurdity in the heart of such a logic. Similar to Durcan’s father in “Study of a Figure in a Landscape, 1952,” who stated “Constipation is the curse of Cain” (l. 34), the Church endows color photography with metaphysical, ethical value. That peculiar combination of an object and a morality implies the anomalous mentality of the church hierarchy that subjugates individuals through groundless logic. Against that oppressive authority under the church-state alliance, Durcan expresses his anti-Oedipal willingness: “The general public, however, is expected to pay no heed to the ban; / […] / And next year Ireland is expected to become / The EEC’s largest money spender in colour photography” (ll. 30-34). The children of an Irish anti-Oedipus are ready to oppose the Father’s voice, the hierarchy’s ban of color pictures. The poem ends in, “This is Claudian Conway, RTE News (Colour), Maynooth” (l. 35, emphasis in the original), by

\textsuperscript{46} In 1943 speech, de Valera supported the alliance between a less materialist economy and Catholicism: “ideal Ireland … the home of a people who valued material wealth only as the basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit … The Irish genius has always stressed spiritual and intellectual rather than material values” (qtd. in Morrogh 154).
showing the TV news release in color. Durcan insinuates that the anti-Oedipal generation continues their deterritorialization tasks of creating colorful pictures, heterogeneous communities.

Durcan’s critique of the ideological alliance between the church and state is also expressed in “The Divorce Referendum, Ireland, 1986.” As the title indicates, the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution Bill in 1986 was proposed to repeal the prohibition on divorce that had been in effect since its adoption in 1937. The state called a referendum on divorce and it was condemned by Fianna Fáil (the Republican Party) and the Catholic Church. With its strongly conservative sexual morality, it was not unusual for the church to officially prohibit divorce. The problem, for Durcan, is that the church attempts to influence on the state and its legislation. For example, a priest in the poem suddenly changes his attitude during the sermon as he speaks about divorce: “And to remind you that when you vote in the Divorce Referendum / The Church’s teaching and Christ’s teaching are one and the same” (ll. 19-20). Turning “from pink into white” (l. 15), the priest ardently expresses his and the church’s opposition to the referendum. The speaker, however, feels stunned by the priest who gets immersed in politics in a strong alliance with the Republicans. For Durcan, the church has already been thoroughly contaminated by state ideology. He trembles with fierce anger at the hypocrisy of the collusion:

I knew the anger that Jesus Christ felt

When he drove from the temple the traders and stockbrokers.

I have come into this temple today to pray

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47 The ban on divorce was lifted by the Fifteenth Amendment in 1996.
48 Divorce has been closely related to the concept of morality in Irish society. Because Durcan was divorced from his wife, he was condemned as a criminal: “Also, being separated, I know what it is like to be on the receiving end of badmouthing, malice, exclusion. Some of my own family treat me as a criminal or as a second-class citizen because I am separated. I have committed the crime of separation and, therefore, I am morally reprehensible and I am not entitled to first-class rights or normal courtesies” (Diary 6).
And be healed by, and joined with, the Spirit of Life,

Not to be invaded by ideology.

I say unto you, preacher and orators of the Hierarchy,

Do not bring ideology into my house of prayer. (ll. 25-31)

Durcan the anti-Oedipus does not deny the existence of the tradition of religious belief as he desires renewal through the mass. What enrages him, however, is not the tradition in and of itself, but ideological appropriation of the tradition as the priest and the hierarchy support a specific political group. The church has its own hidden motives in politics; that is why the speaker juxtaposes it with “the traders and stockbrokers” in the Bible who took advantage of those who entered the temple to worship. As the speaker reminds himself of Jesus’ teaching at the temple by overturning the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, he is furious about the business of the church in favor of the state. If the ancient temple was contaminated by businessmen, the contemporary Irish Church is corrupted by the state ideology that incessantly territorializes and monitors the bodies of the citizens. The combination of the state ideology and the hierarchy serves as a foremost hypocrite-agent that has oedipalized Irish children since the birth of the nation-state. Durcan, a child of anti-Oedipus, thus exposes and challenges the complicity between the church and state to confine the individual within the realm of family through the rejection of the divorce referendum.

If the church’s political interference affects the public realm of the referendum as discussed above, church authority also meddles in private considerations. The speaker in “10.30 a.m. Mass, 16 June 1985” attends a mass in which the sermon is about Father’s Day. He wants to

think about his own father during the sermon delivered by a “sexy” (l. 27) priest, who appears “like a film star at an international airport” (l. 3). Despite his several attempts to recollect his father, he is interrupted by the sermon:

No – don’t do that – I’d [the speaker’s father] prefer to talk to you [the speaker].

Dying, he confessed to me the story of his life.

[interrupted] How many of you here at Mass today are fathers?

I want to all of you who are fathers to stand up. (ll. 43-46)

His stream of consciousness launched by the term “Father’s Day” leads him to memories of his dying father who confessed his story to the speaker. All of a sudden, in the midst of the sermon, a question spoken aloud (ll. 45-46) breaks in his stream of consciousness. That question sounds like an Althusserian interpellation, “Hey, you there,” that is, “Hey, stand up, you fathers.” The most secret and private realm of stream of consciousness is interfered with that ideological calling of the church. As the functions of censorship work, the priest’s interpellation designates and territorializes individuals in a certain place, “here,” time, “today,” and of a certain identity, “fathers.” Against that overwhelming Father’s voice, another Oedipal oppressor, the speaker expresses his frustration in remembering his own father in his secure privacy: “Jesus! / I want to tell you about my own father / Because none of you knew him!” (ll. 62-64). The church authority, for Durcan, is thus considered a territorializing force with its interruption of private realms and its commanding interpellation of an individual under its authority.

Another of the representative private realms territorialized by church and state is sexuality. The church-state alliance exerts control over individual sexuality in censorship. As the
Irish Free State proclaimed its anti-modern Catholic identity, it adhered to conservative sexual morality. In “Making Love Outside Áras an Uachtaráin,” Durcan challenges the censorious morality of the church-state authority. The former President of the Free State, de Valera, is depicted as a rigid moralist secluded in “his ivory tower” (l. 6). As Elizabeth Cullingford observes, Durcan describes de Valera as a censorious father of the nation, in particular, on sexual grounds in this poem (224). The speaker wonders how de Valera would respond to the action of his love making outside the president’s office. As the “green, green grass” (l. 7) indicates, the office and its surroundings can be considered “sacred” places that represent Irish national authority strongly based on Catholic morality. The speaker, however, censures the church-state surveillance of the individual desires of the young couple. Durcan thus portrays de Valera as a stalker:

I see him now in the heat-haze of the day

Blindly stalking us down;

And, levelling an ancient rifle, he says “Stop

Making love outside Áras an Uachtaráin.” (ll. 21-24)

Under state ideology equipped with Catholic sexual morality, the speaker candidly makes love with his lover. Enraged by that “blasphemous” deed, however, de Valera stalks and commands them to stop making love in his territory by aiming “an ancient rifle” (l. 23) at them, which reminds the reader of nostalgia for the heroic gunplay of the past. With that anachronistic ethical standard, de Valera and his generation who founded the nation-state oppress free expressions of love of the new generations. More important, Durcan compares his relationship with his lover to

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50 The official residence of President of Ireland.
the one between Diarmaid and Gráinne in ancient Irish history. Against the young lovers, de Valera can be considered Finn who traces down the couple to break them apart. His paranoiac desire interferes with their relationship. Like Finn, de Valera cannot bear the speaker’s love because of his rigid Catholic morality. As one of the standards by which we can detect conservativeness in a government is whether it monitors freedom of the citizens, in particular, by regulating the bodies of the people, the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland have long subjugated the citizens’ bodies through conservative Catholic moral ideology. Hence comes the state’s collaboration with the church in the fervent oppression of freedom of expression.

*State Censorship and Ideology*

Due to state censorship, many artists have left Ireland in search of freedom of expression. Not only Irish modernists, but Durcan’s artistic forefathers like Patrick Kavanagh and Francis Stuart were also under state surveillance as discussed in the previous chapter. If the state maximized its oppressive paternal voice through many censorship acts, Durcan publically challenges its restrictive regulations. Durcan in “Around the Corner from Francis Bacon” imagines a homosexual relationship with Francis Bacon, a painter well known for his homosexuality. Despite his own actual heterosexuality, Durcan’s speaker makes homosexual love with Bacon in an attempt to drastically show the tyrannical state censorship in Ireland. While they are making love, “Far from the tyrant liberties of Dublin, Ireland, / Where the comedy of freedom was by law forbidden / And truth, since the freedom of the State, gone underground” (ll. 31-33). In comparison to Bacon’s provocative paintings, there is little sexual

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51 According to Cullingford, the Irish legend portrays a love triangle in which Gráinne rejects her suitor, Finn, who is older than her father. Instead, she chooses a young, handsome warrior Diarmaid. They escape from Finn’s consistent pursuit through woods and mountains (225).

52 Bacon frequently adopted homosexual motifs as expressed in several triptychs or *Wrestlers* (1953), which was inspired by Muybridge’s photographs.
artistic freedom in a suffocating Ireland. Taught by Bacon “about the psyche / Of the female
orang-outang caged in the zoo” (ll. 47-48), the speaker reminds the reader of the oppression of
the state that territorializes individuals and suppresses their desires to find a way out of a Foucaultian panopticon. The citizens and artists in Ireland are continuously treated like animals
in a zoo supervised by the panopticon of the prison or the state.

When the state monitors freedom of expression and art, only nationalist or government-
inspired art can exist. Durcan in “In Memory: The Miami Showband – Massacred 31 July
1975”\(^{53}\) shows how Irish art is controlled and contaminated by nationalist ideology. The speaker
happens to meet a “patriotic (sic) / Versifier” (ll. 1-2) in a public house who insists that “You
must take one side / Or the other, or you’re but a fucking romantic” (ll. 2-3). That typically
nationalistic rhetoric judges the world in black-and-white logic, to which the church hierarchy is
held regarding color photography as discussed earlier. For the chauvinistic nationalists, those
who do not stand with them are all considered enemy and cursed as irresolute romantics. Every
artist and work of art in Ireland, thus, should take one side either as patriot or as betrayer. The
chauvinistic versifier, in fact, “is blind to the braille connection / Between a music and a music-
maker” (ll. 5-6). Just as Louis Braille, who was blind, invented a tactile writing system for the
blind, every work of art is the fruit of an artist’s agony throughout his whole life. The false poet
ignores that relationship but judges a work of art only in terms of nationalist ideology. In
addition, he and his colleagues are not true artists as the speaker notices that “It is in war – not

\(^{53}\)This poem is based on a massacre of three members of a popular Irish band. BBC News on July 27, 2010 reported
on this event under the title of “Film Plans for 1975 Miami Showband Massacre Story”: “Three members of the
popular band were taken from their tour bus and shot dead on a country road after a gig in Banbridge, County Down,
on 31 July 1975. They were waved down by a group of armed men in army uniforms at a bogus checkpoint outside
Newry. It was a loyalist paramilitary gang, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), who had planned to load a bomb on to
the bus and have it explode as the band drove south to Dublin. The murders, which happened 35 years ago this
week, remain one of the darkest atrocities of recent Irish history.” (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-
10775354)
poetry or music –/ That men find their niche, their glory hole” (ll. 15-16). Possessed by nostalgia for the past heroic war, they blindly reduce a matter of art to political, nationalist ideology. More important, they have “no contradiction in the mind” (l. 18) that can become essential energy for art, especially for poetry. That is why the false poet is obsessed by a dichotomy between life and death maintaining that “If there is birth, there cannot be death” (l. 19). Rather, that binary logic indicates, for Durcan, the death of a poet, the death of art in Ireland. Forcibly by the state censorship or consciously by chauvinistic ideology, artistic spirit in Ireland faces double-death as the speaker laments the death of the Miami Showband, a famous cabaret band, killed by the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1975. In the ideologically rigid Ireland of the 1970s, at the height of the Troubles, their music and art had to choose one political side. Because of their crossing over ideological borders, as they traveled over political borders from Banbridge in Northern Ireland to Dublin, they, like their art, which harbored contradiction that transcended nationalist ideology, had to be sacrificed. Durcan thus remembers the day of the massacred not only as the death of the members of one music band but also as the death of art in Ireland.

When state censorship and chauvinistic ideology prevail, art in Ireland degrades into a vulgar product possessed by the snobbish bourgeoisie. In “What Shall I Wear, Darling, to The Great Hunger?” Durcan reveals the hypocrisy of a nationalist patron of art. The speaker recommends to his wife, who asks about an appropriate dress to attend a national theatre, that she wear “Your see-through, sleeveless, backless, green evening gown” (l. 6). The people in the theater are less interested in the play than her sensual dress in admiring the fact that she looks like “Mother Divinity” (l. 12) in her green gown. What is hypocritical in their admiration, however, lies in their justification of their lustrous gaze on the female body by taking advantage of nationalistic words. There is no discussion about art in the theater but gossip about sensational
issues. As a result, there is neither artistic sublime in the mind of those who are filled with philistine desires nor noble behavior in reality. As the speaker’s wife starts her business next morning as a landlord, she threatens her tenants, “unmarried young mothers / and their frogspawn” (ll. 20-21), to pay rent or be evicted to the street. A so-called “patron of the arts” (l. 26) harshly treats her tenants in order to buy her dress for the nationalist theater that performs *Great Hungers* (l. 29) and *Juno and the Paycock* (l. 30), both of which ironically show the miserable reality of the unprivileged. For the sake of her nominal nationalist duty as a patron of art, she justifies her exploitation of the economically and socially deprived. Art sacrificed to nationalist ideology has no power in reality but merely sustains the *status quo*. Ever since the initiation of state censorship has been enacted, Irish theatre has been filled with only frivolous productions appealing to a hypocritical appropriation of art meant to satisfy the materialistic desires of the petty bourgeoisie.

**Alternative Father Figures**

Under the restrictive government, as Irish modernists already searched for alternative fathers in rejection of their fathers’ legacies, Durcan “is also a wanderer in search of alternative fathers” (O’Toole 33) unlike the political father figure of de Valera. Whereas de Valera can be marked by his censorious policies, Durcan’s alternative fathers have more open-minded characteristics. In “Mr Goldsmith, My Father’s Friend,” Durcan makes a contrast between his father and the father’s friend. His father is described in negative ways as a legal man “stern and staid” (l. 1), “so saturnine” (l. 15), and “— Cut off, therefore, from the rest of man” (l. 9), which

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54 Sean O’Casey, the author of *Juno and the Paycock*, portrays the miserable lives of the Dublin slum tenants who were packed within small apartments. As they peeked out through the window panes, they were described as caged animals.
resonates with de Valera’s ivory tower in “Making Love Outside Áras an Uachtaráin.” On the contrary, Mr. Goldsmith appears as the one “Who laughed so much at supper time” (l. 18) and an iconoclast with his “uproarious” (l. 3) and “verbally delirious” (l. 24) personality. In addition, Mr. Goldsmith consciously rejected the golden rule in his boarding school as he “did not use the upstairs toilet / But relieved himself in the garden” (ll. 6-7). By repeating that courageous behavior against the rule at the end of each stanza, Durcan’s speaker confesses that “And I was proud of my father’s friend” (l. 48). Although that misbehavior per se cannot provide a role model for a new father, his free excretion in the garden can be compared with the strictness of Durcan’s father in “Study of a Figure in a Landscape, 1952” discussed earlier. If the speaker’s father designates a bathroom as a certain place of excretion by making his son stand on the starting blocks, thus regulating the place of excretion, Mr. Goldsmith’s behavior is significant in that he neither delimits himself for excretion within any place nor discipline his body in a certain way. In fact, these are the ways in which the state has taken control over individuals by supervising artists through nationalist ideology within the boundary of Irish national identity and by monitoring individual bodies through various censorship acts.

Against the censorious regulations of father-state authority, Durcan find alternative father figures in religious Fathers. Contrary to his negative descriptions of the hypocritical church and priests, Durcan in “The Death of the Ayatollah Khomeini” introduces a Father in Drogheda. The priest publically criticizes during his sermon the old generation’s sanctimonious religious rituals: “We – the older generation – / Have become a nation of Sunday churchgoers. / The Gospel means nothing to us on weekdays.” (ll. 20-22). As a result, the iconoclastic priest suggests, “On Sundays, I beg you to stay in bed / While your parents get up to go to church” (l. 17-18). He may sound like an excommunicated priest when he says to the young people to stay in bed on Sunday
unlike their parents who have habitually attended mass. He recognizes, however, how his generation has presented superficial religious ceremonies without any social influence in reality in which religion becomes one of the products of capitalism: “Our religion is comfort and the supermarket” (l. 22). In other words, the Father ironically teaches the young generation a lesson not to follow their father’s generation, an anti-Oedipal lesson. Instead of the materialist legacies that biological fathers have left the young people, the Father bequeaths a true spiritual inheritance. As he administers communion, “The congregation looked awaked, alert, apprehensive, / … / As the moment of truth approached. / There was that sense of the moment of truth approaching” (ll. 43-48). In his religious ceremony, there is true spiritual metamorphosis, through which the speaker and his young generation can be spiritually renewed and differentiated from their fathers’ generation. As this poem appears in Durcan’s Daddy, Daddy (1990), in which he expresses his anti-Oedipal tendencies and his search for alternate father figures, Durcan’s suggestion of the spiritual father can thus be read as an anti-Oedipal attempt.

In the absence of or in denial of an earthly father, it sounds natural, for Durcan, to invite a religious Father. In a similar way in which the poem above has shown, the speaker in “Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil” depicts a true father figure through a priest, Father O’Brien. The relationship between the priest and the speaker is closer than that of his own flesh. The speaker is isolated in a remote place – “In a cottage with no television – an ex-soldier’s outpost / On the side of a mountain – a German soldier / Who had fought on both fronts” (ll. 12-14). The one who rescues the lonely speaker from his despair is Father O’Brien, who invites him “to drive over to his house on Sunday afternoon / And watch the All Ireland Football Final on television” (ll. 3-4). If the image of watching a TV football game together can be considered an ideal situation between father and son, the Father’s suggestion represents Durcan’s longing for an ideal image
of father in a true relationship with his son. Not only does the Father fulfill an earthly father’s role by watching TV with the speaker, he helps him restore his spirituality through a truly pious mass, in which the speaker feels religious ecstasy: “All of us being toasted by electric fires high up on the walls: / All of us gazing altarwards at the standing-glass window of Mother and Child – / The Gold Madonna of Mayo” (II. ll. 22-24). In addition to leaving the speaker that spiritual inheritance, Father O’Brien, as a benign father also gives him a lesson on the meaning of the word “mercy”: “Mercy is by definition exclusively divine. / Mercy is a divine, not a human term” (VI. ll. 36-37) in the world of “Genocide” (VI. l. 28), “Ethnic cleansing” (VI. l. 30), and “Thoughtlessness” (VI. l. 32). In particular, the lesson of the fatherly priest makes a stark contrast with that of the speaker’s father in “Poem Not Beginning with a Line by Pindar,” discussed earlier, who told the young son, “Teach the Protestants a lesson” (l. 21), in justifying a sectarian violence with harsh and violent words. Emotionally, spiritually, and edifyingly, the Father takes place of the parenthood of the speaker’s father. Through those overall images of Father O’Brien, Durcan glimpses alternative fathers in his anti-Oedipus quest.

Durcan’s Ambivalence toward His Father

Religious institutions are, indeed, condemned by Durcan in that they have closely been complicit with the state ideology; what Durcan challenges is not religion itself but the previous generations who took advantage of it based on their political interests. Durcan never denies the sphere of that institution in which inexplicable religious transformation takes place. The reason that Durcan considers some Catholic priests as alternative “fathers,” despite his trenchant criticism of corrupted priests, is that he can still find within that institution some models who are
neither limited to a religious sectarian orthodoxy nor contaminated by the state ideology. For anti-Oedipus Durcan, the foremost concern is the oppressive state ideology enacted through censorship that regulates the body and consciousness of the citizens including artists. He cannot deny the fact that he has already been within the state institutions such as education and the Church. In addition, he has not repudiated the fact that he has his own father, John James Durcan. Despite his consistent criticism of his father or his father’s generation, what Durcan directs his attention to is the state power that searches for a scapegoat for the sake of nationalist ideology.

As Cullingford notes, Durcan in “Lament for Major General Emmet Dalton” “conjures up the image of Collins as the lost leader and Dalton as his faithful lieutenant” (224). Given Michael Collins and Emmet Dalton, in effect, were sacrificed and “disowned” by the new state of de Valera who was driven by his own political desire, Durcan’s anti-Oedipus is thus aimed at not only exposing the authoritative father’s voice in the domestic realm, but also challenging the lurking violence of state power that produces many scapegoats. That is the way in which Durcan can re-evaluate his own father, who was once an oppressor but became a scapegoat deserted by the state.

Durcan’s anti-Oedipal project, as discussed thus far, is not just the reactionary rebellion of an adolescent son. That reactionary struggle may well be called Oedipal complex. The thesis of Durcan’s anti-Oedipus lies in his critique of the state that is posited outside the family and takes advantage of the situation and character of his father, who devoted himself to the state. In short, even in his criticism of his father, Durcan can notice the violent influence of state power. If Durcan initially evaluated his father as an oppressor like a fascist, he soon understands the more complicated relationships that underlie the dictatorial behaviors of his father. In his criticism of his father, he shows less a subversion of patriarchal authority than a sense of pity toward his
father. In a bizarre and comic setting, the speaker in “The Man with Five Penises” finds a glimpse of his father in the bathroom as “a man with five penises” (l. 1). Aside from a common psychoanalytic interpretations of phallus, the father with five penises looks substantial enough to make the speaker regard his father as being as “immobile as a crocodile” (l. 9). If a child of Oedipus saw his father with five penises, from a psychoanalytic perspective, he would be overwhelmed and intimidated by the father’s authority, because the father’s penis can “represent” his power and authority. For Durcan, however, his speaker never feels frightened in the face of the five penises of the father’s authority, but “Concerned as well as sorry” (l. 18). Unlike common Oedipal children who may become submissive to the father’s authority, Durcan’s speaker rather feels sorry about his father’s pitiful situation in which the father may be inconvenienced, by which Durcan implies that the speaker has already overcome Oedipal anxiety, in particular, when he “discover[s] / That there was in fact only one of them” (ll. 39-40). Comically and absurdly describing the father, rather than authoritatively, Durcan ridicules stern images of the father. As Durcan in “Bringing Home the Watermelon from Samarkand” also humorously depicts his father who brings a pair of watermelons “tied up eroticly in a string bag – / Metaphysical brassieres” (l. 8-9) as if he were “a woman with bosoms” (l. 13). When he closes the poem “The Man with Five Penises” in saying, “Unquestionably, one penis is more than enough” (l. 41), he comically overcomes the father’s influence. As for Durcan’s comical

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55 Whereas Sigmund Freud almost indiscriminately used “phallus” as a synonym of “penis,” Jacque Lacan preferred to use “phallus” rather than “penis,” a biological genital organ, to emphasize the imaginary and symbolic functions of the penis. Dylan Evans summarizes the relationship between the phallus and the Oedipus complex: “The phallus is one of the three elements in the imaginary triangle that constitutes the PREOEDIPAL PHASE. It is an imaginary object which circulates between the other two elements, the mother and the child (S3, 319). The mother desires this object and the child seeks to satisfy her desire by identifying with the phallus or with the phallic mother. In the Oedipus complex the father intervenes as a fourth term in this imaginary triangle by castrating the child; that is, he makes it impossible for the child to identify with the imaginary phallus. The child is then faced with the choice of accepting his castration (accepting that he cannot be the mother’s phallus) or rejecting it” (144).

56 For Deleuze and Guattari, as the unconscious represents nothing, a father’s penis represents nothing in their anti-representational philosophy.
descriptions of his father, despite his criticism, that comic critique does not just serve to express tragic Oedipal anxieties, but transcends them toward an anti-Oedipal mindset. As Peggy O’Brien notes, comedy “perpetually propels and refreshes Durcan in his drive to understand” (85) his father. Based on his understanding of his father, his satirical but comic portrayals of his father can resonate with Kiberd’s interpretation of The Playboy, “not as awful tragedy but as happy comedy” (Inventing Ireland 388) mentioned earlier.

In his appropriation of comic elements as he describes his father, he still retains sympathy for him despite his poignant criticism. In his reminiscence, his father was, in fact, not a cruel person:

I used [to] attend the trials at which my father was judge and I knew how much he dreaded sending a fellow human being to jail (except when confronted with dedicated evil) and how he would do anything within his power to give the lesser sentence and to mitigate the barbarity of the Irish penal system. (Diary 11)

His father rather “had his part in the play” of Irish history and “had to do his duty” (Diary 12), which sounds like a Yeatsian consolation of the executed leaders of the Easter Rising. His collection of poems about his father, Daddy, Daddy, for which Durcan won Whitbread Poetry Award in 1990, represents his ambivalence toward his father, who had to take his part for the state. In “The Dream in the Peasant’s Bent Shoulders,” Durcan portrays the relationship between his father and the state:

Loyalty to the State was the star

In the East of your life
And reward by the State.

Instead, they have taken away your pyjama bottoms

Leaving you only with your pyjama tops

And a hoe in your hand.

Your peasant’s bent shoulders have ceased their dreaming

As you crouch down before me, a jewel in torment. (ll. 28-35)

Despite his loyalty to the state “Unconditionally / For twenty-eight years” (ll. 13-14), he is dejected in a solitary hospital like a peasant who has bent shoulders due to his hard work on the land. Crouching before his son, the father becomes a loser. On the verge of his father’s death, the son, however, does not become a winner at all. He never shows any sense of defeat from Oedipal anxieties before his deceasing father. There is no Oedipal complex or desire for the son to overcome his father. Durcan, rather, recognizes the state power that makes his father the dejected. “Without proving any reason or explanation” (l. 16), the state tyrannically hurts his pride by taking away his pyjama bottoms. His father, in fact, is degraded into a clown-judge manipulated and forsaken by the state in the end. In a wig and gown as the judge of the state, Durcan’s father in “Bank Clerk” appears as “festooned with chains” (l. 39) “from neck to ankle,” (l. 40) exploited by the state. The only reward his father receives is “loneliness” (l. 4) as described in “The Dream in the Peasant’s Bent Shoulders.” Regardless of his dedication to the state, his father becomes forgotten and forsaken in a remote hospital.

Throughout the two poems above, Durcan’s anti-Oedipus was not fulfilled by a willingness to murder his father. The discovery in his anti-Oedipus progress is to find the state
power behind his father; that is why Durcan starts to re-evaluate his father on his deathbed. Durcan in “Glocca Morra” vividly reminisces that he and his father had happy moments when they “Played all sorts of games for year, / Football, hurling, cricket, golf, donkey” (ll. 41-42). His father was so friendly a person to the speaker. That was, however, before he became a judge of the state: “Before he got into his Abraham-and-Isaac phase” (l. 43) or “Before he had time to chop off my head” (l. 45). His father changed into a violent man who tried to sacrifice his son when he began to work for the state. Although Durcan does not show Oedipal desire to eliminate his father throughout this poem, he expresses deep sympathy toward his dead father inasmuch as he “wrung his [my] hands at the foot of his [father’s] bed / Until a consultant doctor told me to stop it / And to show some respect for the dead” (ll. 17-20). Durcan’s anti-Oedipus has grown mature enough to have sympathy for his unfortunate father and recognize the power of the state that makes his father violent.

Durcan remembers how his father was violent. In “Crinkle, Near Birr,” the speaker recollects that his father severely beat him by using a trouser belt like an American cowboy who appeared on TV, when he lost his cricket uniform. The speaker, however, does not impute that violence to his father, but to a specific time when his father changed. His father and he, in fact, had happy moments to the extent that the speaker says, “Daddy and I were lovers / … / We got married in the church of Crinkle, near Birr” (ll. 1-3); it was in the days “before he became a judge” (l. 15). The speaker’s marriage is significant because it proves Durcan’s anti-Oedipus. As the speaker confesses that his father and he were in love when he was “six” (l. 2), the time when a child is considered to have a sense of rivalry against his father for his mother from a psychoanalytic perspective, that is, an Oedipal complex, there is no complex of that kind in his mind as a child. Rather, for Durcan, his father gave him joyful memories like playing hurling
together as father and son are portrayed in “The One Armed Crucifixion.” His father is not remembered as a rival for his mother. In addition, after his father became a judge of the state, the fact that their beautiful relationship began to be torn apart reveals that the speaker sees the origin of his father’s violence in the state power or its apparatuses that made his father a punisher. He finds barbarity from the state rather than from his father in himself. This viewpoint that locates the state power behind the father and behind the familial triangle is the main thesis of Durcan’s anti-Oedipus.

The father-son relationship in “Cot” is finally reversed:

I saw that the deathbed had become a cot
And that you, Daddy, were a small, aged infant
Struggling to stay alive in the world.
You were kicking up your legs in the air,
Brandishing your bony white knuckles.
I realised that you were my newborn son. (“Bare Feet” ll. 14-19)

His father becomes an infant son; Durcan becomes a father who looks after his baby father in a cot. The speaker passionately comforts his dying father: “Don’t fret, son, / Don’t ever again fret yourself” (ll. 45-46). The speaker finally seems to overcome the previous oppressive authority of his father. That overcoming is, however, not that which the speaker actively achieves through his own extreme struggles against his tyrannical father. The purpose of Durcan’s anti-Oedipal revolution does not aim at obliterating the opponent in dichotomy of the problem. His father does not appear as a harsh oppressor any longer in Durcan’s ambivalent feelings toward his father
“Whom I disliked so submissively, / Yet whom I loved so mercilessly, / As you, Daddy. To me. / You were at once saint and murderer” (“Chips” ll. 29-32). Anti-Oedipus Durcan expresses sorrow for his father’s misfortune as a puppet of the state rather than sheer antagonism against him in order to take over his place.

Although Durcan expresses his sorrow for his father’s inevitable role as a puppet in Irish society, that does not mean that he accepts his father’s legacy. Even if the state took advantage of his father, he cannot justify his father’s ideology and deeds. In “Bare Feet,” the speaker declines to follow his father’s way of life. He undoubtedly shows his sympathy for his father now on his deathbed, who “had to walk to school / In his [your] bare feet” (l. 5-6) in 1914. As a self-made man, his father not only became a state judge, but also diligently contributed to the state. The old generation is, however, saturated with nostalgia for the past founded on victorious images gained from war. When his father offers him his own old pair of shoes, which reminds him of the war of the old generation, the speaker “demurred at wearing them” (l. 19). As Stephen Dedalus in Ulysses declines his mother’s request for prayer on her deathbed, Durcan’s speaker in this poem also rejects the heritage of his father as symbolized by the father’s shoes. These two anti-Oedipal children have an attribute in common in that they seem to be afflicted by a sense of guilt when they turn down their parents’ legacies. Stephen in Ulysses is condemned by Mulligan’s aunt because she “thinks you [Stephen] killed your mother” (U 1. 88); Durcan confesses

As the end of your life

As all through your life

I scandalized you.

Should I have stepped into your shoes?
I should have stepped into your shoes. (ll. 22-26)

Durcan does not seem to completely overcome his dead father’s great influence on him. He even admits that “As I get older, my dead father gets younger” (“Meeting the President, 31 August 1995” l. 11). On his way to the president’s office, his dead father continuously appears on his hands and shoulders. There is, however, one major difference between modernist anti-Oedipus Joyce and post-modernist anti-Oedipus Durcan. Joyce simply turned down the legacy of his parents’ generation with rage and disillusionment; he sometimes transferred his guilty conscience to others: “someone killed her” (U 1. 90) or “I cursed the system which had made her a victim” (qtd. in Ellmann 169). Even if he recognized his part in his mother’s death as he confessed, “My mother was slowly killed, I think, by my father’s ill treatment, by years of trouble, and by my cynical frankness of conduct” (qtd. in Ellmann 169), he basically found the cause of her death in others, not in his justifiable “frankness.” In contrast, as the quotation above shows, Durcan acknowledges his provocative attitudes toward his father and expresses sympathy for his father’s generation in his rejection. If the modernist anti-Oedipus Joyce mainly focused on flying away from the nets of territorialization in searching for his artistic freedom, Durcan seeks not just freedom but comprehensive understanding of the generation that was the scapegoat of the state as discussed so far. If Joyce was devoted to individual attempts to escape from the triangles of oppression, Durcan finds power relationships behind the familial triangle. Although both of the two anti-Oedipals seek a way out, their focuses vary: for the former as the artist as a young man, the focus was on deterritorialization itself; for the latter, it is on the lurking state power behind the family structure.

Despite all his sympathetic feelings toward his father, Durcan the anti-Oedipus decides to take his own path one quite different from his father’s. With his poetic vocation, Durcan in
“Hymn to My Father” bids farewell to his father on his deathbed. Although Durcan expresses his sympathy for his father and acknowledges that his father has a great influence on him, he cannot take the same path that his father took: “I am glad that it was in this life / I loved you / Not the next” (ll. 19-21). Not only did they have “no life together – or almost none” (l. 6). They have also chosen different ways of life – his father as a lawyer and Durcan as a poet – to the extent that they are “Estranged” (l. 18) from each other. For Durcan, his father at the end of his life is at an incompatible crossroad.

O Russian Knight at the Crossroads!

If you turn to the right, you will lose your horse;

To the left, your head;

If you go straight on, your life.

If you were me – which you are –

Knight at the Crossroads,

You would go home to Russia this very night. (ll. 22-28)

According to a common motif in Russian folk tales, a Russian knight comes to a crossroad and finds an inscription on a menhir that says, “If you ride to the left, your will lose your horse, if you ride to the right, you will lose your head.” Taking that dilemma in his father’s life consumed, Durcan portrays his father as a desperate Russian knight at a loss in his choices; whatever he chooses, he has to face his death. If there are only three exclusive ways for his father, Durcan has a way to resolve that dilemma. That is to find another home. As he defines himself as “A man in search of his Russia” (l. 8), he rather chooses a different way at a crossroad from his father’s in
which his father becomes a helpless victim in his native land, Ireland. The anti-Oedipal son, Paul Durcan, suggests another home, Russia, to his father. With his minoritarian tendencies, Durcan cannot feel at home in Ireland where oppressive authorities embodied in his father, the Church and the state incessantly overwhelm him. Although the nation of Russia is not an ultimate place for his ideal image of home, Russia as alternate home is significant in that it provides him with, at least, a sense of deterritorialization, a way out, away from those Oedipal powers. Durcan thus, through “Hymn to My Father,” acknowledges the divergent paths that his father and he has taken away from his father.

Taking a different way of life from his father’s is a crucial element in Durcan’s anti-Oedipus as the modern Irish anti-Oedipus of Synge and Joyce differentiated themselves from their fathers. The anti-Oedipus Durcan expands his criticism of his own father to broader social spheres, ranging from the Church authority and the state power. Although he sharply criticizes those authorities, his anti-Oedipal revolution does not come from a mere subversion of that hierarchical relationship by subduing the opponents. His revolutionary energy lies in his search for another home, Russia, a utopia. That quest has been his ultimate goal since he became a poet. To become a man in search of a genuine home out of home becomes Durcan’s poetic vocation. Out of territorialized realms of the father, the family, the hypocritical Church, the oppressive state apparatuses, Durcan differentiates himself from previous generations of nationalists who have been actively engaged in those power relationships. Durcan opens the way to an Irish postnationalism that will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3. “Postnationalism in Durcan”

In his poetry, Durcan recognizes the failure of the nation-state and suggests alternative Irish communities from a postnationalist perspective. Since the establishment of the new nation-state, emancipated from British colonial power, there have been, in fact, diverse alternative perspectives on the new Irish community, suggested by postcolonialism and historical revisionism. Although postcolonialist critics and revisionist historians have conflicting viewpoints on modernization and nationalism, they agree with the idea of the failure of the post-independent state, especially of “de Valera’s Ireland” rather than one of a glorious national emancipation achieved by sacrifices of the oppressed people. As for the critiques of the nation-state, the Irish postcolonial critics of Field Day and Irish revisionists have appropriated Indian subaltern studies that questioned the legitimacy or representativeness of the post-independent state. First, the revisionists charge the nation-state with economic and cultural nationalism, anti-modern clericalism, or incapacity to overcome a romantic commitment to an agrarian, Gaelic, and/or Catholic utopia. Contrary to its anti-colonialist motto, the Irish nation-state ironically kept the previous colonial legal and education systems intact without modifying the devices that had once tortured its own people. Failing to make an honorable hybrid, the new state developed neither an English nor an Irish sensibility. Revisionist historiographers thus take critical attitudes toward state institutions such as the courts and police force, as Durcan has shown.

For the usual postcolonialists, the primary reason that they blame the post-independent state is its questionable legitimacy in the sense that the new state is virtually a copy of the occupier’s state by extension. They insist that Irish cultural nationalism was basically derived from British influence that led to ultimate failure in accomplishing complete national independence. For more left-wing postcolonialists, their critique is based on the way in which the
revolution of the Irish political economy was stymied by a comprador bourgeoisie who repressed more radical social transformations (Cleary 7). If de Valera, through an extremely protectionist self-reliant economy, induced mass emigration in search of jobs and serious economic and cultural isolation, when Sean Lemass seized power, he opened the country to global capitalism and to a higher probability of labor exploitation by joining the EEC in 1972. In addition, the nation-state occluded various subaltern struggles, such as an agrarian movement, a women’s movement, or labor unionization, by exerting coercive state apparatuses. In contrast to the elitist nationalist historiography that constructs the history of Ireland in terms of a grand narrative with a homogeneous concept of nationalism, Irish postcolonial projects that Lloyd and other scholars pursue are intended to distinguish the nation-state from histories of various local movements. In that sense, Irish postcolonial criticism as well as historical revisionism adequately resonates with the subaltern studies. Although the two groups share with the subaltern studies the recognition of the failure of the new nation-state, their emphases vary. If postcolonial criticism focuses primarily on the dubious legitimacy of the state, revisionism finds fault with the exclusive identity politics of the state apparatuses that deny plurality in national identity.

These two analyses of Irish community each have their own weaknesses. For example, revisionists are often criticized for their postmodern pluralism and elite narratives; postcolonialists are charged with the concept of everlastingly unsuccessful subalternity and moral fundamentalism. Postnationalist critics, by taking advantage of the two scholarly perspectives, can suggest new models for Irish community. In particular, out of a recognition of

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57 Joe Cleary indicates that revisionists are regarded by postcolonial critics as “less the anti-establishment dissidents than the avant-garde fraction of a new state intelligentsia” (3).

58 “[…] there is a serious intellectual danger of celebrating the subalternity of subaltern groups. […] In such a scenario where the subaltern becomes the object of study because it is always in unsuccessful revolution, the subaltern becomes the site of cultural integrity and authenticity, filled with an ethically-charged identity which paradoxically relies on what Spivak calls the ‘monolithic and anonymous [subject]-in-revolution’” (Graham 156).
violent identity politics, which has reshaped a political geography in the North since the 1960s, they put forward a non-ethnocentric concept of community such as the European Union. A postnationalist retains more sophisticated distinctions in his or her conception of nation. For instance, Richard Kearney makes several distinctions of “region from state, state from nation, nation from republic, republicanism from nationalism, nationality from sovereignty, absolute sovereignty from shared sovereignty, internationalism form supranatioanlism, federation from centralization” (*Postnationalist Ireland* 1). In addition, he suggests the five categories of nation defined by the civic, the territorial, the ethnic, the migrant nation, and the culture (2-9). Despite those several categories, the Irish nationalists not only identify nation with modern state but also exclusively insist on the ethnic concept of nation. Kearney observes:

[There were] certain members of the Irish Ministry of Justice in the 1940s who refused to shelter Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution on the grounds that “they do not assimilate with our own people but remain a sort of colony of a worldwide Jewish community. This makes them a potential irritant in the body politic and has led to disastrous results from time to time in other countries.” Racialism may have been rare in Ireland; it was not non-existent. (*Postnationalist Ireland* 4)

The Irish regarded nation exclusively in terms of ethnicity to the extent that they could not offer humanitarian aid for another “race” like the Jews during World War II. Since the Irish were once colonized by a foreign power, they may have well tried to invent or resuscitate their tradition in the course of building a new nation-state with distinctiveness of national traditions like the Gaelic language and customs. The problem, however, is that the invented traditions are “highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the ‘nation,’ with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest” (Hobsbawm,
Introduction 13). Ritualized and institutionalized for the new state, those ethnically distinguished traditions became a fundamental conduit for the state ideology, so that Irish nationalism and its political appropriation of cultural institutions, David Lloyd observes, serve to “form subjects for the state” (Oral Space 92). Contrary to that ethnocentric and ideological concept of nation, a postnationalist tries to overcome the ethnic boundaries of nation. His or her project may sound like a Joycean aspiration, “Hibernicizing Europe and Europeanizing Ireland” through which Joyce tried to transcend an extreme sense of Irish nationality in terms of cosmopolitan Hellenism as illustrated in Ulysses, in which he not only appropriates ancient Greek mythologies, but also uses a variety of European languages. By transcending an exclusive definition of nation, a postnationalist reaches for a more flexible community in which ethnic, cultural, or territorial limitations can no longer predominate.

Because postnationalists have a less rigid conception of nation in terms of ethnicity, they basically take critical attitudes toward the established nation-state, in particular, toward the nation’s past sanctified by the state. Contrary to the Celtists who consider the past a lost golden age represented as “Romantic Ireland” since the invasion of the British imperialists, many twentieth-century Irish authors and film directors have disclosed the myth of the romantic Ireland. Nevertheless, they are not always opposed to the legacies of the past. In other words, they do not attempt to erase every old custom like religion from Irish history. They, rather, appropriate the past in terms of power relationships that shaped the new nation-state. Peadar

59 Kearney notes that “this ideology looked less to a future Enlightenment dream of world citizenry than to a memory of an ancient ‘Celtic Race’ which pre-existed colonial divisions and differences” (Postnationalist Ireland 35).

60 Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbons, and Michael Cronin in Introduction to Reinventing Ireland list a group of authors and film directors who go against the grain of “the comfort-blanket of Romantic Ireland” (11) as follows: Patrick Kavanagh, John McGahern, Edna O’Brien, William Trevor, Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Roddy Doyle, Pat O’Connor, Cathal Black, Neil Jordan, and Jim Sheridan.

[the post-de Valera generations were] in breaking with the reassuring liberal illusion that the ills of contemporary Ireland are simply the residues of the older order – land, religion, and nationalism. Social decay, crime, alcoholism, domestic violence, homophobia, racism and alienation are not conveniently backdated to the sins of the fathers but are portrayed as endemic to modernity itself, part of the price of catching up with advanced Anglo-American or European culture. (11)

Looking back to the days at the verge of the nation-state, the postnationalist generations recollect the past in relation to state power and its violence that ideologically invented so-called Irishness. A postnationalist project, as a result, aims at debunking the state-oriented constructions of the past, not the past *per se*, which can be summarized by Kearney’s phrase, “not a liquidation of the past but its reinterpretation” (*Postnationalist Ireland* 59).

Unlike a nationalist who reinstates his/her people in some predestined place through the ideological use of myth of the past, Kearney argues, a postnationalist liberates or deterritorialize them from a given time or place through utopian myths (*Postnationalist Ireland* 122-23). In their reinterpretation of the native myths and rediscovery of their alternate home away from the native country, modern/contemporary Irish poets, such as Kavanagh, Heaney, Kinsella, McGuckian, Muldoon, and Durcan, believe in a sense of utopia by challenging the status quo established by the nationalists (Kearney 123). In short, Kearney makes a contrast between ruling class nationalists and underprivileged postnationalists based on how they appropriate myth for an ideological or a utopian purpose. Fredric Jameson, however, questions the contrasting view of
the relationship between ideology of the ruling class and utopia of the oppressed because all classes have utopian desires that serve as “the affirmation of collective solidarity” (*The Political Unconscious* 291). Both nationalists and postnationalists are ideological and utopian in that they aspire to a deterritorialization from dominant power of their eras. Inspired by the French Revolution, Irish nationalists in the nineteenth and twentieth-century desired an ideal nation-state free from colonial power. Postnationalists also search for an alternative community free from oppressive authority of the nation-state. Nevertheless, Kearney’s argument is still valid in that he differentiates a postnationalist from a nationalist in terms of whether he/she is held to a certain time or place. As the term, Utopia suggested by Thomas More, signifies, there is no place like it. The most significant aspect of Utopia lies in its negativity. While a nationalist or a postcolonialist has a certain geographical territory and a specific period of time to which to return, a postnationalist has no boundaries to be territorialized. In that sense, a postnationalist can serve as an example of Deleuzean nomadism in search of a leakage of power or a line of flight from the territorializing forces of state apparatuses. Refusing to be territorialized within the state power established by most nationalists, a postnationalist with utopian desires pursues a deterritorialization that can escape from the oppressive ideology and apparatuses of the nation-state.

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61 “Certainly fear of want makes all kinds of animals greedy and rapacious, but only mankind is made so by pride, which makes them consider their own glory enhanced if they excel others in displaying superfluous possessions; in the Utopian scheme of things, there is no place at all for such a vice” (*Utopia* 68). Clarence H. Miller in the Notes to *Utopia* explains the meaning of ‘Utopia’: “The name of ‘Utopia’ derives from Greek *ou* (‘not’) and *topos* (‘place’), meaning ‘no place’ (More also called it by the equivalent Latin name ‘nusquama’). ‘Utopia’ includes a pun because the initial ‘u’ may also be derived from Greek *eu* (‘good’). Hence Utopia is a good place which is no place” (142).

62 Jameson in “The Politics of Utopia” (2004) also states that “it is most authentic when we cannot imagine it. Its function lies not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to imagine such a future so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped and confined” (46).
In considering those characteristics of postnationalism, I want to illuminate Durcan as a postnationalist poet who calls into question nationalist myths and sectarian violence with his alternatives to that ideologically rigid society. In his criticism of the founding ideology of the nation-state, mainly so-called Celtic Irishness, he reveals how the Celtic construction relies on superstitions and unreasonable obstinacy in regard to the concept of tradition, such as the Gaelic language. Despite his criticism against the nationalist myth-making, Durcan is willing to reinterpret the nation’s past through his reconciliation with his father and through his recognition of the utopian aura exuded from local places. He finds utopia in a foreign country like Russia or a hybrid Ireland without being fixated in a historical time frame or place in the native land. Accordingly, his utopia has ahistorical, atemporal features that withstand nationalist logic of progress toward the establishment of the nation-state. Rather than working for the nation-state, he thus values the significance of doing nothing for the state. Behind his passionate search for utopia, Durcan is always keenly aware of violent identity politics in Ireland. Against the inflexible conception of nation, he candidly and plainly criticizes unjustifiable terrorism in Northern Ireland. In addition, because of that inflexibility of national identity, Irish society reveals ethnocentrism with which the Church, the courts, and the academy are complicit. If Irish racial violence toward other minorities can be attributed to its colonial experience under which strong masculine behaviors have been promoted to assert the political autonomy, the excessive expression of masculinity pervading in postcolonial Ireland justifies its violence toward women and social minorities. In response to the hypermasculine culture and ideology, Durcan suggests alternative perspectives such as an aesthetic of sports and a significance of dancing. He also shows new models for postnationalist Irish men and women, who cannot be

63 Although religion basically has an ethnocentric aspect in that it originates from the natives, Christianity, Islam, and some religious sects such as Rev. Moon’s Unification Church tend to transcend ethnocentrism.
defined by conventional stereotypes of gender. In his acute recognition of tragic reality and his assiduous search for utopia, Durcan glimpses his utopian postnationalist Ireland.

**Durcan Critiques the Founding Ideology of the Nation-State**

Postnationalist Durcan challenges the myth of the founding of the Celtic nation by revealing its emptiness as briefly discussed in Chapter 1 regarding his minoritarian perspective on Irish pre-history and archaeology. Contrary to the nationalists who traced back their national origins to Celtic culture to distinguish Ireland from the secular modern world of the colonizer, Durcan in “O Westport in the Light of Asia Minor” shows that the Celtic national myth is simply an invention in which there is no tangible object of identity. Irish identity politics cannot be separate from the British imperialist prejudice toward Ireland as a feminine native land. Just like Irish nationalists, Durcan is also aware of British colonialism in modern Irish history, in which the identity imposition project of the British facilitated their colonization of Ireland: “British frocks and dresses lay draped on the rocks, / Grey flashing windows of a nineteenth-century boutique” (ll. 4-5). What distinguishes Durcan as a postnationalist from majoritarian nationalists is that the latter believe that there is a primitive time or place appropriate to restoring national sovereignty and identity. For Durcan, the center of national identity is not filled with the glorious splendor of the birth of the nation, but with emptiness: “Yet when cocky men peered round the curtain of sky / There was no god and the mists came” (ll. 14-15). By shattering the myth of national foundation, Durcan, an iconoclast, plainly exposes that the myth is a mere illusion like mists. As the mists can easily blind the people all in mystification of the nation, Durcan recognizes that the mists prevail over the native land and his generation has inherited that
illusion from their parents. Against “seductive garments” (l. 32) that have deceived the people, Durcan courageously proclaims his poetic vocation as postnationalist: “But there were some who had guts, took action and stayed” (l. 29). Passionately shining truth on the national founding myth like the sun, “Black at the edges, pure red at the centre” (l. 34), Durcan as an inside informant confronts the false mystification of the nation.

**Violence in Nationalist Myths**

If the nationalists in the poem above beautify the national foundation, they also take violent advantage of the native land to justify their ideology. The Irish native land in “The Drover’s Path Murder” is described as “The beautifullest woman in West May” (l. 3) with her sensual beauty and pure gold that she carries. There are two men who ambush to rob her of the gold jewelry: “searched her savagely but could find no gold. / They raped and murdered her because they could find no gold” (ll. 13-14). The virgin native land that Celtists frequently refer to becomes no longer pure land because the nationalists themselves have already destroyed it to find the gold of making a national myth of foundation. In other words, preoccupied with their search of the national origin, the nationalists are ironically willing to sacrifice the native land as they murder the native woman. Contrary to their failure to find the national origin represented as gold, the native land endlessly conceals its essential origins; that reflects Durcan’s postnationalist perspective, which cannot be fastened onto any certain origin. For a postnationalist, there is no specific source of identity to which the people of Ireland should return. Although there may be the gold of the woman, it is impossible to locate its place and time. Brutally hunted down for the nationalists’ sake, the raped and murdered land causes the speaker to feel guilty not only because of the murderers but also because of his own greed and innate violence in searching for the gold at that scene of murder: “As three men, thrice murderous, we bow our heads, / Yet soon we too
may have to pay with our lives / And we shall have only our faces for gold, / Only our faces for gold” (ll. 31-34). Nevertheless, he soon realizes his postnationalist vocation to recall numerous victims drowned in the bog. In remembering the many sheep drowned in the bog, he does not lament only for the murdered native woman considered to be the origin of Ireland because he may fall into an essentialism identical to that into which the nationalists once fell. Aware of the danger of essentialism, he turns his attention to several women and their voices, “the warmth of women and of women’s voices” (l. 39). Durcan’s postnationalist duty is thus to identify his own intrinsic violence as well as to disclose aggressive nationalist myth making that murders the native land.

Durcan’s recognition of violence in the nationalist myth of national foundation culminates in “Before the Celtic Yoke.” As Kearney comments on this poem, “echoing Kavanagh’s satire of the ‘Irish thing’” (Postnationalist Ireland 135), Durcan fundamentally questions the legitimacy of Celtic heritage in the formation of national identity: “What was it like in Ireland before the Celtic yoke –” (l. 1). As Durcan’s two previous poems have shown, a true national identity of Ireland for him did not originate in Celtic culture. That culture or its ideology is rather a “yoke” (l. 1) that tortures and distorts the native land. The speaker’s muse declares that the Celtic construction of Ireland is the same as the violence that human history has reiterated:

Elizabethan, Norman, Viking, Celt,

Conquistadores all:

Imperialists, racialists, from across the seas,  

64 Kavanagh said, “I do not believe that there is any such thing as ‘Irish’ in literature” (qtd. in O’Briend 15).
Merciless whalesback riders

Thrusting their languages down my virgin throat,

And to rape not merely but to garotte

My human voice:

To screw my soul to orthodoxy and break my neck. (ll. 3-10)

By juxtaposing the Celts with other notorious races for their brutality, Durcan categorizes the Celts as an invader group. As imperialists once came from foreign lands, the Celts are also foreign occupiers. Durcan “connects the bloodshed of the 1970s,” Elizabeth Cullingford observes, “with the ideology of an imperialist Celticism that matches in violence anything perpetrated by the Normans or the Elizabethans” (152). Words, such as “Merciless” (l. 6), “Thrusting” (l. 7), “rape” (l. 8), “garotte” (l. 8), and “screw” (l. 9), aptly represent how violently the Celtists as well as the Celts acted in the native land in the name of nation. More important, they territorialize native souls within a certain “orthodoxy” (l. 10); hence comes the birth of official history of Ireland and its major culture. For Durcan, all those orthodoxies are recent inventions reflecting on religious and political ideologies of the Celtists: “these are but Micky-come-latelies / Puritanical, totalitarian, by contrast with my primal tongue” (ll. 12-13). However, when he envisages the state before the invention of Celtic Ireland, in particular, when he speaks of “my virgin throat” (l. 7) and “my primal tongue” (l. 13), he seems to presuppose another origin of national identity. In other words, he may fall into an Irish identity fundamentalism when he looks forward to retrieving some primitive state of Ireland; he seems to at least suggest that he has a certain time to return to the period “before” the Celtic cultural invasion as the title indicates. The speaker’s muse nevertheless states that “I am as palpable and inscrutable” (l. 22),
which means Durcan’s concept of primal Ireland refuses to be defined in terms of the place or the period of the origin despite its tangibleness. Although Durcan discloses violence in Celtic constructions of national identity and searches for an alternative time or place, what primarily lies in that utopia is not a certain time/place but an escape from conventional constructions of national identity. National identity in itself, for postnationalists, is neither that which is harmful nor that which must be nullified. If they had no national identity, it would be almost impossible to suggest alternatives. The construction of national identity is a matter of appropriation. If a nationality is characterized in a dogmatic and violent way the IRA has striven for, Durcan cannot accept that political invention of nation. When he says, “If you would contemplate me / You will know the terror that an old man knows / As he shrinks back from the grassy womb of his chirping mamma” (ll. 24-26), he obviously wants to escape from a nagging mother’s or parents’ influences that induce “terror” (l. 25) in him. As a result, terror and violence are two aspects of the Celtic yoke for Durcan; his search for “before” that construction can be read as a way out of the terror and violence.

A Superstitious Obsession with Tradition

If those poems above are aimed at criticizing violent myths of national foundation, Durcan in “Hopping Round Knock Shrine in the Falling Rain 1958” shows how the Irish were fantasized by a concept of tradition, including old religious superstitions. As the young speaker reminisces on his old days when he was thirteen and broke his leg, he was advised by his aunt, a “superstitious old lady” (l. 2) that he “circumambulate the shrine fifteen times / Repeating the rosary, telling his [your] beads” (ll. 7-8). After hopping around the shrine in the falling rain, he realizes that her pious remedy is simply a “trick” (l. 7) because it does not work for his broken leg. It is important, however, to notice that Durcan emphasizes less that his aunt’s remedy did
not work than that he realizes “That day was a crucial day / In my hedge school of belief, / In the potential of miracle, / In the actuality of vision” (ll. 23-26). He is rather “grateful” (l. 28) for that fuss in the rain because he learns a great lesson that Irish society is obsessed with old religious superstitions to the extent that the Irish deny normal treatment for the sick. When the speaker reveals fantasies of the void concept of traditional miracle and vision, it is that moment when he confidently establishes his postnationalist perspective. The so-called Irish traditions, in fact, products of the modern nation-state, are not only apparently ineffective in reality but also degraded to the status of superstition.

That peculiar Irish mentality obsessed with traditional superstitions can also be found in their use of the Irish language. The speaker’s family in “The Persian Gulf” recites the rosary in the Irish language. That language, however, is just superstitiously murmured without any contact with reality: “In a language in which we do not converse / And which is as strange to me as Urdu or Arabic./ Praying in Irish to a skylight on fire is an abstract art” (ll. 10-12). He not only feels he is suffocated by that language and chooses to dream of the Persian Gulf to find a way out, but he also emphasizes that the Irish language as an abstract art is foreign to his sense of reality. Although that language is outdated inasmuch as it is considered an exotic language, the speaker’s father is still engrossed in using it when his house is on fire:

When the first fireman reaches us

And cries to us – “Are you all right?” –

Daddy says to him in Irish: “We don’t speak English.”

The fire-brigade man, barely visible in smoke, […]
Shrugs his eyebrows and climbs back down the ladder.

The ladders are retracted and the fire engines driven away,

Leaving us to burn to death speaking Irish. (ll. 34-42)

That is a peculiar moment when the Irish mentality is haunted by a superstition of tradition. Revealing how morbidly the speaker’s father is obsessed with using the Irish language⁶⁵ to the extent that he resolutely chooses to die and even sacrifice his whole family, Durcan denounces the ways in which the Irish blindly believe in their ancient language. The father in “Crinkle, Near Birr” also uses a dialect known as the Athlone accent that people consider the language spoken in a convent isolated from a real community. In addition, he categorizes the human race into two groups: “Into those who had fire escapes and spoke Irish / And those who had not got fire escapes and did not speak Irish” (ll. 56-57). As a typical nationalist does, the father perceives the world in an exclusive dichotomy in considering the Irish language a fundamental standard by which to define national identity. For the father, only those who speak Irish are thought to have fire escapes; that image is in contrast to the “The skylight” (l. 1) in “The Persian Gulf.” Whereas the skylight of the latter is an expression of the speaker’s escape from the fire of nationalism, an exclusive usage of the Irish language, the fire escapes in the former signify an ivory tower of nationalism in which he feels “in a mood to be secretive” (l. 53). Although those two images represent deterritorialization in that they look for a way out, they lead to completely different destinations. While the former reaches its self-reclusion as in “a convent in the middle of a dark forest” (l. 21), the latter aspires to fly away from that cultural oppression; that is why Deleuze

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⁶⁵ One of the first scenes in The Wind That Shakes the Barley directed by Ken Loach describes a young man’s death. A teenager, Micheál, refuses to use the English language and faces death at the hands of the British Black and Tans.
and Guattari maintain that not every deterritorialization is beneficial. Because a deterritorialization is brought to an end in reterritorialization, what is important in deterritorialization is not the act of deterritorialization per se but the kinds of reterritorialization that result from deterritorialization. Accordingly, a fire escape of deterritorialization can be appropriated in different ways as Durcan’s two poems illustrate. When it is used for the lives of the people and when it can save them from oppression, deterritorialization becomes meaningful. On the contrary, when it oppresses the people by insisting on certain modes of identity like the Irish language or Catholicism, when utilized in the name of nation, it can result in a destruction of the nation. That is the point at which a postnationalist can be differentiated from a nationalist. If a nationalist tends to focus on deterritorialization in and of itself from colonialism, a postnationalist has to consider how the nationalist deterritorialization is reterritorialized in a fixed or violent way and has to find a creative and less-fascist way toward reterritorialization.

When a national tradition exerts its oppressive power to reterritorialize its own people, it easily loses a sense of reality. As in “Hopping Round Knock Shrine in the Falling Rain 1958” nothing happens after that traditionally quasi-religious remedy, speaking the Irish language in the two poems above makes nothing happen in reality. The only outcome is “the ruins of the house sticking up through the waters” (“The Persian Gulf” l. 44) that no one will be likely to visit any more; that is why the Irish language is called an abstract art. For Durcan, one of the common features shared among an abstract art, the Irish language, and a superstition is that they are detached from reality. Although they can have, now and then, an influence on reality, they at last

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66 Deleuze and Guattari state that relative deterritorializations, as Hitler’s Nazi illustrated, ultimately lead to a deadly reterritorialization. (A Thousand Plateaus 56)

67 That can be applied to the Irish context of colonialism. If British colonialism means a territorialization that controlled over all Irish material and spiritual lives, anti-colonialism or Irish nationalism that strived for national independence can signify deterritorialization from that colonial power. Nevertheless, every struggle for national liberation is not always good because while some deterritorialization can bring a healthy reterritorialization of a new national community, some result in another fascism that urges its people to follow a certain ideology.
fail to save the people in need and result in a destructive reterritorialization. The man in “Raymond of the Rooftops” is engaged in a cultural project of Irish traditional writing “for a woman’s magazine in London / An Irish fairytale called Raymond of the Rooftops” (ll. 8-9). Although his children could accidentally be decapitated by falling slates, the man is not concerned about the roof and leaves his wife, “herself,” to fix it alone. Because he is busy writing an Irish fairytale, a holy nationalist duty for him, he has no time to take care of the real lives of his family. Without any contact with reality, Irish tradition proceeds toward a destructive reterritorialization; that is how Durcan considers the concept of Irish tradition invalid in reality.

In the same manner, the speaker in “The Girl with the Keys to Pearse’s Cottage” depicts a historic relic that is going to collapse. With “wet thatch and peeling jambs” (l. 9), Patrick Pearse’s cottage, 68 a symbol of Irish nationalist inspiration, has no one to look after it. Even a girl who has managed that relic finally decides to leave: “Our world was strange because it had no future; / She was America-bound at summer’s end. / She had no choice but to leave her home –” (ll. 17-19). As the speaker confesses that it was “When I was sixteen” (l. 1), perhaps in 1959 or 1960 provided that this poem reflects Durcan’s biographical element, 69 it was the time when the Irish economy was almost destitute due to a “self-reliance” economic policy enacted by the Free State. In the name of Irish tradition, the nationalist leaders, in particular de Valera, insisted on adopting economic isolation exclusively focused on an agricultural system. Since the establishment of the Free State, as Declan Kiberd observes, the rate of unemployment and emigration remained so high that people generally believed that it was better to leave their country than to stay (Inventing Ireland 479). The girl with the keys to Pearse’s cottage is no

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68 Patrick Pearse was one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising and President of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. Since he read “Proclamation of the Irish Republic” outside the General Post Office in Dublin at the outset of the Rising, he has been a crucial symbol of Irish nationalism.

69 Durcan was born in 1944.
exception. She has no choice but to leave like everyone else around her. She abandons “Pearse’s Ireland” as unhealthy as “de Valera’s Ireland.” No one is likely to stay and maintain the relic of tradition because she has to face harsh reality or death as does the speaker burned to death in “The Persian Gulf.” When she leaves her country with her keys, the relic turns into deserted ruins. Rather than remaining attached to a void concept of tradition, the girl chooses to live and not to die captivated with that relic.

Durcan’s stance on the tradition of nation sounds resolute as expressed in “Give Him Hondi”: “May I never romanticise / The lives of Aboriginal people. / May I never write trite / Codswallop about indigenousness” (ll. 476-78). His postnationalist enunciation is not to mystify the lives of the Irish people by relying on a cultural fundamentalism that Kavanagh once criticized in “The Great Hunger.” What happens in the name of nation, rather, can become an object of his criticism. As for the 1916 Easter Rising, he observes that “I don’t want to debunk nineteenth-century nationalism. […] I told him [a British journalist] quite honestly that it was very remote for me […] He felt I was betraying the Irish cause” (“Passage to Utopia” 330). As for Pearse, one of the Easter Rising leaders, Durcan evaluates him as “a fanatical, young idealist, set out on what nowadays would be called a suicide terrorist mission” (Diary 55), which reminds us of a more recent terrorist attack in the U.S. on September 11, 2001. It is significant that when Durcan in Diary compares Pearse with Muhammad Atta, “a fanatical, young Arab idealist, [who] led a suicide attack against the city of New York” (56), he considers the Easter Rising not as an ideological gel of various subaltern struggles that Irish postcolonial scholars try to re-evaluate,

70 If Durcan has a demythologizing tendency toward the Irish natives, his contemporary poets, such as Thomas Kinsella, John Montague, and Seamus Heaney, reappropriate various myths. For instance, Heaney in “The Tollund Man” approaches native myths of North through exotic ones, such as Nordic mythologies. Richard Kearney observes, “Heaney approaches indigenous myths either indirectly, through borrowed myths (Nordic, Greek, Roman) or through the detached eye of the ‘inner émigré.’ Joyce and Kavanagh are his guides here, rather than Yeats and the revivalists” (Postnationalist Ireland 130).
but as mere violent terrorism: “In the eighty-five years between Patrick Pearse and Muhammad Atta, Ireland became the world’s number one nursery of terrorism. […] the IRA became the world’s leading and most successful terrorist organisation” (56). In his debunking of nationalist mystification of nation, his attitude sounds more like that of a revisionist than a postcolonialist. In particular, as most of his poems discuss his nation and religion, what he is concerned with is the matter of appropriation of those concepts. He takes them not in one territorialized, ossified way, but in many deterritorialized ways. If a hat in “The Hat Factory” can symbolize an identifier of man, “His hat which is the last and first symbol / Of a man’s slender foothold on this earth” (ll. 58-59), the speaker refuses to assume any particular identity: “Probably, I shall never wear a hat” (l. 68). That is how the postnationalist Durcan sees a nation without sticking to one particular national identity like a ready-made product from a factory.

**A First Postnationalist Alternative: Utopia**

*A Reinterpretation of the Past*

Although Durcan adopts a critical viewpoint on the concept of tradition, he also shows his ambivalence toward the nation and his father’s generation. In “Making Love Outside Áras an Uachtaráin” the speaker discovers how de Valera obdurately pursues self-righteous morality. Nonetheless, he states that “Because the odd thing was – oh how odd it was – / We both revered Irish patriots” (ll. 9-10). Even though Durcan seriously challenges the state apparatus and the violent aspects of nationalism, he does not deny the necessity for national independence. He obviously honors Irish patriots, his father’s generation, who brought the Free State out of British colonialism. Durcan is not an anti-nationalist but a postnationalist who has a more sophisticated
perspective on the concept of nation, tradition, and/or identity. That is one of the reasons why 
Durcan still lives in Dublin and remains within the official religious system of the Irish Catholic 
Church. In short, postnationalist Durcan definitely hopes to have a free state without exterior 
colonial powers; after the national liberation, he longs for another “free” state without oppressive 
identity politics. Away from that rigid concept of identity, the new generation of Irish artists, 
with Durcan, “affirms the positive value of confusion, uncertainty, homelessness, migrancy, 
questioning, questing for ‘another place’” (Kearny, *Navigations* 322).

Based on that reinterpretation of the past and his father’s generation, Durcan finds a 
utopian moment in a father-son relationship illustrated in “Crinkle, Near Birr.” As discussed in 
the previous chapter on an anti-Oedipus tradition in the Irish context, conflicts between father 
and son are crucial topics in the discussion of postnationalist utopia. If revisionists or 
postcolonialists all together aim at destroying the target of the father or his generation’s faults, 
postnationalists, rather, hope for a true union with their fathers:

We went to our honeymoon […]

That is what it meant to be Irish and free –

To be father and son in bed together

In a hotel in the City of the Tribes

Listening to the BBC Radio Third Service. (“Crinkle, Near Birr” ll. 23-40)

In beautiful memories of his childhood, the speaker longs for an ideal relationship with his father 
in the honeymoon. Durcan’s utopia does not lie in his complete rejection or erasure of the old 
generation and its violence: “What I remember most / Are not the beatings-up and the temper
tantrums” (ll. 84-85). He rather recollects a happy moment when father and son shared a common interest, such as playing cricket. In a similar sense, Durcan in “The Two Little Boys at the Back of the Bus” portrays a utopian glimpse into his affinity with his father when sitting in the back of the bus going home and sharing his father’s digestive biscuits. That happy moment between father and son that the speaker recalls is a model of a postnationalist reconciliation that transcends the oppositions and the ideological differences between father and son. Postnationalist Durcan shows neither reactionary resistance to his father’s violence nor indiscriminate rejection of all past tradition. A postnationalist utopia overcomes another binary opposition as well, the one between the traditional and the contemporary. When his father carries his son “in his two hands home to bed” (l. 90), regardless of who has the initiative or more willingness in that reconciliation, their unity does not represent the son’s romantic submission to his father’s authority but a blissful situation like a honeymoon.

*The Quest for Another Place*

The past is not that which Durcan liquidates but that which he needs to reinterpret as he re-illuminates his relationship with his father. In particular, when the past is closely linked to local places via the image of modernization bound to urban life, local places are significant for Durcan because he can distinguish those places from nationalism that incessantly imposes exclusive identity on an individual in presupposition of the other, its enemy. In other words, nationalism necessarily depends on the existence of the other to define the identity of its people as the Irish nationalists consciously or unconsciously need the English to find their national identity. Local places, however, do not require exterior sources to define them. They are sufficient to identify themselves. In that sense, local places can be discussed in terms of Kavanagh’s parochialism in comparison to provincialism. Whereas a provincial “is always trying
to live by other people’s loves” and has no mind of his own, a parochial “is self-sufficient” with his “intended intensities and courage” (qtd. in Warner 81). Kavanagh’s contemporary authors, who had nationalistic tendencies tried to gain “the respect and attention of their former colonial masters, even when their fear of inferiority is masked by patriotic rhetoric and reference” (O’Briend 14), which reflects their provincialism. That anomalous mentality of the so-called Irish majoritarian writers represents how unconsciously they depended on former colonial authority despite their nationalist writings. As a result, the word nationalism for Kavanagh and Durcan sounds hypocritical in their contradictory behaviors.

Sometimes I am accused of betraying the nation because I don’t support the traditional sense of nationalist identity. The very word nationalism sometimes fills me with disgust. This does not mean that I reject the local place of origin. I respect Kavanagh’s statement that it takes a lifetime to get to know the corner of a field, that there is a valid pride of place – what he calls the ‘parish’ rather than the ‘province.’ (“Passage to Utopia” 329-30)

Although Durcan is obviously opposed to all ideological deeds performed in the name of nationalism, the reason that he never forsakes the local places, as Kavanagh favored the term of parochialism, is that there lies a valid pride in them, in other words, a self-sufficient utopian aura. That recognition of the significance of local places is one of the main differences between postnationalism and revisionism. Whereas the latter indiscriminately finds fault with concepts like “the past” and “the nation,” the former has a more sophisticated discerning perspective as in Durcan and Kearney. In his distinguishing of local places from revisionism, Durcan finds some utopian value in those which the revisionists once disparaged as anachronistic relics. In addition, his emotional attachment to those places does not necessarily imply that he revives the subaltern
voices that postcolonial critics seek; that is one major difference between a postnationalist perspective and a postcolonialist one. While the latter tends to return to or, at least, rely on a certain alternate identity or place in the name of the subaltern, the former does not do so.

Kearney in *Navigations* explains further the Irish utopia in terms of native places:

> It is, to be sure, not the nation-state in any official sense. It is a place more local than the nation, more personally and communally experienced – one not circumscribed by abstract statues or boundaries. A place where the old antagonism between the native and the alternative ceases to apply. A place of recreation only disclosed when one has ventured out in search of the no-place (*u-topos*) that is always elsewhere. Here we understand that we can be Irish and citizens of the world without contradiction. (322, emphasis in the original)

A postnationalist utopia seeks out more local, personal, and communal places than does an official nation-state that establishes abstract boundaries of Irishness. It is a place where there is no more contradiction between nationalism and revisionism. More important, as noted in Kearney’s quotation, postnationalist locales can be distinguished from postcolonialist ones, in that a postnationalist does not search for a terminal place but an ultimate deterritorialization, nomadism, a line of flight, without being fixated on a certain geography. That utopian aura embedded in local places thus gives Durcan a fundamental ground for his search for a postnationalist Ireland.

A postnationalist utopian local place is well represented in “Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949.” The speaker, a five-year-old boy, leaves with his father for Mayo filled with

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71 Local places and their names for Durcan were significant inasmuch as he decided to drop English and got a degree in archaeology and medieval history at University College Cork. His inquisitiveness about local places can
names of many local places. Vividly remembering the details of happy moments of visiting his father’s home, the young speaker makes a stark contrast between utopian images of Mayo and a tragic Dublin. Whereas the local places in Mayo become “magic passwords into eternity” (l. 9), Dublin is portrayed as “the alien, foreign city” (l. 1) or as “the daylight nightmare” (l. 22). In addition, Dublin suffocates him with “railings and palings and asphalt and traffic lights, / And blocks after blocks of so-called ‘new’ tenements” (ll. 25-26). A “grave” (l. 28) and “cemetery” (l. 29)-like city of Dublin gives him the impression of a death-bed, making him believe “home was not home” (l. 21). On the contrary, life in Mayo is a “seemingly seamless garment gorgeously rent / By their [the morning cattle and cock] screeches and bellowings” (ll. 17-18). Life in Mayo, for the speaker, seems organic and without contradictions to the extent that he feels comfortable as Yeats felt comfortable in Innisfree. That is the point at which this romantic, nostalgic poem sounds unusual for Durcan, because he has consistently criticized the romantic versions of the nationalist rural ideology as he follows Kavanagh’s anti-pastoralism. It is, however, the point at which this postnationalist poem can be distinguished from a revisionist perspective that ignores significant meanings in local places. The significance of local places is that they can provide some utopian inspiration. The primary function of that utopia-like place does not lie in its positive suggestions for a certain time/place, but in its negativity; that is, an awareness of harsh reality. Although he praises Mayo and expresses emotional values, his nostalgic manner can be read in the close relationship to the city of Dublin, the birthplace of his loneliness: “Thousands of crosses of loneliness planted / In the narrowing grave of the life of the father; / In the wide, wide

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be traced back to his childhood memories in Mayo where he visited his grandmother (his mother’s mother), the MacBrides who lived near Westport, County Mayo, and where his aunt (his father’s sister) lived in. Durcan, in particular, reminisces that the place where his grandmother lived was “Eden” (Dalton 23) to him. As he dedicated his collection, *O Westport in the Light of Asia Minor*, to his grandmother, Eileen MacBride, he shows a deep respect for Mayo.
cemetery of the boy’s childhood” (ll. 27-29). Mainly because postnationalism has no footing in a given time/place regarding utopia, his utopian desire negatively reveals absurdity in reality.

That negation of the status quo is also a main theme in Yeats as he proclaims: “I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree” (“The Lake Isle of Innisfree” l. 1). Although the two poets contrast a rural area with an urban city, there is a critical difference between them. If Yeats is held to the certain place of Innisfree to overcome his inner contradictions about city life, of which the mode is similar to traditional Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Durcan does not simply long to return to a local landscape, but focuses on contemporary harsh reality. Christina Hunt Mahony observes that Durcan “writes of efforts to shake off the drowsiness and the awkward transitions of the 1960 and 1970s, and the setbacks of the 1980s” (274) in the course of defining modern Irish reality. In other words, the main focus of the poem is not simple nostalgia for a specific rural place but painful recognition of savage reality in an urban city. Although his naming of rural places seems to evoke postcolonial nostalgia attached to a certain place of origin, Durcan’s places in Mayo soon evaporate like magic when his litany-like naming of those places, such as “Kilcock, Kinnegad, Strokestown, Elphin, / Tarmonbarry, Tulsk, Ballaghedereen, Ballyvary” (“Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949” ll. 10-11), leads to “eternity” (l. 9). Rather, the image of Mayo for Durcan serves as the home that he unceasingly quests for throughout his lifetime, although he was born in Dublin. Maurice Elliott points out that the image of home runs through Durcan’s poems:

[…] as an unavoidable motif of yearning, while at the same time signaling the inevitable difficulty of the quest. This is conveyed not only by the pervasive and very Irish metaphor of “wandering” or moving across the surface of the earth, but also by the haunting spectre of its collapse into loneliness. (149-50)
Home for Durcan is his lifelong journey to get there. However, he will never reach home and that is why he always feels lonely as a minority person. Dublin, ironically, is not his home, but Mayo is the unreachable home, utopia. What Durcan desires in Mayo is thus not just a rural landscape *per se* but a rural aura from which he can grasp utopian impulses through local names that can surpass fundamentalism in nationalism as well as sufferings in city life.

As local names in Mayo remind Durcan of utopian impulses, naming can serve to play a crucial role in postnationalist utopian thinking. When Walter Benjamin, in “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” mentions the prelapsarian language, that is, a naming language, that reveals utopian impulses because after the Fall human beings are believed to have lost that special language by which man communicated with God and nature, and in which there was no separation between the signifier and the signified. After the Fall, human language was degraded to a mere sign to represent an object; the diversity of languages came about; and the origin of abstraction was instead introduced. In particular, in comparison to abstract language, a naming language has a close relationship with concrete elements in reality: “Name, with regard to existing language, offers only the ground in which its concrete elements are rooted. But the abstract elements of language are rooted in the word of judgment” (Benjamin 328). As a result, retrieving the prelapsarian language for Durcan is the key to overcoming the “abstract art” in “The Persian Gulf” expressed as an example of a Celtic cultural judgment of national identity.

The speaker’s muse in “Before the Celtic Yoke” proclaims, “In Ireland before the Celtic yoke I was the voice of Seeing / And my island people’s Speaking was their Being” (ll. 27-28). There was no separation between language and being before the advent of the Celtic “cultural shrouds”

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72 The prelapsarian language has in common with utopia in that they can never be achieved as “no place” and, at the same time, can be understood as the ideal, “good place.” The only difference between them is their directions. Whereas the former is oriented toward the past, the latter toward the future.
(l. 29), that is the cultural invention of nation that has brought about cultural death in Ireland. There was rather a perfect unity between language and being through a naming-language before that artificial project:

My vocabularies are boulders cast up on time’s beaches;

Masses of sea-rolled stones reared up in mile-high ricks

Along the shores and curving coasts of all my island;

Verbs dripping fresh from geologic epochs;

Scorched, drenched, in metamorphosis, vulcanicity, ice ages. (ll. 14-18)

Nouns and verbs are no more dead, abstract signs, but active agents of metamorphoses through which no one can insist that “I am this, I am that” (Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*) or “There is the source from which all cultures rise” (Kavanagh, “The Great Hunger” XIII l. 18, emphasis in the original). Unlike the artificial construction of Celtic culture through which the separation between language and nature was introduced into Ireland, that is, the Fall of Ireland for Durcan, his naming of a prelapsarian language can suggest revolutionary utopia to shatter a nationalist inculcation of cultural identity.

When Durcan talks about the naming-language, it may sound like a return to a certain prelapsarian time in the past. However, although Durcan seems to insinuate a certain period of time before the Celtic construction or before the Tower of Babel, Durcan’s prelapsarian utopia is still a valid concept from Benjamin’s point of view. The potential of political revolution, for Benjamin in “On the Concept of History,” comes from the past as he illustrates with reference to *Angelus Novus*, a picture painted by Paul Klee:
His [the angel of history] face is turned toward the past. […] But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future […] What we call progress is this storm. (392, emphasis in the original).

For Benjamin, the energy of progress is blowing from Paradise in the remote past. Nonetheless, his perspective on revolution is by no means rosy. It is rather an ironically bleak vision because the angel of history can never reach the glorious past, but is always pushed away by the storm of progress toward the unknown future. In that sense, the Celtists can look forward to seeing the potential in political progress, in particular, under the special circumstance of colonialism as well as to finding the authentic identity of Ireland from the ancient world uncontaminated by recent foreign occupation when they set their utopia in the past. On the contrary, Durcan’s utopia has no fixed footing in time or place but is a matter of orientation just as Klee’s angel of history is always looking toward Paradise in the past, and, at the same time, cannot arrive at Paradise.

When Durcan values the names of the west villages, he recalls their names in an attempt to find alternative ways to cultural (re)construction of the Celtists. Because, “after” the Celtic project, all Irish culture has been overwhelmed by Celtic ideology, Durcan’s alternative way to the future can ironically be searched out “before” that project, toward the unreachable past. The so-called “before” period in “Before the Celtic Yoke,” for postnationalist Durcan, is not the place/time to retrieve but an everlasting Paradise perceptible but unattainable.

If a postnationalist glimpses that unreachable utopia, a postcolonialist establishes a more attainable time/place to be recovered. Irish postcolonial critic Luke Gibbons, in Transformations in Irish Culture (1996), introduces the significance of the West of Ireland in comparison to the West of America. Ireland and the United States, Gibbons observes, share the myth of the west as
sites of cultural survival of traditional values in the course of industrialization and modernization (23). In particular, by sharing “their pronounced hostility to law and order and the forces of centralization” (24), the two models represent a last bastion of traditional culture that shapes national identity. Despite those common grounds, they have several differences. For example, if the American western is strongly based on individualism and a puritan ethos, the Irish form pursues an escape from individualism and from a suffocating moral atmosphere. Gibbons argues that the glorification of violence and lawlessness in Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* was impelled by “a desire to return to the prelapsarian world of Ascendancy Ireland” (25); that desire for a harmonious time lies at the heart of the West of Ireland. In particular, by prioritizing time to space, the Irish western genre extends “its horizons through the accretions of history which acknowledge, rather than deny, the pre-colonial presence on the landscape” (Gibbons 13). To sum up, the wild west of Ireland represents, for postcolonialists, a certain peaceful time before colonial invasion; that is the major difference between a postcolonialist perspective and a postnationalist perspective. If the former presupposes a crucial time to return to and sets an exact model for recovery, the latter acknowledges the impossibility of return to it due to its non-existence even if he longs for a utopian time, that is, the time “before” the Celtic invasion. A postnationalist thus continuously searches for another “place” rather than “time” in his lifelong journey. As for Durcan’s utopianism, Edna Longley maintains that Durcan’s “mystical entrances’ affirm lost Edens, like Ireland ‘Before the Celtic Yoke,’ or an ideal peaceable kingdom” (Introduction xi). Although he definitely longs for the period distinguishable from the Celtic construction of Irish identity, he is by no means led to another fundamentalism by affirming a certain “lost Eden”: 
My work as a poet has always been a searching for the other place. The notion of ‘utopia’ is fundamental to something about myself, and I think, about human nature. It is a theme which has cropped up again and again in my recent readings of Primo Levi, the Italian Jew whose books bear witness to his time in a Nazi concentration camp; Leonardo Boff, the Latin American theologian of liberation, and Richard Kearney. Utopia, for me as for them, does not mean harking back to a ‘lost Eden.’ (“Passage to Utopia” 327)

It is worth noting that Durcan’s thinking about utopia not only directly resonates with Kearney’s postnationalist perspective, but he is also not held to a lost golden age of Ireland with which Celtists, nationalists, or some postcolonialists have been engrossed. The continuous search for the other place, not the other time, is one of Durcan’s most significant duties as a postnationalist.

Postnationalist Durcan has always sought alternative places for home in particular, “Eastwards” (Durcan, *Diary* 113). At leaving Ireland for Russia, the speaker in “Going Home to Russia” feels “the moment of liberation” (l. 18) from the oppressive nation-state. To be going home to Russia, even if his own country is Ireland, causes him to experience heaven. His travel to Russia by way of “Copenhagen – the Baltic – Riga -- Smolensk” (l. 49) fills him with a new sense of being at home, especially when out of home. Russia, for Durcan, can be a model of a utopian place in the sense that he finds a sense of homecoming in Russia:

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73 Durcan reminisces the images of Russia in his childhood: “Twenty years ago, in late February 1983, I made my first visit to Soviet Union: Moscow, Leningrad, Armenia, Estonia. Born in 1944 I had been reared by Church and State here in Ireland to fear all Communists, especially Soviet Communists, as evil people with cloven hooves, even more sinister than Protestants” (*Diary* 175).

74 Russia, for Durcan, is not an exotic country at all, because his grandmother Eileen’s mother, Margaret Wilson, lived in Russia. Eileen became a half-sister of Maud Gonne with whom she shared the same father, Colonel Gonne. Refer to Mary Dalton’s interview with Durcan: Dalton, Mary. “Spiraling Lines: Paul Durcan.” *Irish Literary Supplement*. 10.2 (1991): 23-25.
To believe in utopia is to believe that there is some kind of homecoming in the ‘other place.’ Asia Minor. Russia. Turin. The quest for the ‘other place’ – whether it take the image of Mont Sainte Victoire or the village of Assisi hanging in the sky – enables us to be freer, no longer captive to our island; You see things when you return from the journey that you had not seen before. You are filled with new outrages, new dreams. (“Passage to Utopia” 331)

The main reason that Durcan can feel at home when he is apart from home is that the concept of home is not limited to one geographically demarcated area in which postcolonialists often attempt to find the home of nation. Although he becomes a foreigner in Ireland, he feels himself to be a native in the foreign land of Russia. That is the irony through which Durcan retains utopian longings rooted in exotic places that enable him not to be territorialized in a certain time/place.

The utopian place overseas enables Durcan to find his identity in peace rather than in anger or violence through which nationalists or postcolonialists have often found national identity in a reactionary manner: “The lesson of all my journeys has been that utopia is peace” (“Passage to Utopia” 331). That is why the speaker in “Going Home to Russia” makes love in Russia: “O svetka, Svetka! Don’t, don’t / Say my name! Oh say my name! / […] / Say my name! / Say my name! (ll. 65-68). When he asks his lover to say his name, he shows how earnestly he wants to find his own identity. His identity cannot be found in his native land, Ireland, but in a foreign land, Russia. For him, identity is not that inherited from his parents, from Irish ancestors, but that newly created or found in an exotic place. The speaker comes “home to you [his lover]” (l. 89) in Russia
To sleep with you on the settee and to become with you

Creatures of the new forest, crushed deer;

Never again to have to endure the persecution

Of landlords, the humiliation of advertisers;

To live again with nature as before I lived

In Ireland before all the trees were felled. (ll. 97-102)

In that description of the utopian image of home, Durcan reminiscences about an ideal era when Ireland was covered with trees, which reminds the reader of the discussion of “the citizen” in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. As for the deforestation of Irish land, the citizen, a symbol of a bigoted Irish nationalist, insists, “Save the trees of Ireland for the future men of Ireland on the fair hills of Eire, O” (*Ulysses* 12. 1263-64). The Irish forests were destroyed to the extent that “by 1904 only a little more than one percent of Ireland was woodland” (Gifford 352); blame for the deforestation was mainly attributed by Irish nationalists to British colonialism, in particular to the Land Acts from 1870 to 1909. In that sense, the citizen probably presupposes that Ireland was utopia, at least, before the coming of the British. The deforestation, in other words, for Irish nationalists, was a destructive outcome of British policies, and they want to restore the time before the colonial invasion. The ideal state of forestation of Ireland, for Durcan, however, does not

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75 He is referred to as Michael Cusack, founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association (Killeen 141).
76 Initiated by the British government, the Land Acts allowed peasant proprietorship of land. The Acts seemed significant as long as they guaranteed the peasants ownership of land, through which the Anglo-Irish, who had owned the major portions of Irish land, fell as they lost the land, their fundamental socio-economic ground for the Ascendancy. Although the Acts sounded revolutionary for the peasants, they had limitations because they were not launched by peasants themselves but by the British colonial government. After the establishment of the Irish Free State, de Valera dealt with the installments on the land purchased by the peasants and he proclaimed a so-called economic war against Britain in the 1930s.
designate the time before colonialism, the Celtic era. As discussed in “Before the Celtic Yoke,” in which the images of primitive nature signify the state of being uncontaminated by the Celtic identity project, Durcan’s “Ireland before all the trees were felled” (l. 102) in “Going Home to Russia” signifies the pure state of Ireland before the construction of the Celtic myth and identity rather than the pre-British-colonial Ireland. More important, it is worth noting that the speaker’s forgotten identity under oppressive state power can be found in new “places” awakened by nature and trees in Russia rather than in a primitive “time” before Celtic culture. Wherever natural images sustain as in trees, boulders, beaches, stones, or shores, Durcan can attain connection with any foreign land in his pursuit of utopia that enables him to find his new identity. Lucy Collins maintains that Durcan’s exploration of identities “is pursued through different experiences of place and culture and within an overtly personal framework: Russia is expressed in sensual description and apparently through a sexual relationship” (218). Her observation is significant in that the identities that Durcan pursues have at least two meanings. As discussed thus far, they can be found in other places and cultures rather than in Ireland. More important, they can also be located not in a public relationship with nation or the state, but in a private relationship, as the speaker in “Going Home to Russia” makes love with his lover. Given that Irish identity has been primarily and ideologically constructed by both British colonialists and Irish nationalists, Durcan’s sources of identity found in private relationships are significant enough to represent alternative Irish identity.

When Durcan emphasizes new places or private relationships, Durcan does not prioritize a certain foreign place in the same way in which the postcolonialists substitute the West of Ireland as the origin of culture. As Kim Cheung Boey argues, Durcan juxtaposes foreign terms with the English vernacular by which he can erase the border between his native land and the
foreign land (367). Because the two different lands are already conflated, the exotic land is no
more than a foreign place but like home, while he feels alienated in his native land. The
“permeability of places” (Boey 367) is a significant point that prevents Durcan from falling into
identity essentialism when he searches for his identity in foreign places. As Durcan in “The
Dublin-Paris-Berlin-Moscow Line” shows how he “shuttles between home and abroad, self and
other, a procedure defying linear logic” (Boey 366), he blurs rigid binary concepts and produces
a new hybrid. By virtue of its hybridity, Durcan’s quest for new identity in a foreign land thus
escapes from identity essentialism and creates new assemblages.

When considering an Ireland in which its identity fundamentalism has been sublated, a
hybrid Ireland finally opens before him. Durcan’s successful hybrid Ireland, different from the
failed versions constructed by the nation-state, as discussed by postcolonialist critics earlier, is
well captured in “Backside to the Wind.”77 The speaker, a fourteen-year-old boy, is dreaming of
a hybrid utopia, “a French Ireland” (l. 3):

What kind of village would I now be living in?

French vocabularies intertwined with Gaelic

And Irish women with French fathers,

Backside to the wind. (ll. 5-8)

In a hybrid Ireland, nothing can claim to be pure “Irish” including language and genealogy.

Thinking of another hybrid Ireland, the speaker desires “an Arabian Dublin” (l. 23), filled with
heterogeneous combinations of places. Durcan, however, does not heedlessly favor all kinds of

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77 After former President Mary Robinson quoted the poem in her inauguration speech in 1990, postnationalist
perspectives and debates in Ireland have become a major issue in contemporary Ireland.
hybrids. He is obviously wary of some kinds of harmful hybrids, such as “Anglo-American mores” (l. 35) that asphyxiate him and “the Japanese invasion” (l. 37) of materialism in the days of “money is our God” (l. 39). Not every kind of hybrid but a just hybrid is pursued in Durcan’s utopian Ireland. His utopia is not just a chaotic collage of differences but a planned assemblage. That just kind of hybrid Ireland is, however, a utopia unattainable in the face of cruel reality. When the speaker desires a utopian, hybrid Ireland, he still has “no choice but to leave, to leave” (l. 53) his native land because of the harsh realities of suffocating morality and materialism mentioned above. In particular, while thinking about a new world standing “By the scimitar shores of Killala Bay” (l. 2), he is always banished from the native land by the force of the wind at his backside. By repeating “Backside to the wind” at the end of every stanza, the speaker expresses his feeling of estrangement from home. He becomes an exile in his native land and continuously searches for other homes in foreign lands. Although he confesses that “yet there is nowhere I more yearn to live / Than in my own wild countryside, / Backside to the wind” (ll. 54–56), he is still forced to leave the land, and destined to seek a hybrid utopian Ireland.

The Quest for Atemporality

Since the hybridity in utopian Ireland has no footing in a certain time/place, it often reveals ahistorical or atemporal tendencies. Kearney notes that postnationalists do not construct history “as a continuity leading inexorable back to a lost paradise or forward to a guaranteed future” (Postnationalist Ireland 65). They rather pursue multiple time frames as collage or

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78 By comparing postnationalism with postmodernism, Kearney introduces Lyotard’s postmodern philosophy distinguishable from “mere relativism (or lazy pluralism)” (Postnationalist Ireland 66). One of the significant distinctions between a relativist refusal to judge and a postmodernist indeterminate judgment is that the latter does not consider all kinds of judgment good as any other. It pursues “not ‘any kind’ of justice, therefore, but the right kind of justice” (66).

79 Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of abstract machine can resonate with a postnationalist utopian concept in that it does not pursue a disorderly mixed situation: “Now there is no hint in all of this a chaotic white night or an undifferentiated black night. There are rules, rules of ‘plan(n)ing,’ of diagramming” (A Thousand Plateaus 70).
ahistoricity. On the contrary, almost all nationalist and/or colonialist agendas represent historical issues based on a chronological time frame in which individual experiences are homogeneously abstracted. With that anti-historicist view of postnationalism, Durcan in “Teresa’s Bar” portrays ahistorical utopia. In this poem, there appear two groups of people, “those whose business has to do with time” (l. 20) and those who have no concern with time. Whereas the former are always busy with their nationalist or anti-colonialist business, “Outside in the rain the powers-that-be / Chemist, draper, garda, priest / Paced up and down in unspeakable rage” (ll. 5-7), the latter are “Doing nothing” (l. 9) but lingering in Teresa’s bar. Those who are engrossed with time manifestly represent diverse political agendas, whether they be nationalists or colonialist, as “chemist” can signify gun, bomb, and terrorism, “draper” flags and nationalist propaganda, “garda” police authority, and “priest” religious authority. Although they look different from each other, they are, in effect, the same because they are all preoccupied with political zeal in “unspeakable rage” (l. 7) in the rain. In particular, when their identities are revealed as nationalist movement agents – “The Garda Siochana or the Guardia Civil – / The Junior Chamber or the Roman Curia – / The Poetry Society or the GAA – / The Rugby Club or the Maynooth Hierarchy – / RTE or Conor’s Cabaret –” (ll. 29-33) – nationalist violence with that rage is promptly expressed toward its opponents through their time-sensitive tasks under a historically significant circumstance of colonialism. Those who are preoccupied with time are quick to judge others, so Durcan defines them as “the members of the resurrection of judgement / Growl and scowl behind arrases in drawing rooms” (ll. 48-49). Contrary to the nationalist

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80 Even postcolonialist scholar Lloyd demonstrates “a counter-historical thesis about the insistence of a spatiality that defies historicist logic” (Oral Space 4). In addition, as Lloyd maintains that Irish histories are “overshadowed by the reactionary nationalism of the Free State and by relative conservatism of the Labor Party and Trade Union movement that developed within it” (Irish Times 111), and, in particular, that state-oriented nationalism took its bourgeois forms, Irish historiography has represented a certain ideology of a ruling class. Along with non-elite histories of Irish postcolonial or subaltern studies which aim at “sites of a complex intersection of individual and communal locations” (Lloyd, Ireland after History 88)
members of judgment, “the members of the resurrection of life” (l. 50) in Teresa’s bar are outside the chronological time frame because “There is no time in Teresa’s bar” (l. 28). Those who are in the bar will probably be criticized by the nationalists when they do not actively participate in the national liberation mission. Nevertheless, they are neither the nation’s betrayers nor cowards, in that they have “guts not to be blackmailed by time” (l. 27). Even if they have no sense of historical time in the days of anti-colonialism, the main reason that they are portrayed as an alternative group of people by Durcan is that those disengaged colleagues, young and old, follow “a life-obtaining sequence” (l. 45), in comparison to the men of “holy” national judgment. Accordingly, for the postnationalist Durcan, historicist logic stands for bigoted judgment of which the end result is violent terror, a destruction of opponents.

In their pursuit of historicist logic, the nationalists above are extremely busy with their “works,” in comparison to the people in Teresa’s bar who are doing nothing. The latter deserve to be called out or reproved as “lazy idle schemers”81 by the “diligent” nationalists. Gregory Dobbins in Lazy Idle Schemers demonstrates the politics of being lazy at the height of Irish cultural nationalism. In his distinction between the literature of Revivalism and Irish modernism after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, he argues that if the central value of the former headed by Yeats was teeming with “strong work-ethic” (10) to construct the image of the new nation-state, the writers of the latter, the so-called counter-Revivalists such as Joyce and Beckett, resisted any work ethic for the nation. In addition, if the Revivalists believed in “a teleological conception of progress” (8) of history, the modernists denied that linear concept of progressive historicism. In that sense, for Dobbins, Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus represents a model for “a lazy, would-be artist” (10), who goes against the ground of the Revivalist work ethic as

81 “—Out here, Dedalus. Lazy little schemer. I see schemer in your face. Where did you break your glasses?” (Joyce, A Portrait 51).
well as that of capitalist values. It is, however, worth noting that idleness “is not a celebratory practice – it is a sign of postcolonial intellectual and economic underdevelopment” (28).

Epitomized by the word “paralysis” (1) in *Dubliners*, Irish idleness is interpreted as a miserable *milieu* of late-colonial Ireland. Accordingly, “While the stereotype of native idleness implies the *necessity* of colonial rule,” Dobbins analyzes, “Joyce’s depiction of idleness ultimately suggests that it is a *consequence* of colonial rule” (72, emphasis in the original). Although Dobbins blames that socio-torpor solely on British colonial power, a typical weakness in postcolonial discourse that justifies a resolute binary scheme between colonizer and colonized, his argument about idleness is still valid inasmuch as it provides a creative literary form to represent the overall conditions of the late-colonial Ireland, and it also calls into question the teleological progressive narratives in Irish nationalism geared to the nation-state, in which every citizen is required to serve the nation, and it provides a creative literary form to represent the overall conditions in late-colonial Ireland.

If idleness can be interpreted as a resistant method for the Irish modernist against colonial power and the totalitarian nation-state, it can also represent a symbol of utopia. Idleness, in a Marxist viewpoint, enables the people to anticipate “the utopia that comes into being after the arrival of socialism” (Dobbins 67) as it resists a capitalist work ethic. To Bloom in the “Lotus Eaters” episode of *Ulysses*, Dobbins argues that idleness “is a marker both of an otherness essentially foreign to an Irish sensibility […] and of an almost utopian, desirable sensuality he generally lacks” (71). As an idle atmosphere can give Bloom a different sense of reality, that is a utopian aura, Durcan’s “Teresa’s Bar” is full of that aura as the people in the bar are “doing nothing”:

We sat all day in Teresa’s Bar
And talked, or did not talk, the time away; [...] 

That we could sit all day in Teresa’s Bar

“Doing nothing.” (ll. 1-9)

It may sound dubious that their inactive deeds bring about radical changes in a colonial situation. Because they do not take any positive actions for national liberation or against colonial power, they seem politically impotent. They even sound selfish as long as they linger leisurely in a pub. It is, however, worth mentioning Lloyd’s explication of a pub culture that resuscitates potential resistance to colonial power, at least as a negative resistance. For Lloyd, a pub, in particular, as a public house is a symbolic combination of modern and non-modern. It is non-modern in that drinking retains “certain practices of an oral culture” (Oral Space 88) on the one hand, and it is also modern because drinking was progressively “practiced within the closed space of the public house” (88), provided a modern subject can be defined in terms of the state of being “disciplined to inhabit and to move among the discrete spaces of civil and political society” (86). If a person is out of (self) control, he/she is referred to be uncivilized, barbaric, and, thus, non-modern. If a person, however, abides by the social regulations and regulates his drinking in a designated place, he/she is ready to be called a self-regulatory, disciplined, and, thus, modern subject. As a result, the public house in times of a modernization period in Ireland can signify the coexistence between the modern and the non-modern. More important, as illustrated in Joyce’s “Counterparts” and also in the “Cyclops” episode in Ulysses, Irish masculinity, that is a primary source of an anti-colonial struggle, through the public house “was deliberately and programmatically being reconstituted by Irish nationalist movements” (Oral Space 91). In short, the public house, for
Lloyd, is both a place charged with recalcitrant anti-colonial energy and a place supervised by a modern state.

As Dobbins’s interpretation of idleness shows, Lloyd’s reevaluation of a pub culture is a significant postcolonialist discourse because of the subversive energy rediscovered. Nevertheless, one of the major differences between Lloyd’s pub and Durcan’s is that the latter’s is a place for free imagination for alternative society; the imagination is entirely personal and utopian. The pub in Durcan’s “The Butterfly Collector of Corofin,” is also a place for utopian hope. After drinking some whiskey, the speaker confides to a barman, “If only I could go back to being a caterpillar again” (l. 17). For him, the pub serves as a place for free personal imagination by which he can escape from the territorializing forces of the nation rather than as a place for anti-colonial struggles or the state-oriented disciplines, as Lloyd’s argument illustrates. The pub in “The Nun’s Bath” marks the realm of imagination as clearly distinguishable from reality. Idly thinking about a sensuous nun taking a bath in a magical atmosphere, the speaker rather suggests a new model of an Irish woman conventionally described as St. Mary. More important, Durcan’s idle schemers in Teresa’s bar neither talk about anti-colonial issues nor are they restricted by the state authorities; they continuously envisage “Heaven” (l. 70), utopia:

So let’s lock up the bar, Teresa,

Lay ourselves on the floor,

Put some more coal on the fire,

Pour ourselves each a large whiskey;

Let’s drink to Teresa of Teresa’s Bar
Reclining on the floor with one of her boys,

And big black coals burning bright,

And yellowest whiskey in a brown bottle,

And outside a downpour relentlessly pouring down. (ll. 73-81)

In the midst of a downpour outside, in the midst of national turmoil, whether it be colonial violence or anti-colonial struggles, the speaker finds utopian hope in the act of idling in the bar, lying on the floor, drinking whiskey. While the nationalists outside in the rain are enthralled with ethically charged judgment of good and evil, the minoritarians excluded from the nationalist movement look for an alternative perspective beyond that binary opposition of judgment. Durcan’s aesthetic of doing nothing, drinking, or daydreaming in a pub thus retains a postnationalist utopian impulse that overcomes anti-colonial nationalism based on some antagonism. From that binary dichotomy between good and evil, there exists only one type of Ireland with no exceptions. On the contrary, Teresa’s colleagues doing nothing from a nationalist viewpoint diligently create heterogeneous worlds. As Kearney observes, “It is this polyphonomous perspective in his [Durcan’s] work which allows the reader’s imagination to conjure up new images from the flotsam and jetsam of the old. This is where his utopian impulse originates” (Postnationalist Ireland 135). Out of hybridity, ahistoricity, and idling, Durcan’s pursuit of postnationalist utopian impulses can face brutal violence in nationalism.
Durcan Critiques Violence and What it Engenders

Sectarian Violence

Diligent working for nation, when done excessively, has often resulted in violence. The violence in nationalism, in particular, the Troubles in the North, has been a major concern for Durcan. As Edna Longley in “Paul Durcan and the North” observes, Durcan, unlike other Southern poets who kept relatively silent about the terrorism, has been passionately concerned about the violence in the North and he “not only crossed the border” as a Southern poet, “he dramatized the problems of border-crossing” (105) inasmuch as he risked “hate-mail and worse” (105) due to his criticism of Republican violence. Durcan’s critiques of the Troubles are vividly epitomized in “Ireland 1972:” “Next to the fresh grave of my beloved grandmother / The grave of my first love murdered by my brother” (ll. 1-2). That fratricidal war has been aggravated by both extremes on either side as in “North and South”: “Two identical notices: / PRIVATE KEEP OUT” (ll. 4-5). The terror only produces a devastation of the native land for both islanders: “Dune grass, starved sheep, barbed wire; / Whitewashed, womanless cottage” (ll. 8-9). The reiteration of mutual violence evidently brings about a national tragedy as long as the two identical notices last long; that is Durcan’s recognition of the contemporary Irish reality of suffering from the exclusionary concepts of nation.

Durcan’s recognition of brutal reality is followed by his direct critiques of the hypocritical agents who justify their use of violence. In “The Bloomsday Murders, 16 June 1997” Durcan explicitly criticizes the hypocritical behavior of Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin,

82 Durcan in Diary harshly criticizes the Sinn Féin IRA and its leader Gerry Adams, especially his hypocritical propaganda: “Your endurance and your skill are beyond question. But I cannot accept the Thirty Years War – not only the killing of people but also the killing of language, the abuse, manipulation, murder of words. My soul is coated with the excrement of thirty years of propaganda. And in your voice those terrifying notes of intimidation and
who led the IRA for decades. After instigating his men to murder two Protestants, Adams on TV pretends to be a preserver of national culture wearing a union shirt and signing copies of *Ulysses* on Bloomsday. In his union shirt, he is proud of his sectarian enthusiasm for United Ireland. He ironically takes advantage of Joyce for promotion of his extremist ideology in utter disregard for Joyce’s actual cosmopolitan thesis. Adams forgets Joyce’s dictum about the concept of nation as written in the poem as Preface: “—A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place” (*U* 12. 1422-23). Adams has probably not read *Ulysses* in which Joyce suggests a new concept of nation: “Or also living in different places” (*U* 12. 1428). Durcan rejects the connection between being Irish and supporting political violence done in the name of nation based on ideological differences. Reflecting on the Bloomite concept of nation, Durcan condemns Adams’s hypocritical nationalism:

> I am a citizen of the nation of Ireland –

> The same people living in the same place.

> I hope the Protestants never leave our shores.

> I am a Jew and my name is Bloom.

> You, Gerry Adams, do not sign books in my name.

> May God forgive me – lock, stock, and barrel. (ll. 27-32)

It is Durcan’s postnationalist enunciation that overcomes previous religious, ideological, and racial discrimination. While Adams’s narrow and restricted definition of Ireland unceasingly

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self-pity: ‘I am here to progress the peace process, not to react to the stories of some jumped-up, scurrilous journalists’” (132); “Why did Sinn Féin IRA choose games – war games and word games – over the reality of life on earth?” (139).
produces so many victims that Bloom or Joyce might be enraged at his hypocrisy, Durcan’s concept of the nation of Ireland is that which accommodates diverse religions and races by challenging nationalists’ identity fundamentalism. The IRA activism, for Durcan, is never justifiable when it is compared to the 1798 Rebellion leader Theobald Wolfe Tone who organized the United Irishmen and led campaigns for the reformation of the Irish parliament under British control. Although Wolfe Tone was a Protestant lawyer, he successfully managed religious gaps between Irish Protestants and Catholics by collecting political demands from both sides, political autonomy from Britain for Protestants and improvement of living conditions for Catholics under the Penal Laws. Wolfe Tone overcame narrow-minded religious sectarianism by achieving “the short-lived alliance between ‘Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter’” (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 20), which “would never be achieved again” (20) in Irish history. Unlike the united resistance of the United Irishmen, the IRA terrorism in the twentieth-century is, however, a synonym for British colonialism in terms of its use of violence as described in Durcan’s poem, “Margaret Thatcher Joins IRA.” That is why Durcan in “Omagh”83 more outspokenly charges Adams with his terrorism: “Gerry, a chara, I am vexed with you” (l. 1). Against the IRA terrorism for the last thirty years, Durcan shatters the myth of republican resistance appropriated by the IRA that has always imputed national conflicts to the British authorities without any recognition of its own inner violence. Although Adams pretends not to be a terrorist by publicly insisting that he is an “ex-terrorist” (1. l. 35), Durcan does not believe his words because “Terror is terror that has no end” (1. l. 48). Because terror causes ever more successive terror as proved by contemporary Irish history, Adam’s ostentatious words, for Durcan, lack honesty and do not

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83 There was a car bombing in the town of Omagh in 1998. That terrorist act was performed by the IRA and officially 29 people were killed. Refer to the film *Omagh* (2004) directed by Pete Travis.
inspire confidence. Without seeking any official pardon, through his apology, Adams just cleverly justifies his terrorist propaganda through the media.

If terror can never be justifiable for Durcan, it can be vindicable for Yeats; it is a main difference between the postnationalist Durcan and the nationalist Yeats. Whereas Yeats in “Easter, 1916” once justified terrorism in the Easter Rising – “A terrible beauty is born” (l. 80), Durcan in “Omagh” consciously distinguishes himself from Yeats by directly opposing that Yeatsian dictum: “A terrible beauty / Was never, is never, and never will be born” (l. ll. 44-45). As for the so-called terrible beauty of nationalist violence, Yeats somewhat passively acknowledged a necessity for violence committed in the name of nation in the course of modern Irish history, in particular, when he affirmed individual roles in that turmoil, as if they were in a dramatic play. For example, he describes John MacBride, who married Maud Gonne whom Yeats loved, as the one who is completely transformed through the very act of his active participation in the Easter Rising:

He, too, has resigned his part

In the casual comedy;

He, too has been changed in his turn,

Transformed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born. (ll. 36-40)

If Yeats considered him in the past as “A drunken, vainglorious lout” (l. 32), his honorable deeds in the Rising lead Yeats to change his attitude toward him. MacBride is promoted from a mere comic player to a national paragon. In that evaluation, terrorism is regarded as something
justifiable and worth pursuing if it can bring change to his country. Durcan, however, denies any causes for terrorism mainly because of the thirty one victims in the Omagh bombing, including unborn twin babies, that he enumerates all their names and ages in the poem. For Durcan, human lives are the main concern no matter how well or justifiably an ideology can be presented by the nation, which can make a difference between postnationalist Durcan and cultural nationalist Yeats (or the IRA terrorists) who can accept any violent methods for the sake of a cause. In that sense, the litanies of Durcan and Yeats are fundamentally different. Yeats lists the names of the dead in the Easter Rising by infantilizing them: “As a mother names her child / When sleeps at last has come / On limbs that had run wild” (ll. 62-64). More important, Yeats passively resigns the victims to a de-humanized historical fate to be recorded as a national history: “I write it out in a verse / […] / Now and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn” (ll. 74-78). When the death of the individuals are officially remembered and memorized through his poem as that for the coming nation-state, individual lives can justifiably be consumed in the name of nation. In his state-oriented national literature, with which many postcolonial critics find fault, Yeats affirms his conservative politics that appropriates individuals as instruments for the new nation-state. On the contrary, Durcan focuses on individual singularities out of human affection by calling out each birth place of the victims for the “First Litany” in the poem, each name for the “Second Litany,” and each age for the “Third Litany” separately. That is how he remembers the victims who cannot be reduced to functions for the nation or the state in comparison to Yeats’s commemoration.

While composing this poem as litanies to lament the victims, Durcan feels a sense of guilt that becomes a source of his poetic responsibilities. As the Omagh bombing begins to be lost from people’s memory as time goes by, Durcan himself also becomes immersed in his daily
chores, such as “Bin collection day” (ll. 13. 4), a notice of a change of weekly bin collection day, his lost prescription for “antidepressants / And sleeping pills [that his doctor sent him] three days ago” (ll. 13. 11-12), and his conversation with his neighbor. For Durcan, terrorists take advantage of the process of time that enables ordinary people to easily forget tragic results of terror in the flow of time:

It [the IRA] used terror as a textbook strategy to defeat not only the British Army and the RUC۸۴ but to defeat every citizen who stood in the IRA’s way. It used terror knowing that terror’s greatest ally is the Process of Time itself, how the Process of Time is a process of Attrition and Oblivion so that we ordinary folk have no choice but to accept the end result of terror, primarily because we cannot remember the day-by-day, hour-by-hour minutiae of terror. (Diary 131)

The speaker of the poem realizes that he is not able to manage even his trivial tasks, and finds that there is a contradiction between his passionate willingness to publically charge the tragic bombing and his incapability of dealing with his own personal matters. He can do nothing for the victims of Omagh but says, “Omagh have mercy on me” (l. 13. 47, emphasis in the original), which is an expression of his guilty conscience regarding his incapability of resolving the tragic history.

The sense of guilt of an incapable poet can be found in contemporary poet Seamus Heaney in “Summer 1969.” The speaker on vacation in Spain realizes that while he “was suffering / Only the bullying sun of Madrid” (ll. 2-3), the citizens in Belfast were being shot dead by a British police force, the Constabulary “Firing” (l. 2) toward them. While he was enjoying

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۸۴ The Royal Ulster Constabulary was the police force in Northern Ireland.
“At night on the balcony, gules of wine” (l. 8), they shed red blood “in their dark corners” (l. 9). His recognition of his incompetency in the wretched turmoil, however, provides him with a sense of poetic responsibility. As he helplessly “retreated” (l. 20) to the Prado, the main Spanish Art Museum, he ponders over three paintings of Francisco Goya and finds his poetic responsibility for the victims as Goya “painted with his fists and elbows” (l. 33) the disastrous reality and “flourished / The stained cape [the victim’s blood] of his heart” (ll. 33-34). That is how Heaney and Durcan share their responsibilities as poets. Based on their acute recognition of the incapability to bring justice to reality, they each regain their critical awareness of the tragedy in Northern Ireland. If Heaney metaphorically expresses his willingness to be involved in the Troubles with his artistic perspective as he closes “Summer 1969” with a description of how Goya painted, Durcan in “Omagh” more explicitly enters into the center of violence by censuring Gerry Adams who caused the bombing: “No, I cannot forgive you” (l. 14. 1). In order to end the tragic violence in Northern Ireland – “For the extinction of the moans” (l. 14. 2) of each individual, he performs his duty as a poet with his direct criticism. On the contrary, Yeats’s recognition of a poet’s responsibility in “Easter, 1916” is once and for all justified in his naming of the victims in his poem. Although he admits that he ignored the leaders of the rising, he does not reveal his lack of courage to participate in that. If Yeats, rather, through the act of writing the poem, comforts himself and tries to overcome a sense of shame in not becoming a man of action, Durcan continuously faces and articulates his guilty conscience in writing about the victims as expressed in “The Bloomsday Murders, 16 June 1997.” As the IRA killed two RUC policemen, David Johnston and John Graham, the speaker rages against the murder. Behind the rage, there is a sense of his guilty conscience arisen from his awareness of his incapability to protect the victims.
I met David and John up the park
Patrolling the young mums with prams.

“Going to write a poem about us, Paul?”

How they laughed! How they saluted!

How they turned their backs! Their silver spines! (ll. 18-23)

The recognition of his own helplessness, and, in particular, in his remembrance of the victims’ innocent laughter and greetings, enables him to establish his poetic responsibility. That is the way in which Yeats and Durcan differently recognize contemporary history, its victims, and a poet’s responsibility through their poems. If Yeats sets himself aside from the turmoil, as expressed in “Lapis Lazuli,”85 and tacitly evades a sense of guilt, Durcan directly faces tragic reality and guilt. As Heaney finds his artistic responsibility in his painful awareness of his own absence in the historical moment of violence, Durcan also finds a ground for his writing of poetry with his acute recognition of his complete incapacity in the face of terror.

*Racist Ethnocentrism*

If the terrorism in the North can be traced back to its identity politics by which extreme nationalists exclusively define the nation, that identity politics was also pronounced outward by way of Irish racism. Joyce’s *Ulysses* can serve as an exemplary literary text to prove Irish racism, in particular, Anti-Semitism: “Ireland, they say, has the honor for being the only country which never persecuted the jews. […] Because she never let them in” (*U.* 2:437-38, 442). Although Mr. Deasy proudly talks about the non-violence of the Irish toward the Jews, Joyce insinuates how

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85 “Those Chinamen climb towards, and I / Delight to imagine them seated there; / There, on the mountain and the sky, / On all the tragic scene they state” (ll. 49-52).
extremely the Irish are engrossed in ethnocentrism and anti-Semitism by not allowing foreigners
to come to their native land. Irish racism has a significant meaning because of the ways in which
once oppressed people discriminate against other minorities. By imitating the previous
colonizer’s violence inflicted on them, the Irish reiterate that violence toward other “inferior”
races or groups of people. In a short story, “The Dead,” Joyce also acutely points out
contemporary racism among the middle-class Irish:

Freddy Malins said there was a negro chieftain singing in the second part of the
Gaeity pantomime who had one of the finest tenor voices he had ever heard. […]
And why couldn’t he have a voice too? asked Freddy Malins sharply. Is it because
he’s only a black? Nobody answered this question and Mary Jane led the table
back to the legitimate opera. (Dubliners 199)

Given that Ireland was still under British colonialism at that time, it is evident that the colonized
Irish denigrated another oppressed group of people, that is, African Irish. That ethnocentrism has
survived in Durcan’s contemporary Ireland. Keenly aware of Irish racism especially towards
those who have black skin, Durcan in “Black Sister” dramatically portrays a Catholic black
woman who came from Africa with her son whose father is an Irishman. The poet has to
apologize to her – “forgive me” (l. 7) – because of a racist Irish circumstance complicit with Irish
Catholicism. She is isolated in an Irish hotel room because of her skin color, even if she gave
birth to an Irish boy, illegitimate, another minority resulting from the relationship with a white
Irishman who went on a mission trip to Africa. Not only does the father dishonor and reject his
quasi-wife, he reveals an extreme racist voice: “She’s black and therefore a whore” (l. 19). With
that typical illogical reasoning, the Irish racist father detains her in a small hotel. Striking in his
racism is the fact that it is not just a problem of individual personality, but the racist violence of
identity politics complicit with the Catholic Church. Although the Irish piously value their Catholic identity, when they face a racial issue, they easily forsake that religious rubric; that is why they vehemently reject the black Catholic girl. Hence comes Catholic hypocrisy. As Cullingford aptly points out, “Institutional Catholicism and racism are two sides of the same coin.

He [Durcan] refuses the virgin/whore polarity by representing the woman both as an Eve ‘seductive as the tree of knowledge’ and a black Madonna with an ‘afro halo’” (156). Although the Irish are “no niggard to mission fields at Sunday Mass” (l. 16), which means they are “religiously” enthusiastic as long as they send many missionaries to Africa to preach Catholicism, they are not willing to marry black women, “Even if she’s a Catholic virgin” (l. 18) mainly because of racial differences. That is how Durcan discloses religious hypocrisy in Irish Catholicism when it is engaged in racial issues. With his strong charge against that racism, Durcan laments a minority on whom Irish racist violence is committed:

Is that not you yourself stepping across the screen

Out of missionary fields into a country courthouse

Machine gun firing from your thigh, and freedom

On your dying lips? (ll. 8-11)

With those strongly visual ejaculatory images, Durcan wants to censure and subvert, even if it may end in failure, the hypocrisy of the Church and the courts diligently collaborating in their racial discrimination.

The theme of the Church’s complicity with Irish racism is also evident in “The Limerickman that Went to the Bad.” Referring himself as a Limerick man and a football player
chosen for the British Lions, the speaker naively shows the purpose of his visit to South Africa: “And I went out there – but to play football not politics” (l. 3). However, it does not take long for the readers to find through his dramatic monologue that there is always politics, that is, racism. First, introducing a “spoilt priest” (l. 12) who cohabited with a native girl, “a coloured skivvy” (l. 14), the speaker insinuates that the priest is a religious hypocrite filled with carnal desires and racism. This poem is seemingly aimed at charging Catholic sanctimoniousness by foregrounding that odd priest. Against all expectations, however, as the style of dramatic monologue usually does, the speaker himself is revealed as a racist: “But for sheer blasphemy, can you imagine anything more fucking blasphemous / Than two coloured playing handball in church? Jasus.” (ll. 16-17). In fact, Durcan reveals that the speaker is to blame, although the speaker finds fault with the priest. The priest rather charges him by deliberately pouring “his entire pint of glass of lager / Over my [the speaker’s] head” (ll. 10-11). Cullingford argues, “although the racist speaker is too dim to get the point, his countryman’s attack is a principled protest against the sporting apartheid in which the British Lions team is participating. It is significant that his assailant is a ‘spoilt priest’” (157). The speaker cannot endure the situation in which the Africans play handball in a church yard, an action that the spoilt priest once denounced. From a sheer racist perspective, he indeed comes to South Africa not to play football but to enter into a politics of racism in contrast to his first statement in the poem. In the end, “Like all Limerickmen that go to the bad” (l. 15, emphasis added), the speaker also “had a [racist] history” (l. 15) like the priest whom he criticizes.

Not only is the Church complicit with Irish racism, but the Irish courts also serve as active agents of racism. Durcan in “The Two Professors Found Guilty of Murder” exposes how the court and the academy collaboratively commit racist violence. Written as reportage, the poem
portrays the process of a trial over the death of a black Indian history scholar, “Jesus Trinidad” (l. 4). Despite his pro-Christian name, that religious affinity becomes useless as long as the Irish courts and academy are deep in racial issues. After cruelly killing him, the two professors more cruelly hand his wife a bag in which there are “Chopped-up segments of her husband’s head” (l. 15). Her husband had been abused by them for the previous three years to the extent that he confessed “They are using a bacon-slicer on my mind – I cannot survive” (l. 18). The major reason for the murder turns out to be that the black scholar had a different perspective on the history of Ulster from the one of the infuriated nationalist professors. They gave him several warnings and threats not to further his investigation. Portraying them as blinded by their nationalist zeal despite their intelligent duty as scholars to search for historical facts with impartiality, Durcan shows how the Irish academy is corrupted and biased by nationalist ideology. Nonetheless, that academic nationalism is soon justified by the judge whose name is the same as the two professors’: “Columba A. Cantwell and Columba B. Cantwell” (l. 3) and “Justice Columba C. Cantwell” (l. 6), which signifies not only “the same Gaelic saint’s name and the same satirical surname” (Cullingford 156), but also a strong ideological solidarity between the academy and the courts when they face the issue of racial differences. The sentence sounds self-evident in that ethnocentric circumstance. It is of no surprise that the judge “sentences both accused to life imprisonment / Suspended on condition that they never get caught again” (ll. 6-7) with a partisan verdict: “Trinidad was both a foreigner and a fool / And no tears whatsoever should be shed on behalf of his wife” (ll. 29-30). Through that sentence, racist violence in Ireland is officially warranted by the collusion of the academy and the courts, the state apparatuses by which a social minority is unceasingly persecuted. There seem to be neither foreigners nor foreign opinions in the territory of Ireland as the judge concludes the trial:
The court expressed sympathy with the two murderers

And wished them continued, further success in the green fields

– In the green, green, green fields, – of their academic endeavours. (ll. 31-33)

Not only is the Irish academy contaminated by nationalist ideology based on ethnocentric racism, but the state apparatuses like the courts also serve as zealous agents who blindly reinforce nationalist ideologies as they exempt cruel criminals. Through his candid exposure of that intimate complicity among the academy, the state power, and ethnocentric nationalism marked by the green fields of the academy above, Durcan shows how Irish identity politics leads to racist violence.

Irish ethnocentrism can often be expressed in its political neutrality as was the case during World War II. In “Fjord,” the speaker and his father talk about Irish fjords. As the term “fjords” portrays, it can signify a secure, neutral, but narrow state of Irish mentality, that is, Irish ethnocentrism that preserves its own territory, intransigent to foreign influences. When his father values its geological features, “The Killary fjord in the safe waters of whose deep, dark thighs” (l. 15) becomes symbolic national pride. In that fjord, however, “German submarines had lain sheltering in the war” (l. 16). In other words, the so-called neutral position of Ireland tacitly consented to the German injustice during World War II. Although Irish nationalists have had antagonism against Britain since British colonialism, Durcan considers that it is unjust for his father or his father’s generation to tolerate obvious vice of the Nazis. Because of ethnocentric nationalism and sheer anti-British sentiment, the Irish justify their hypocritical violence in the name of political neutrality. In fact, Irish neutrality, in which Durcan’s father has pride, is not neutral at all.
Look into your Irish heart, you will find a German U-boat,

A periscope in the rain and a swastika in the sky.

You were no more neutral, Daddy, than Ireland was,

Proud and defiant to boast of the safe fjord. (ll. 17-20)

By hiding violent tools like “a periscope in the rain and a swastika in the sky,” Durcan’s father or the nation-state hypocritically proclaims its neutrality in the War. As long as the state connives with German violence, however, it only reveals its selfish nationalism indifferent to world peace, whether that quasi-neutrality can be performed in defense of the nation. For Durcan, his own country is “not as a neutral defender of peace unaffected by the ‘outside’ world, but as harbouring its own fascism with its own brand of violence” (“Passage to Utopia” 328).

Irish political indifference to world injustice due to its strong ethnocentrism is also reflected in “56 Kent Saro-Wiwa Park.” As hearing news of the military personnel’s execution of Kent Saro-Wiwa, a nonviolent campaign leader in Nigeria who opposed environmental degradation, the speaker “immediately” (l. 3) drives to the Nigerian Embassy in Dublin. He expects that there will be many people protesting the illegitimate hanging of the leader. Against all his expectations, however, there are no voices against that injustice but only the silent scenery of Lesson Park:

Instead, the gates were open, the curtains were open,

And there was not one single Irish policeman in sight.

There was no one nor nothing to be seen in Lesson Park
Except in the gutter a black, bloody ooze of leaves.

There were only gyrating crimson leaves on quartz, granite steps;

Ogoni bannerettes gyrating in wind and rain on stone. (ll. 7-12)

Contrary to the speaker’s immediate action, that neutral and tranquil description of the park vividly epitomizes the Irish mentality of political indifference to world issues. Psychologically and politically isolated from the rest of the world, the Irish do not pay attention to the other except their own. For Durcan, that Irish ethnocentrism internally expressed through the Troubles and externally through racism is that which should be overcome in a new postnationalist era. A nationalist ethnocentrism repeatedly generates violence inside and out; that is why Durcan in *Diary* expresses his feelings of isolation caused by Irish ethnocentrism:

I felt homesick for Ireland and yet increasingly angry with my native land.

Realising how for thirty years we have milked Europe of money and yet we have refused to take on any European values ourselves. […] Walking the streets of Florence, Donnini, Arrezo, Pontasieve, Rignano, Pelago, Regello, I felt ashamed to be Irish, ashamed to be a citizen of a country which is so selfish and so self-centered that we rejected the Nice Treaty. Irish selfishness is now an international phenomenon. (114)

That self-centered nationalism and further racism of the Irish are the main problems to be overcome. Irish political neutrality, for Durcan, is not ethically neutral at all. It is evidently

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86 The Treaty of Nice, signed by European leaders on February 26, 2001, initially contained amendments to the European Union Treaties to facilitate the enlargement of the EU up to 27 members including Eastern European countries. The Republic of Ireland, however, voted against the ratification of the treaty in a referendum on June 7, 2001. Although Ireland accepted the treaty on October 19, 2002 in the second referendum, that procedure represented a typical example of Irish ethnocentrism.
political simply because it connives with injustice in the world. Irish political silence will turn into racial violence committed toward some other minority.

*Hypermasculine Violence*

As for Irish racist ethnocentrism expressed outwardly, it is highly likely that this racism reflects Irish colonial experiences. In the course of resistance to colonial power, the Irish adopted an exclusive concept of nation to distinguish themselves from the occupier; because of that rigid concept, they consciously or unconsciously developed racist ethnocentrism. If we can find one of the origins of Irish racism in colonial experiences, which can never justify racist violence, a hypermasculine culture of the nation-state can also be traced back to Irish colonial experiences. In order for an oppressed group of people to regain their national sovereignty, physical, armed resistance seemed inevitable as many historical events, such as the 1798 Rebellion, 1916 Easter Rising, and Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), illustrated. In particular, strong masculine images of Ireland were needed to shatter the British prejudices of a feminine Ireland. As Joseph Lennon observes, the nineteenth-century “English pundits and imperialist administrators, as well as French and English Celticists, characterized the Celtic races as feminine, unintellectual, natural, and pre-modern, particularly Irish, and especially in the decades around the Irish Famine” (136). In that sense, strong masculine images of Ireland were almost unanimously accepted in times of anti-colonial resistance. The problem in that Irish masculine culture, however, is that it is bound to colonial governing ideology. Joseph Valente in *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (2011) demonstrates how the Irish manliness project of Irish nationalists was caught in a dilemma under British colonialism as he names it “the Metrocolonial
Double Bind” (21). He characterizes the ideal of manhood\(^{87}\) as a combination of the strong physicality and “the simultaneous necessity for an achievement of a vigilant, rational self-control – in strong passions strongly checked” (3). That combination of strong animal spirits and self-regulatory disciplines defines an ideal manliness. Although the virtue of manliness was originally invented by the British, the Irish nationalists also accepted that concept as an ideal image of Irish manhood. The two characteristics, robust animal spirits and self-control, for the Irish, were incompatible because when they willingly chose the former by insisting on their physical strength against colonial power in the way of armed resistance, they were treated by the colonizer as savages and barbarians incapable of self-control, self-government, that is, emancipation. On the other hand, when they demonstrated their capacity for self-control, they were immediately subject to the established colonial power “at the price of abiding the order of his oppression” (Valente 21). Despite that double bind implicit in Irish manliness, the Irish achieved national emancipation in the end by virtue of the first characteristic, “robust animal spirits,” through the Irish War of Independence. When the postcolonial nation-state established its political legitimacy based on past heroic gunplay during war time, it, not unexpectedly, succeeded to a new tradition of Irish masculinity, securely characterizing part of the national identity through an emphasis on physical strength. In addition, that masculine tradition was appropriated in its extreme form by the IRA terrorists in the North and caused many gruesome casualties as discussed earlier. That is the point at which Durcan criticizes hypermasculinity in the nation-state, even though he honors national independence. For him, as a postnationalist, the postcolonial nation-state has promoted sexual identity politics in which man as well as woman is

\(^{87}\) For Valente, “manhood” is synonym for “manliness,” which is slightly different from “masculinity.” If masculinity can be defined in terms of “the possession and regulated deployment of robust ‘animal spirits’” (2), manliness is that in which masculinity is internalized by “converting these cruder ‘animal’ virtues into the higher-order spiritual attainments of integrity, self-possession, and self-control” (2).
forced to behave according to certain masculine rubrics established by the nation-state. Against
the grain of that culture, Durcan exposes how masculine violence has been exerted on woman,
finds hypermasculine ideology of the state in sports, recognizes, at the same time, an aesthetic in
sports, and finally suggests a new model for Irish woman in the patriarchal nation-state.

As Durcan notes in his diary, Irish masculinity has often been engaged in destruction
rather than in resuscitation of life:

I think it is because Man – the male of the species – especially the Irish male of
the species – is more afraid of life than of death. He is scared of death but he is
terrified of life and so, in practical terms of the Abortion Referendum, man is
terrified of woman and, therefore, seeks to control woman as much as he can.

(Diary 91)

In particular, that violent Irish masculinity has been expressed towards its opponents, Irish
women, described as symbols of life for Durcan. A female interviewee in “Interview for Job” is
incessantly asked by a male interviewer about her appearance described as “luscious hair” (l. 7),
“kissable” (l. 17) lips, and seizeable “hips” (l. 19). Obsessed with a female body, the interviewer
aptly represents the masculine gaze of society. All of a sudden, the interviewer abruptly refuses
to offer her a job. Fiercely enraged at her because he probably considers that she would not
satisfy his sexual desires due to her “Erogenous depression” (l. 10), the male interviewer expels
her from his office on a severe winter day. His sheer masculine perspective judges all women in
terms of sexuality. That masculine viewpoint is not only a matter of one individual male. As the
title of the poem indicates, Durcan in “The Woman Who Keeps Her Breasts in the Back Garden”
exposes how the whole Irish society is preoccupied with a hypermasculine perspective. Written
in interview style, Durcan portrays a strange situation in which a woman keeps her portable breasts in her back yard. The reason why she does that eccentric deed is that “it’s a male-dominated society” (l. 2), and “there is all this ballyhoo about breasts” (l. 6). Just once or twice a day, she takes her breasts out for a walk. With that startling and comic magic realist description, Durcan acutely satirizes how Irish reality is obsessed with a strong masculine perspective. Because a magic realist style, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, enables the reader to recognize the differences between the magic and the real, when Durcan appropriates magic realism, that exotic genre reveals corruption, hypocrisy, and violence of social reality with a keenly critical sensibility. That is how Durcan’s comic but sarcastic rhetoric works. Durcan’s recognition of a male-dominated society is once again exposed at the end of the poem when the interview ends:

I have other things on my mind besides my breasts:

Australia – for example – Australia.

To tell you the truth, I think a great deal about Australia.

*Thank you very much for talking to us, Miss Delia Fair.* (ll. 15-18, emphasis in the original)

Although the woman wants to talk about her major concern, Australia, rather than her breasts that draw men’s lustful attention, the reporter hastily closes his interview without listening to her last words. If this theme is applied to Irish society in general, it can be considered that Irish society prevents individuals from realizing or, at least, talking about their dreams due to the male-oriented ideology. By closing the mouth of an individual, the oppressive society only shows what certain males want to see and hear. When the reporter is also preoccupied with the
breasts as other Irish males are, this poem can also be read as Durcan’s critique of the Irish press or the mass media run by various camera lenses of masculine gaze. Given that the press can easily shape people’s consciousnesses and ideologies, Durcan’s critical description of the press fundamentally questions the consciousness of the people in the post-liberation nation-state. Even though the people were emancipated from a foreign power, they are still colonized by a hypermasculine perspective.

Irish society is, for Durcan, filled with macho culture, in particular, with Irish men’s violent words regarded as manly in the nation-state: “Talk the language of men – / bullshit, boob, cunt, bastard – / And – teach the Protestants a lesson” (“Poem Not Beginning With a Line by Pindar” ll. 40-42, emphasis in the original). Strikingly, that “language of men” comes from Durcan’s father, a circuit judge of the Republic of Ireland, as he justifies the violence of the IRA who killed Protestant working men hijacked in a minibus. Those brutal words and that viewpoint have easily been justified in Ireland. The father’s violent saying, “teach the Protestants a lesson” (l. 42), is significant because it not only represents his aggressive personality, but also reveals the father’s complicity with the state and the church. Given that his father is a judge appointed by the state, he is one representative of the State. At the same time, when he condemns the Protestants, he identifies himself with the Catholic Church in a binary opposition. As Longley aptly points out, the Troubles were unceasingly justified and stimulated by the extreme nationalists with the aids of “unadmitted Catholic sectarianism” and the “mutual hypocrisy” of the Church and the state (“Paul Durcan and the North” 108). In short, the father’s words of retaliation are an expression of a brutal collaboration between the father, the church, and the state, all of which primarily construct the identity of the Republic of Ireland primarily founded on the Catholic-state alliance. That alliance can be amplified by the “manly” words above. In this regard, Durcan
exposes those close connections between violent masculinity, the Church, and the state that laid the foundations of the Irish nation-state.

Not only is Irish masculinity deeply rooted in the state apparatuses, but also in culture. Durcan considers that sports like boxing and rugby have been appropriated by the national ideology that insists on the masculine power of the state. As for physical strengths expressed in rugby, the speaker in “The Two Little Boys at the Back of the Bus” subverts that masculine image by comparing rugby to homosexual behavior:

The ideology of which was to

Enact in the muck and lawn

Of the playing fields of Ballsbridge

A parody of homosexual aggression:

Scrum, hook, tackle, maul.

We thought it right and fitting

Manly and amusing,

That our clubs were named

After barbarian tribes. (ll. 16-24)

The ideology of the nation-state promotes individuals to be equipped with collective consciousness to make one united team with aggressive power as in a rugby game. Those tough deeds are regarded as appropriate, in particular, “Manly and amusing” (l. 22) for the State, to the
extent that the club is named after barbarian tribes that displayed brutal violence. Durcan, however, ridicules all the seriously committed behaviors of masculinity regarding them “A parody of homosexual aggression” (l. 19). As in the instance of “The Woman Who Keeps Her Breasts in the Back Garden,” Durcan’s magic realistic use of the startling imagery of homosexuality in rugby causes the reader to feel a “comic relief” and, at the same time, brings an acute awareness of the absurd reality of contemporary society. As for the state ideology promoting individual/collective masculine power, Joyce’s A Portrait can be an exemplary example. In a setting of colonial struggles, in particular, at the height of cultural nationalism, Stephen Dedalus faces various territorializing forces urging him to be a man who can serve as a docile body for the sake of national independence:

When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him to be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father’s fallen state by his labour and, meanwhile the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow […]. (88-89)

In the days of cultural nationalism, every individual is solemnly required to be disciplined in certain ways of behavior, such as “to be true to his country,” to help revive national “language and tradition,” or “to be a decent fellow.” In particular the words like “gymnasium,” “strong,” “manly,” and “healthy” are explicit expressions of masculinity that Irish nationalism and revivalists ceaselessly imposed on individuals. The Gaelic Athlete Association (GAA) stressed the physical strength of the male in order to revive recalcitrant Irish manhood in the colonial
situation. They also believed that purity of Irishness, in other words, the authenticity of Ireland, could be found in the athletes and in rural Ireland (Culleton 218). In that sense, Irish identity was already formed in terms of masculine physical strength that founded the ideology of the nation-state. It is the point at which postnationalist Durcan questions the masculinity in sports encouraged by the state for the sake of national identity.

A Second Postnationalist Alternative: Aesthetics

Aesthetics in/of Sports

When Eric Hobsbawm argues the relationship between sports and nationalism, national sport retains a lot of ideological aspects: “The rise of sport provided new expression of nationalism through the choice or invention of nationally specific sports – Welsh rugby as distinct from English soccer, and Gaelic football in Ireland (1884) […]” (300). In an Irish context, it is evident that sports like Gaelic football were ideologically promoted by nationalists of the GAA with an emphasis on physical strength demonstrated above. Postnationalist Durcan, however, despite his aversion to masculinity in sports, accepts and even enjoys watching sports like soccer and boxing on TV as Colm Tóibín reminisces that “All his [Durcan’s] life sport has been a major interest” (“Reading Poems against the Wind” 52). Although Durcan critically eroticizes a sport event like the World Cup for its macho perspective (Elliott, “Melancholy Poet of Love” 143), he also appropriates sport in a different way from the ideology through which nationalists took advantage of sport. He rather appreciates sport artistically. In “We Believe in Hurling,” the speaker praises the play of hurling, a traditional Irish hockey. One of the major differences between nationalists and Durcan in terms of the appropriation of hurling is that while
the former used it to promote national consciousness for national emancipation, Durcan is fond of its aesthetic features:

At each orbit-of-the-earth trajectory of the ball;

Catch, cut, hook, puck, double, solo, hop.

These are the boys who were born

To sweeten and delight;

To bejewel and beautify. (ll. 40-44)

As the speaker definitely loves watching a hurling game on TV as ordinary people do, Durcan’s postnationalist view does not repeal all the traditional values. A revisionist may be opposed to Durcan’s eulogy of hurling in his or her ideological interpretation. Becoming a postnationalist, however, does not necessarily mean that he has to dislike hurling. Hurling, for Durcan, aside from its ideological appropriation, has a sheer aesthetic function as the orbit of a ball represents. Besides, when the speaker evaluates the purpose of the hurling players with the words, “To sweeten and delight” (l. 43) and “To bejewel and beautify” (l. 44), Durcan undoubtedly considers sport in an artistic way. The speaker, as ordinary people do, enjoys watching the game: “I laugh, I gasp, I frown” (l. 45). He even sheds tears when his favored team wins the game. In the act of his enjoyment of sport, there is neither masculine show-off nor an ideological propaganda. As the anchor in the poem says, the game of hurling, for Durcan, “Is pure poetry. / Pure inspiration. Pure technique” (ll. 58-59). Hurling, sports, poetry, and art can overcome violence arisen from binary oppositions between the colonizer and the colonized, the Irish and foreigners, and man and woman. When he states, “Hurling is the father of freedom” (l. 71), and
when he appropriates a cultural nationalist saying, “The hurler strikes, and man is free” (l. 77),
that is not the freedom that a nationalist, a postcolonialist, or a revisionist can achieve by refuting
his or her opponents’ ideas, but the freedom that can escape from the violence of identity politics.
For Durcan, the title, “We Believe in Hurling,” can be replaced with “We Believe in Art” with an
emphasis on artistic autonomy unaffected by politics, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Sport can obviously blind the people to politically sensitive issues, make a citizen a
docile body of the state. Durcan also recognizes the politics in sport to tame a citizen. In
“Apartheid,” the speaker is discharged from a mental hospital “after twenty-seven sessions of
Electric Convulsive Therapy” (l. 1). Not only has he already been disciplined in the name of
“therapy,” but he is also educated by his father on that day of discharge to attend “the Rugby
International / Between Ireland and South Africa” (ll. 13-14). Sport serves as a successful
method to adapt “the abnormal” speaker to a “normal” reality that is already defined by the
father and the state. Nevertheless, sport *per se* is neither a means of discipline nor a politically
conservative method. Durcan in “Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil” suggests sports as that
which can transcend political violence. Invited by an iconoclastic priest to watch “the All Ireland
Football Final on television” (l.4), he expects that

> Tomorrow would be a day of affection as well as of rest:

> An authentic Sabbath;

> No politics;

> No jealousy or rivalry; (ll. 21-24)
Sport is a matter of appropriation. Although sport can be used as a means of politics, it can also provide us, at least, with a sense of rest, “An authentic Sabbath.” There is no politics, no ideological war in itself. Durcan does not grant any political meanings on hurling, but sport and its beautiful moments can overcome political hatred and violence from which Durcan gains a postnationalist utopian aura distinguished from a masculine-oriented nationalist world view.

**Aesthetics in/of Dance**

The aesthetic appreciation of sport lies at the heart of Durcan’s postnationalist perspective. Contrary to a macho character playing tough sports that reflect the ideology of the nation-state, Durcan’s male characters choose to enjoy dancing. Durcan in “The Ballet Dancer” introduces a man who returns home after rehearsals, dancing with his children. While “Pirouetting, miming, all three together” (l. 14) in a freely and flexibly artistic way, they bring a new spirit to the ideologically rigid town in which his neighbors “look askance at him. / Oh how they dread the woman in the man” (ll. 15-16). In disapproval of his occupation as a dancer, the Irish community self-assertively believes that a man should behave like a strong, brave soldier, not like that dancer. Although a male ballet dancer is usually well known for his physical strength and flexibility based on hard training, the power he has is not that of a warrior who can conquer his enemy. His power always presupposes the beauty of his own body and its movement, not the toughness to subdue his opponents. Perhaps that image of a male ballet dancer is not suited for the nationalist cause to construct the strong, vigorous Free State that gloriously defeated its enemies. Rather, his two sons who work as “engine drivers” (l. 6) for “the nation-railways” (l. 7) seem more appropriate than their father to the ideal of the state because they can serve the new nation-state and its industry with their own strength. His wife also represents aggressive power that the state promotes as long as she is “a local battleaxe” (l. 8). If a brave,
strong man was an ideal model of Irish manhood under the colonial yoke, a postnationalist model, for Durcan, is not that kind of reactionary warrior-like figure. Rather, Durcan foregrounds a socio-culturally excluded character, the “feminine” man like Leopard Bloom in *Ulysses* who has to stand alone against chauvinistic, macho nationalism. Peggy O’Brien argues that Durcan “strips away the layers of denial beneath the displacement that figures the nation as a woman, ‘Motherland,’ by honestly exposing the feminine in the individual male identity that resists the purity and polarity of stereotype” (100). By introducing “the woman in the man” (l. 16), Durcan takes a line of flight from the rigidity of Irish masculinity. Durcan’s ballet dancer thus suggests a revolutionary alternative to the public gaze of hypermasculine society through his unencumbered dancing with his children.

Dance for Durcan becomes a useful tool for a postnationalist revolution distinguishable from nationalist reactionary violent ways. The twelve disciples of Jesus in “The Separation of the Apostles” in *Crazy About Women* show a dance of separation by means of a solution to Republican terrorism “In this most genocidal era of all” (l. 31), Durcan insinuates that dance can become one way to overcome the hostility of the IRA and hypermasculine activities of terrorism: “The secret to the apostolic life is dance / And today is our dance of separation / On disco floors of desert – bare feet arias” (ll. 39-41). The violent armed-resistance of the IRA, whether called terrorism or not, cannot be an option for Durcan. He prefers a non-violent ways of building a community. The poem that enunciates Durcan’s postnationalist agenda, “O Westport in the Light of Asia Minor,” also actively appropriates dancing and singing:

They came at a run down the mountain […]

And danced to ring upon ring […]
And they sang: As if a rock were naked. (ll. 35-43)

Durcan’s postnationalist revolution does not take advantage of violent physical strength but retains gentleness in his dance and song. Through their dancing and singing, Durcan’s brave men who open the gate for a new postnationalist era show an alternative way to form a new community not in an aggressive way but in an artistic and peaceful way. Durcan’s new model for Irish manhood no longer insists on physical valiancy but honors the following values: “Gentle, wild, soft-spoken, courteous, sad; / Angular, awkward, candid, methodical; / Humorous, passionate, angry, kind; / Entirely sensitive to a woman’s world” (“The Haulier’s Wife Meets Jesus on the Road Near Noone” ll. 123-26), which can be distinguished from traditional characters of Irish men drunk, violent, and hypermasculine, whether invented or prejudiced by colonialists or nationalists.

A Third Postnationalist Alternative: New Models for Irish Women

To challenge a hypermasculine society, Durcan has shown his satirical critiques and alternative models for new Irish men. However, it would not be a complete challenge if only the images of men change. In other words, the images of Irish women should also be modified, so that a male-dominated society can be fundamentally questioned; that is why Durcan suggests several types of new Irish women. As discussed earlier, a typical image of an Irish woman including reference to the native land has traditionally been described as a pure virgin or the Virgin Mary earlier than colonial domination, as soon after Ireland moved from pagan to Christian. That image can grant the Irish, in particular, the Irish nationalists, as the colonized a new identity characterized by spirituality that can be distinguishable from materiality of the
colonized. At the same time, as Kearney points out, in the process of sublimation of the native land, “Woman became as sexually intangible as the ideal of national sovereignty became politically intangible. Both became imaginary, aspirational, elusive” (Postnationalist Ireland 119). Against the grain of the nationalist idealization of Irish womanhood, Durcan the iconoclast retrieves an anti-Mary image of Irish women. Durcan in Diary puts it, “State and Church camouflaged their neglect by the Madonna-and-child strategy of paying lip service to women and children: that is, of idealising women and children” (126-27). Based on his critical perspective on the invention of national womanhood, Durcan’s women can be characterized by two features: sensuality and powerfulness. One of the representative models for Durcan is Teresa, who has life-affirming energy. In fact, she is a social minority because she faces a harsh reality oppressed by “her mad father / And her madder husband, / Or enduring their screams” (ll. 16-18). Nevertheless, Durcan takes her as a new model for Irish womanhood because of her sensuality, courage, and truthfulness. She is referred to as “tutelary goddess” (l. 51) for those whose concern is “the resurrection of life” (l. 50) distinguished from the nationalists quick to ideologically judge people. In other words, Teresa is a symbol of life, through whom people can gain life-affirming energy:

Thirty-five, small, heavy, and dark,

And who would sleep with any man who was honest enough

Not to mouth the platitudes of love;

A sensual woman, brave and true,

Bringer of dry wisdom and free laughter. (‘Teressa’s Bar’ ll. 52-56)
It is worth noting that Durcan renders her sensual enough to sleep with any honest man. Contrary to symbols of traditional Irish womanhood, such as the Virgin Mary who represents pious middle-class morality, Durcan plainly proposes that Teresa can become a new model in a postnationalist Ireland. She is not encumbered by rigid morality forced by the Catholic-State alliance but can bring wisdom and laughter to those in her bar. Her sensual characteristics do not represent obscenity but a line of flight from that puritanical morality of the hypocritical state.

Another Durcan’s model of Irish womanhood is Fat Molly. Durcan in “Fat Molly” shows a woman who maintains sensual and life-affirming affection. As her name indicates, she reminds the reader of Joyce’s Molly in *Ulysses*. As Joyce in the “Penelope” episode portrays her as sensual and energetic, in particular, with her free flowing monologue that has traditionally been interpreted as an expression of unregulated feminine desires, Durcan’s Molly also expresses her unrestricted desires. By teaching the young speaker “the art of passionate kissing” (l. 7), Fat Molly becomes Durcan’s ideal model with her candid expression of desires. In particular, when the speaker finds that “her glass had no bottom” (l. 20), her endless desire makes a strong contrast to St. Mary’s abstinence. In a similar manner, the thirty three-year-old female speaker in “The Haulier’s Wife Meets Jesus on the Road Near Noone” bravely expresses her unashamed pride in her body with sensuality to the extent that she talks to an actor whom she meets on the road, “Please take me” (l. 34, emphasis in the original). Durcan’s appropriation of sensuousness, however, is not just a reactionary resistance to the rigid morality of the Catholic-State combination. It rather retains a postnationalist world view:

Well, that was half a century ago

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88 Hélène Cixous, a prominent feminist critic, in “The Laugh of the Medusa” argues that Molly’s unregulated and free flowing use of language might be a model for women writers: “Our glance, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we’re not afraid of lacking” (878).
And now the Vikings are here –

Bloody foreigners –

And there’s nothing but blood in the air:

But thank you Fat Molly for a grand education;

Like all great education it was perfectly useless. (ll. 35-40)

As discussed earlier in “Before the Celtic Yoke,” the Vikings for Durcan are a synonym for the Celtists who constructed and/or invented Irish identity based on a strong nationalist ideology. Given that the fifteen-year-old speaker refers to “half a century ago” (l. 35), that is possibly the 1900s or the 1910s when Irish cultural nationalism or Celticism reached at peak. With a lesson of life-denying philosophy, such as abstinence or temperance, the Celtic revivalists or cultural nationalists are described in “Fat Molly” as secluded by themselves in a fort as if they were monks without any contacts with the secular world by building their own league: “On the other side of the forest from the monk-fort at Kells / Where the bird-men were scribing their magnificent comic / The Book of Kells” (ll. 3-5). Molly’s teaching of life-affirming tendency thus can become a resistant voice to Celticism and its byproduct of religious moral purity that founded the moral ideology of the new Catholic-State. Molly’s anti-rigid morality lesson, however, becomes “perfectly useless” (l. 40) because “now” (l. 36) the Celtic morality prevails over the native land. That is how the postnationalist Durcan recognizes reality of the nation-state and why he keeps on seeking sensuality in his female characters.

In addition to that sensuality in Durcan’s women, they are sometimes powerful enough to take control over Durcan’s male speakers. In several Nessa poems, written about his ex-wife,
Nessa is often described as a strong and even a destructive woman: “She was a whirlpool, she was a whirlpool / And I very nearly drowned” (“Nessa” ll. 17-18). Nessa in “Hymn to Nessa” also “burned through her eyes” (l. 10) and “Her face burning in coals” (l. 12). Those overpowering images drastically subvert traditional portraits of Irish women like innocent, holy, or fragile St. Madonna. As examined in Gibbon’s discussion about Synge’s The Playboy earlier in this chapter, when Gibbons mentions hostility of the West as an expression of resistance to centralizing forces of modernization, he also talks about women’s sexuality and violence in the West. Female characters in The Playboy, such as Widow Quin, Pegeen, or Sara Tansey, continuously display their violence. For instance, Widow Quin is rendered as the one who poisoned her husband and buried her children. Synge is, Gibbons argues, “opposed to depict the idyllic mother figure to ridicule Catholicism” (32). Although Gibbons finds a deterritorializing tendency in the West to demonstrate subaltern recalcitrance from a postcolonialist perspective, his discussion about the West’s women is still significant to a postnationalist perspective in that it shatters traditional prejudices about Irish women.

To shatter conventional images of Irish womanhood, Durcan in “Wife Who Smashed Television Gets Jail” presents a wife who fiercely kicks in a television set at home, an act obviously contrary to the gentle image of the Holy Mother. As her husband testifies in court, while he and his children are “peacefully watching Kojak” (l. 2), a popular American detective TV series, the wife smashes the TV exactly when detective Kojak shoots a woman with the same name as the wife’s and “Snarls [ed] at the corpse – Goodnight, Queen Maeve –” (l. 9). Not only is she shamed by the moment when the dame who has the same name as hers dies, she is disappointed by her husband’s watching TV all the time, and she says, “I didn’t get married to a television” (l. 16). Her husband is addicted to TV inasmuch as he testifies that he and his
children arrive his mother’s house “just before the finish of Kojak” (l. 12) and he adds that his mother loves *Kojak*. Despite the wife’s violent reaction, what Durcan in this poem wants to reveal is his challenge not only to patriarchy but also to an overall social system, including the courts, which is held to an empty concept of the Holy Family. When she suggests to her husband to go to the bar to talk or to play billiards, rather than to watch TV at home, and especially when she finally goes to the pub, the very act of leaving home provides the judge with a cause to find her guilty.

Justice O’Bradaigh said wives who preferred bar-billiards to family television

Were a threat to the family which was the basic unit of society

As indeed the television itself could be said to be a basic unit of the family

And when as in this case wives expressed their preference in forms of violence

Jail was the only place for them. Leave to appeal was refused. (ll. 22-26)

As the judge sets a dichotomy between “bar-billiards” and “family television,” the wife who chooses “bar” instead of “family” is sentenced to jail. The notion of the Holy Family on which the judgment is based, is, in fact, mere flowery words because the judge acknowledges in his combination of “family” and “television” that the family as the basic unit of society necessarily needs a television set to be regarded as a basic unit of the family. In other words, it is an irony that the Holy Family cannot sustain itself in the absence of the secular television. In addition, behind the judge’s absurd logic in the sentence of imprisonment, there is no voice of the wife in the poem. Most of the story is retold by the husband with quotation marks in a way of dramatic monologue by which the reader can guess what happened to the husband and wife. The rest of
the poem quoted above is written as a journalist’s report: “Justice O’Bradaigh said …” (l. 22). There is, in fact, no room for the wife in this poem; that is how Durcan expresses the patriarchal Holy Family in which female voices disappear not only from home but also from the surface of the Irish court and society. Although Durcan suggests several models of Irish womanhood with their sensuousness and violence, that does not mean that new Irish women should have those virtues in a postnationalist era because that could lead to another identity essentialism as previous feminists insisted on their own feminine characters. Through these iconoclastic descriptions of Irish women as distinguished from St. Mary of the Holy Family, Durcan insinuates the absurd conditions of Irish reality in which rigid life-denying morality and overwhelmingly masculine perspectives prevail over individual lives in the name of religious morality.

Durcan as a postnationalist poet conducts his critical tasks of challenging nationalist myths and tradition. He also condemns intransigent identity politics regarding sectarian, ethnocentric, and hypermasculine violence. If he painfully and penetratingly recognizes the terrible reality of Ireland, the very recognition enables him to search for utopia by suggesting several alternatives to contemporary tragedies, such as idling, dancing, finding another home as an exile, and suggesting new models for Irish men and women. Behind those utopian searches, Durcan believes that identity is not fixed once and for all. For Durcan, national identity and individual identity are so flexible that they can be created in new ways beyond boundaries of time and place. His radical experiments on identity in an attempt to deterritorialize himself from the nation-state ideology will be continued in the next chapter.
Chapter 4. “Durcanesque Hybridity”

In the previous chapter, I discussed how a postnationalist Paul Durcan has searched for new homes, alternatives to the ethnocentric Ireland invented by chauvinistic nationalists who have longed for a purely independent nation-state. Durcan as a minoritarian artist and a nonconformist may well desire a more flexible community in such rigid circumstances. If I showed Durcan’s hybrid perspectives on the nation in Chapter 3, we can perceive in this chapter that he then conducts more radical experiments on hybrid identity through his distinctive poetic form and genre: ekphrasis and magic realism, both of which distinctly characterize Durcanesque minoritarian literature. Through his ekphrasis, Durcan achieves hybridity between the temporal and the spatial, and between the public and the private. He also creates hybridity between the real and the surreal through magic realism that enables him to conduct a poetic experiment on identity, that is, becoming-other.

Ekphrasis refers to a poem that addresses a work of art, such as a painting or a sculpture. Historically many poets have utilized other works of art as a basis for their own poems. For example, Andrew Marvell in “The Gallery” compared the poetic speaker’s lover to several portraits in the gallery. John Keats in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” stood before a Grecian urn and sang of its eternal beauty, reflecting on the figures painted on it. Irish writers, including William Butler Yeats and Seamus Heaney also meditated on paintings. Aside from the long tradition of ekphrasis, that creative genre is significant in that it forms an amalgamation of the two different genres of literature and the visual arts. According to Joseph A. Kestner in *The Spatiality of the Novel* (1978), literature can basically be read as a genre of time and the visual arts as one of space. While the temporal arts like music and literature are based on inherent succession and irreversibility, the visual arts, like painting, sculpture, and architecture, have an innately
reversible and simultaneous aspect. A work of ekphrasis thus becomes “a welding of the vertical and horizontal, the spatial and the temporal, the romantic and the realistic” (Kestner 94). In particular, the combination of temporality and spatiality in ekphrasis with “spatial secondary illusion” (Kestner 9), the concept that temporal art assumes spatial qualities of a painting for its development, can produce an effect of atemporality when ekphrasis brings spatiality into its text. Atemporality can be achieved in a literary work, including ekphrasis, despite its innately temporal nature, through the following elements: repetition, interior monologue, discontinuation of “speaking to listen to their [protagonists’s or poetic speakers’] dreams” (Kestner 59), interruption of dialogue, the spiral structure, becoming rather than being, framing, metamorphosis, and so forth.

There are many philosophical implications in atemporality. Deleuze in Logic of Sense (1990) explicates two types of time through his reading of the Stoics: Chronos and Aion. In Chronos only the omnipotent present exists in time as it absorbs the past and future, both of which are understood only in relation to a certain present. On the contrary, only the past and future subsist in Aion, in which the present is divided into the past and future at every instant without thickness and/or extension. Hence there is no chronological time, but atemporality. Chronos is a sort of encasement in that a divine present that oversees all the flows of time simultaneously dominates the past and future from its own perspective. For instance, we can

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89 Kestner argues that the opening paragraph of the “Proteus” episode of James Joyce’s Ulysses represents an inescapable spatiality: “Although the novel is a temporal art form, the opening sentence is about the timeless world of the visible and the unavoidable presence of its modality. In other words, before all there is space, a pure Einsteinian relativity. All first knowledge is spatial” (140). Stephen’s interior monologue in the absence of chronological time on the beach of Sandymount Strand represents atemporal quality of time, compared to his acute sense of expansive spatiality. By incorporating the ineluctable spatial quality, the temporal text of Ulysses can represent the inescapable Dublin which has long captured Stephen Dedalus under its suffocating nets of nationality, language, and religion.

90 Without the overseeing present, no one can recognize the past and future because both are relative terms defined by the present perspective. Temporality, the chronological sense of time, is thus associated with Chronos.
acknowledge a cause-effect relationship thanks to our transcendental present perspective on an accidental event. Without an overseeing present viewpoint, “I” an hour ago, “I” in the present, and “I” an hour later can hardly be regarded as the same “I.” In other words, Chronos is closely involved in the process of subjectification by situating things and persons in a specific time and place, that is to say, by defining them, endowing them with a certain identity. Prior to subjectification, by contrast, Aion resists definition by a superior system of time. As a purely perverse moment coming out of a cause-effect relationship, Deleuze observes, “always already passed and eternally yet to come, Aion is the eternal truth of time: pure empty form of time, which has freed itself of its present corporeal content” (Logic of Sense 165). Aion with its atemporality is a time that can never be fixed in the form of the present but moves on in the continuous flow of time. When chronological time is problematized, a purely essential quality of a thing can be revealed. As a result, when ekphrasis represents atemporal quality in the poem, it can reveal the singularity of an object. Appraising Russian Formalist criticism as valuable, Kestner devotes attention to the momentary aspect of scene in contrast to the constancy of place. It is that creative point at which the concept of singularity can be applied to the scene that resides in ekphrasis. When a writer appropriates scene from a painting and drives it into a literary text, chronological historicity ceases to sustain because of the momentariness of scene. In that absence of the temporality of Chronos, singularity hidden by Chronos finally reveals its existence.91

For Deleuze and Guattari, chronological concept of history is “always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even

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91 The concept of singularity may sound incongruent with the hybridity this chapter is talking about, because a general perception of hybridity relies on the belief that hybridity is a product of the combination between two (or more) different things. In other words, hybridity as “[A+B]” does not sound “singular” inasmuch as it can insist on its distinctiveness. There is, however, other than “[A+B],” a unique hybridity which can be referred to as “[C].” If the former hybridity illustrates on equation, “[A]+[B]=[A+B],” the latter “[A]+[B]=[C].” The “[C]” is that which has no symbolic and/or structural resemblance, but which enters in between “[A]” and “[B].” As for the latter hybridity, “[C],” that will be discussed in detail with regard to the Deleuzean concept of Becoming.
when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history” (A Thousand Plateaus 23). That is a remarkably significant point in that Deleuze and Guattari consider history in relation to the state apparatus, which supervises and defines an individual from a homogeneous perspective. History, like the state, has pretended to be the center of the world: “logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the Idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The State’s pretension to be a world order, and to root man” (A Thousand Plateaus 24).

Because of those oppressive features of history, Deleuze and Guattari want to find an alternative story different from that view of historicity and the state apparatus. They call it Nomadology expressed in a minor literature, which should be discussed in relation to magic realism in terms of a deterritorializational function.

As widely known, magic realism was born in Latin America and is especially rife with its political implications.\(^{92}\) Beside that political function, magic realism\(^ {93}\) is significant because it

\(^{92}\) Fredric Jameson in “On Magic Realism in Films” (1986) regards this genre as inherently historical and political. Unlike a nostalgic film which displays postmodern tendencies with glossiness and simulacra of the past in which genuine historicity and political sensitiveness evaporate, a magic realist film with its vivid rendering of color exudes historical and political awareness. It also depends on “a content which betrays the overlap or the coexistence of precapitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features” (311), which can be observed in most third world countries. Magic realism, thus, becomes a distinctive genre of third world art which reflects the coexistence of the two modes of production involved with both historical and political sensitivities. More important, magic realism as third world literature necessarily depicts a political issue in the form of a national allegory: “The story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society” (Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” 69). In short, for Jameson, magic realism as a third world genre encompasses contemporary historical and political circumstances in national allegories.

\(^{93}\) In comparison to Jameson’s theorization of third-world literature and of third-world magic realist film, Deleuze in Cinema 2 suggests three features of third-world cinema. The differences between classical film and third-world modern ones are as follows: First, while the oppressed minorities are already there in classical cinema, such as American and Soviet cinema, “the people no longer exist, or not yet … the people are missing” (216, ellipsis and emphasis in the original) in a modern political cinema. Because they are “in a state of perpetual minorities, in a collective identity crisis” (217), the minority author has to render them as missing. Deleuze’s third world cinema is thus different from Jameson’s in that Jameson regards oppressed minorities as politically resistant agents who already exist, while Deleuze, based on the absence of the agent, fulfills politically collective tasks in a different way, that is, the invention of a new people. In the absence of the agent, “There will no longer be conquest of power by a proletariat, or by a united or unified people,” Deleuze writes (219-20), but the people in the process of becoming. More important, mainly because minority’s voice does not represent any existing people, based on the absence of
goes against the grain of a chronological time frame, which is one of the characteristics of minor literature. Eva Aldea in *Magical Realism and Deleuze* (2011) investigates the relationship between Deleuzean minor literature and magic realism. As an amalgam of the real and the magical, magic realism retains two contradictory styles: a realism that consists of a territorialized language reflecting a certain rearranging perspective as George Lukacs\(^ {94} \) once observed on the one hand, and the magic with a deterritorialized language on the other hand. If a minor literature has a function of deterritorialization of language with its intensity and anti-symbolic expressions that subvert the conventional chains of signification, magic realism never reaches that stage of directly intense language, “because of the dominance of its realism” (Aldea 35). The magic in magic realism, however, becomes a driving force toward a minor literature. Aldea argues that the magic can be understood as an example of Deleuze’s counter-actualization in which the actual of the real and the virtual of the magic become inseparable (103). That counter-actualization can be expressed by way of Deleuzean metamorphosis, becoming-animal. Following Henri Bergson’s

\(^ {94} \) Lukacs in “Narrate or Describe?” (1970) asserts the superiority of realism with its power of meaningful organization. He demonstrates how to represent social phenomena under capitalism by contrasting the two modes of writing: naturalism and realism. While the former based on observation and description fetishizes human beings and things haphazardly organized without significance in the present tense, the latter based on experience and narration underlines human activities and social relationships well organized in the past tense. Contrary to naturalist writing subject to bourgeois capitalism, for Lukacs, realist writing equipped with the ideology of an author can raise a revolutionary voice against capitalism. The perspective of an omnipotent author, however, can become a territorializing force as it rearranges events in certain ways.
concept of duration, in which the past in the crystalline image always coexists with the present. Deleuze in *Cinema 2* (1989) maintains that the present is the actual image and its contemporaneous past is the virtual image (79). The condition of the coexistence of the virtual and the actual, which characterizes Deleuzean becoming, is a process of deterritorialization of a subject that has been traditionally constructed by chronological historicity. The Deleuzean becoming is a movement in which an individual enters into the zone of in-betweenness with asubjectivity and asignifying character. It is not just a simple imitation that results in reterritorialization but the creation of a monster that loses all symbolic relationship with the object of becoming. The act of becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, has “nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory” (*Kafka* 35). For example, becoming-dog does not mean to act like a dog barking and chasing. It means to find a way out of the callous subjectivities of man and dog in order to enter the zone of in-betweenness to the extent that they lose their own previous subjectivities. In this way, the magical element, that is, becoming-other, enables magic realism to strive toward becoming a minor literature.

Based on the two theoretical backgrounds of ekphrasis and magic realism, I want to illuminate hybrid characteristics in Durcan’s poems. Durcan’s two collections of ekphrases, *Crazy About Women* published by the National Gallery of Ireland, and *Give Me Your Hand* by the National Gallery of London, are significant not only because they intermingle the two different genres of poetry and painting by generating a new sense of historicity, but also because

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95 “Bergson’s major theses on time are as follows: the past coexists with the present that it has been; the past is preserved in itself, as past in general (non-chronological); at each moment time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved” (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 82).

96 One of the examples of the Deleuzean Becoming can be found in the relationship between a wasp and an orchid: “The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, by becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 10).
they combine the public and the private. By reinterpreting and rearranging the figures and events in a specific personal or Irish circumstance, Durcan rejects a chronologically recognized public history. Whereas Yeats once tried directly to establish national identity through his ekphrasis, Durcan focuses more on his private relationships, which are by no means non-political. He, rather, insists on the political autonomy of art through the combination of the public and the private. In addition, Durcan’s attempt to find a way out of Irish identity politics culminates in Durcanesque metamorphosis. By becoming woman, animal, and even something imperceptible, Durcan’s speakers cast doubt on any single unified human identity and can be read as radical experiments to search for an identity alternative to the hyper masculinity of Irish culture and to the totalitarian political identity of Irish society as discussed in Chapter 4. In particular, when his poetic voices blur the boundaries of identity by becoming other, there is no longer persistence of a certain identity but kaleidoscopic changeability and hybridity. In this sense, Durcanesque metamorphosis can be compared to the “Circe” episode of Joyce’s *Ulysses* that continuously problematizes fundamental identity politics.

**Hybridity in Ekphrasis**

*The Public and the Private*

Art museums and ekphrasis in an Irish context have been closely related to Irish cultural nationalism. To liberate themselves from British colonialism, the Irish urgently needed to construct national identity, so they considered art museums repositories of the community’s cultural heritage. Yeats, as an ardent cultural nationalist, wanted to conserve national culture by participating in the art museum project, such as that at Huge Lane Gallery. The Catholic middle
class, however, was hostile to the project because of their different stance on Irish identity and their snobbish middle class materialism, which impelled Yeats to compose “September 1913,” in which he lamented that “Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone, / It’s with O’Leary in the grave” (ll. 7-8). The museum as a national and public space for Yeats, as Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux observes, was an object to which “people are driven by a compelling need to ‘see’ what their nation is” (40). If selected and rearranged paintings in the museum could encourage the Irish to reestablish their own independent culture of nation, Yeats’s poems about paintings were intended to assert his own ideal Irish community, that is the nation-state. Among other Yeats’s examples of ekphrasis, such as “Lapis Lazuli,” “A Bronze Head,” or “On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac,” “The Municipal Gallery Re-visited” serves as a good example of ekphrasis that manifests the ideology for founding the nation-state in postcolonial Ireland. In appreciation of several paintings in the museum, the poetic speaker proposes a tradition of the Free State as represented by John Millington Synge or Augusta Gregory. Although he tries to preserve the private by writing it into the public (Loizeaux 45) by invoking names of individuals, his poetic stance is undoubtedly based on a politics that aspires to a certain imagined community, the Ascendancy as a true identity of the new state with “Dream of the noble and the beggar-man” (l. 47) completely different from the image of the Gaelic-Catholic nation-state. David Lloyd argues that Yeats showed in his later writings, on the verge of the birth of Irish Free State, a set of aesthetic values “which are profoundly antithetical to any tradition of symbolism” (“The Poetics of Politics” 60) with numerous ambivalent attitudes,\(^9\) compared to the earlier ones dedicated to

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\(^9\) Yeats in *A Vision* renders a more ambivalent national identity through his construction of a “spiritual foundation for the new nation-state” (Kiberd 316) as an alternative to the British modernization of Ireland. According to his Double Gyre theory, which consists of two gyres: 1) the Anglo gyre which is primary, democratic, scientific, Christian, and realistic; 2) the Celtic gyre which is antithetical to the Anglo gyre as it is hierarchical, aesthetic, visionary, pagan, and idealistic. Every power necessarily creates its own opposition in search of balance. Because of dynamic equilibrium, no two powers can actually cancel out one another. In that fluctuation between the two poles,
invention of a nation. It is nonetheless undeniable that Yeats’s ekphrasis is still full of a founding ideology for the new nation-state, with a distinctive identity, whether expressed in terms of the Ascendancy or in Unity of Being.

If Yeats dreamed of an imagined public community based on the Ascendancy or nostalgia for the glorious past through ekphrasis, Durcan appropriates paintings in more private and contemporary way. In “Portrait of a Man Aged Twenty-Eight” from Crazy About Women, Durcan enunciates his artistic manifesto: “Art is private relations – not public relations” (l. 17). Because Irish society compels every work of art to be interpreted in relation to nationalism or to the concept of the “public” state, Durcan as a minoritarian artist has to choose another way. In his reflections on the past, he confesses that his artistic enthusiasm arises primarily from his personal experiences. He acknowledges in the Preface to Crazy About Women that he owes his lifelong obsession with picture making to his mother, Sheila Durcan, and to a painter, Sheila FitzGerald, who gave classes (x). Later on, he was hugely inspired by two artists, Francis Bacon and Ronald Brooks Kitaj who revolutionized his perspective on art when he visited their exhibitions. Dr. Brian P. Kennedy, an assistant director of the National Gallery of Ireland in 1990, also observed in the Foreword that Durcan has been engrossed in personal and subjective feelings about paintings whose potential can offer him a uniquely personal relationship with them (ix). Durcan’s readings of paintings strongly based on his personal perspective are fully reflected in his poetry. In fact, Durcan’s poems bring works of art into familiarity by “insisting that the public be made personal, that the historical be made contemporary, the sacred profane” (Loizeaux 59). For example, instead of emphasizing the historical and religious themes of Jesus’
crucifixion, the speaker in “The Crucifixion”\textsuperscript{98} expresses his feelings about a psychological and physical separation from his daughter hospitalized in “the Psychiatric Unit” (l. 2), which illuminates Durcan’s biographical background: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? / … / Father, why have you dumped me” (ll. 24-29). Durcan throughout his poems, not only in ekphrasis, evinces the relationship between the public and the private. In “Making Love Inside Áras an Uachtaráin” from \textit{Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil} (1999) he says, “To be utterly public is to be utterly private” (II. l. 9). Building a nation, a public task, for Durcan, starts with individual actions such as “To watch and to listen and to welcome visitors. / To do our best by our children” (II. ll. 11-12), rather than with dramatic sacrifice for the nation. Nevertheless, he does not deny public affairs, as the words, “Áras an Uachtaráin,” means the president’s office. By combining a private matter of making love with a public one of being inside that office, he resuscitates the private realms conventionally buried by the public discourses. As Kathleen McCracken argues, Durcan uses “the inextricable weave of private and public, personal and political” (“So, Here’s to You, Mrs. Robinson” 149). Durcan wants the private and often painful, such as his unfortunate married life and the difficult relationship with his father, to be heard throughout his ekphrasis. The museum and paintings, for Durcan, serve to relate his different private stories in the public context not from a traditional art historical reading of a painting as affected by nationalist ideology but from a newly intermingled way.

When Durcan reinterprets prominently and publicly exhibited paintings in a private way, that does not mean his poems are apolitical or politically conservative. Rather, he enters the sexual politics of ekphrasis. While Yeats read somewhat saintly and noble spirits in paintings, Durcan in \textit{Crazy About Women} through his personal gaze secularizes the appreciation of art. As

\textsuperscript{98} After Giavanni di Paolo’s \textit{The Crucifixion}. 
Loizeaux argues, Durcan often adopts speakers who are themselves viewers. “Lest we think that we as good gallery-goers, and perhaps church-goers” (l. 54). “The Levite and His Concubine at Gibeah,”99 questions the viewer’s pretensions to rigid Catholic morality. The speaker of the poem sharply condemns Durcan, a poetic character, who has brought a young woman half as old as himself after separating from his wife. The female speaker finds fault with Durcan’s “dishonorable” behavior brought into her community, “To our villa!” (l. 6, emphasis in the original), which may reflect a so-called divorce referendum in Ireland that was affected by the Catholic hierarchy. When she peeps at the couple from the window, her voyeuristic gaze, as represented “with a window frame around my [her] neck” (l. 7), proves her own hypocrisy as she turns out to be obsessed with a secular TV show and objects such as “cushion” (l.20) “sofa” (l. 20), and “armchair” (l.22) in comparison to her strict sexual morality. That same hypocritical voyeurism can be applied to the gallery viewers and/or the readers of his poem imbued with high moral standards. As the speaker-viewer in the poem refuses to allow them entry, the viewers in the gallery pretend not to accept that kind of moral corruption, or, at least, pretend to be detached from it.

The sexuality that everyone wants to disguise in a public place, in particular in a national museum, is frankly exposed by Durcan’s characters. As for the private realm of sexuality, the speaker of “The Presentation in the Temple”100 in Give Me Your Hand also candidly exposes it. What is significant is that he announces it in the devout moments in a temple, especially when baby Jesus is solemnly presented to a priest: “Sexy is not a word you’d properly associate with Simeon / But today it’s the only word, the right word, the procreative word. / Just look at that bit of ankle he’s showing” (ll. 28-30). The gallery visitors and/or the readers become ashamed of

99 After Jan Victors’s The Levite and His Concubine at Gibeah (Fig. 4).
100 After The Master of the Life of the Virgin’s The Presentation in the Temple (Fig. 5).
their concealed sexual desires. In “Bathers Surprised” Durcan foregrounds a female bather and allows her to speak. Against all expectation, although her nudity has long been exposed to the gallery visitors, she states that she is “not surprised at [the visitors’] being surprised” (l. 3). She, rather, rebukes the voyeurism of the male visitors who pretend to be moral and decent in their appreciation of a work of art: “But when it comes to balancing the accounts / Of their inner and their outer selves / Men diddle the books” (ll. 25-27). By insinuating or censuring male gallery goers’ lustrous gaze on a painting, Durcan provocatively challenges the ideological appropriation of art. Durcan’s sexual politics thus plainly questions a traditional reading of art with regard to a grand narrative, such as nationalism, which completely conceals the viewer’s sexual desires. Durcan’s speakers or characters in ekphrasis, as illustrated, expose disguised sexual longings that imply the gallery viewers’ moral hypocrisies. Given that sexuality has been considered the realm of individuals, Durcan actively brings sexuality onto the public arena. Durcan’s sexual politics, in effect, serves to consolidate the two different realms of the private and the public. By publicly speaking of sexuality, Durcan not only makes a hybrid of the private and the public but also criticizes the viewer’s sanctimoniousness. 

The Temporal and the Spatial

As Kestner once pointed out, a representative characteristic of ekphrasis is the combination of the temporal and the spatial, by which atemporality is produced. Durcan has argued that, “The point about pictures, as about books or going to the zoo, is that in the company of pictures and books and wild creatures time stands still” (Diary 86). By appropriating the atemporal stillness of painting, when he intermingles the two different genres of poetry and painting, the temporal and the spatial, Durcan’s poetry suggests a new sense of historicity, the

101 After William Mulready’s Bathers Surprised (Fig. 3).
moment when time stands still, atemporality. His ekphrasis thus resists traditional recognition of a
chronological time frame by emphasizing spatiality rather than temporality. Durcan inserts an
architectural structure, stairs, in “Man Walking the Stairs”\(^{102}\) from *Crazy About Women*. In
Chaim Soutine’s painting the staircase occupies the major space of the canvas with an emphasis
on its diagonal disposition by which Durcan vividly renders distinguishable the spatiality of the
stairs in the poem. The speaker, like Albert Camus’s Sisyphus, repeatedly climbs and descends
the stairs that lead him up to his home. The staircase, for him, serves as a bridge that connects his
isolated mind and the outside world that continuously delivers him “gas bills / And telephone
bills – Final notices” (ll. 42-43). By putting away the time sensitive tasks of paying the bills,
however, the speaker becomes engrossed in the spatial structure of the staircase that suspends
chronological flows of temporality but enables him to reassemble meaningful memories of his
private life. Not swayed by the pressure of time, those singular memories range from his
authoritative father, to his lovely wife, and to his dead son, all of which images are
simultaneously engraved in the spatiality of the stairs. That spatiality of the stairs gives him the
meaning of life: “The whole point of my home” (l. 60), the speaker says, “Is the stairs. Can you
conceive / Of a life without stairs?” (ll. 61-62). Because of that architectural theme of ascending
and descending spatiality, he is able to piece together his old days on those stairs. The spatiality,
for the speaker, creates a new sense of historicity within his abject and lonely situation. That new
historicity is not simple reminiscence but a simultaneity based on atemporality by which his
dispersed memories can reside in one place.

\(^{102}\) After Chaim Soutine’s *Man Walking the Stairs* (Fig. 6).
Atemporality\textsuperscript{103} or, at least, an anti-chronological time frame in ekphrasis can reveal the singularity of an object. In “Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus”\textsuperscript{104} from \textit{Crazy About Women}, two heterogeneous time frames coexist: the time of the viewer of the painting, on the one hand, and the kitchen maid’s time in the painting, on the other hand. By introducing a conversation about Jesus and his disciples between the viewer outside the painting and the maid within the painting, Durcan creates a hybridized time zone. That hybrid time, in particular, problematizes the chronological concept of time that once defined elements of life in one overarching perspective. When the omnipresent perspective, the Deleuzean Chronos, vanishes because of the advent of a new time zone of hybridity, every singularity reveals itself. As depicted in the painting, kitchen utensils are vividly displayed on the table in the foreground, while Jesus and the disciples are obscurely depicted in the background. If Jesus and his disciples imply the grand narrative, the central meaning or Chronos, the contrasting description can signify the end of Chronos. In short, as the two time frames live together, under such circumstance Chronos can no longer prevail; each object finally regains its own singularity:

\begin{quote}
I envy her for being herself:

Each kitchen utensil for being itself;

Everything for being in relation to everything:

Each in its place, she in hers. (ll. 6-9)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103} Atemporality is not a new theme to Durcan. In “Teresa’s Bar” discussed in the previous chapter, Durcan describes an ideal image of a woman, Teresa, who has little interest in Chronos. Outside Teresa’s bar, there are always outrageous conflicts and violence caused by nationalist agendas, such as the Poetry Society, the GAA, or the Rugby Club, all of which deal with time-sensitive concerns in the name of cultural nationalism. Staying away from all those tumultuous affairs related to time, Teresa and her colleagues take the opposite way, atemporality.

\textsuperscript{104} After Diego Velazquez de Silva’s \textit{Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus} (Fig. 7).
When each entity reveals its singularity/haecceity “in its place” (l. 9), once again, spatiality rather than temporality plays an important role to invite heterogeneous time flows to ekphrasis as well as to the canvas.

The concept of haecceity, in effect, has more political meaning than its implication of thisness of an object. It is worth noting that Lloyd in *Oral Space* compares Yeats’s nationalist symbolism with Joyce’s epiphany in regard to his discourse on nationalism. Whereas the former aimed at forming the nation as a whole, “directed against the fragmentation and dispersal of the body and the social space of modernity” (113), the latter was devoted to “a certain metonymic singularity” (113) or to “a presentation of the ‘whatness’ of the thing that is achieved […] rather than their representation of that of which they are a part” (113). Unlike symbols, epiphanies can escape from the logic of representation but present singularity or haecceity as illustrated in Stephen Dedalus’s theorization of singularity through epiphany. Regardless of whether Joyce intended to take Aquinas’ or Scotus’ term, what he tried to express was the whatness of a thing that cannot be defined by any overseeing existence. For Joyce, there was always a leakage of identity for flight, in particular in an Irish nationalist context, which exclusively shaped individual identity in the name of nation, religion, or anti-colonial resistance. Irish nationalism, which shaped the majoritarian culture of Irish modern society, was sustained by diverse symbols

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105 For example, Lloyd argues that odor in Joyce’s *A Portrait* is by no means a representation of an object but “[…] the allegorical counterpart of the oral and the aural, an evanescent material trace that insists on returning and yet remains unavailable for historicist logic: it is the spectre, the revenant, that returns to haunt the spaces of modernity. That it goes nowhere even as it continues to return is […] the index of its utopian potential” (*Oral Space* 115).

106 “When you have apprehended that basket as one thing and have then analysed it according to its form and apprehended it as a thing you make the only synthesis which is logically and esthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic quidditas, the whatness of a thing” (*A Portrait* 231).

107 Although Stephen’s theory of art seems based on Thomas Aquinas’s philosophy, Seamus Deane in his notes on *A Portrait* observes that Joyce’s emphasis on quidditas “owes more to Duns Scotus (1270-1308) than to Aquinas and has remarkable resemblances to the adaptation of Scotus’s theory of haecctas (‘thinghood’) by Gerard Manley Hopkins” (319). In fact, Inspired by Scotus, Hopkins invented the concept of “inscape” in an attempt to express the unique singularity of a natural phenomenon. The concept of haecceity of Scotus was appropriated by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Refer to the page 261 of the book.
like Cathleen ni Houlihan for a nationalistic blood sacrifice or the Virgin Mary for national spirituality or holiness as distinguished from the modern secularity of materialism, in order for the people to live up to the nation-state ideology. Out of a given identity shaped by the Catholic-State alliance, Durcan has envisaged the world of differentiation or haecceity. The significance of Durcan’s haecceity lies in its potential to overcome overwhelming forces of totalitarian nationalism that endows individuals with certain identities. The rigid identity politics of the postliberation nation-state and notorious terrorism of the IRA in the North can be strong examples of how a society can turn tragic when it loses haecceities. Without any consideration for individual concerns, the sectarian nationalists erased differentiation from Irish society in the name of nation; that is why Durcan devotes attention to that haecceity arising from atemporality.

Durcan’s atemporality, ahistoricity in ekphrasis, sounds indifferent to contemporary issues in Ireland. However, as his personal reading of a painting can be understood as his refusal of the Yeatsian reading of a painting in a national/public context organized by Chronos, a superintendent of history, Durcan’s atemporal ekphrasis draws on contemporary issues. Unlike other Southern Irish poets, Durcan ceaselessly pays attention to terrorism in the world-at-large as well as in the North. In “River Landscape with Horseman and Peasants”\textsuperscript{108} from \textit{Give Me Your Hand}, the speaker expresses his extreme fear during one quiet evening:

A single shot rings out.

I think I am dead.

Stephen thinks he is dead.

Then I think Stephen is dead.

\textsuperscript{108} After Aelbert Cuyp’s \textit{River Landscape with Horseman and Peasants}. 
Then he thinks I am dead.

We are alive. He has missed.

We begin sobbing, putting our arms around one another,

Tentacles of tenderness, silence resuming its sniping

Over London, Belfast, Sarajevo. (ll. 8-16)

Serenity prevails in the first stanza and in the painting to the extent that time seems to evaporate. A sudden shot, however, breaks that tranquility and the sound makes the speaker and his friend think they are dead. In that extremely tense moment of terror, Durcan juxtaposes two different time frames of two individuals: the speaker’s and his friend’s. When the speaker thinks he is shot, Stephen thinks so simultaneously, too. Right after realizing that they are still alive, they guess simultaneously again that their friends are dead. By comparing the thinking of the two individuals, Durcan arranges their heterogeneous times like a cubist on his literary text. The silent moment when time stops and everything is suspended due to the sound of the shot is striking enough to bring terror and then relief in the speaker and his friend. The silence of terror, however, dominates over again cities such as London, Belfast, and Sarajevo, which stand for contemporary world history marked by violence and war since World War I. Durcan’s atemporality thus does not mean that he lacks historical awareness. Rather, his atemporal simultaneity, as he weaves heterogeneous time zones into his text, brings a new sense of historicity that enables us to acutely recognize the miserable reality in terror. The coexistence of two different time frames is also illustrated in “Cain and Abel,”

109 which mixes the ancient biblical story of Cain’s murder of Abel and Durcan’s contemporary issue of war. After killing his

109 After Cain and Abel by Circle of Rimaldi.
brother Abel for flirting with his wife, the speaker, Cain, calmly watches “a half-hour of Gulf War” (l. 67) on television. In addition, “The Adoration of the Kings” in *Give Me Your Hand* juxtaposes the ancient day of Jesus’ birth and contemporary Christmas. The speaker, Jesus Christ, who was born in Belfast and is now living in New Zealand, expresses his uneasiness with “the politicians, the paramilitaries, the press” (l. 67) who have made a fuss for their own benefit every Christmas. In this regard, Loizeaux maintains that:

Durcan metaphorically drags images of all kinds out of the museum and down the steps into the stream of contemporary Irish life, reinvesting long-forgotten subjects with personality, returning them to ordinary use, removing them from the art-historical narrative the museum age has created, Hibernicizing the international collection of the National Gallery of Ireland. (51)

Durcan’s Hibernicization in mixing two different time periods exemplifies his concerns for contemporary issues, which fundamentally question the traditional art-historical narrative on which every single event is probably treated as an outcome in terms of historical progress by which tragic reality is easily disregarded. Despite his using of atemporal devices available through ekphrasis, Durcan chooses different ways from historical ideology: the private rather than the public, the atemporal rather than the chronological, whose double escape through ekphrasis enables Durcan to find a way out, his deterritorialization.

Although Durcan’s ekphrases are composed in personal settings, that does not lead to a conclusion that the poems belong only to the poet’s horizon of expectation. As art for Deleuze and Guattari need not reflect the outside of the book, such as the author, because of the tripartite

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110 After *The Adoration of the Kings* by Jan Gossaert (Mabuse) (Fig. 8).
division between the world, the book, and the author, but can assemble them, Durcan’s concept of art as expressed in ekphrasis is also aimed at making a new assemblage: “The challenge of art is to be inclusive and Crazy About Women […] is my attempt to be so inclusive as to make the intercourse between what is painted and what is written as reciprocal as it is inevitable” (Crazy About Women xi). As reciprocal intercourse between a painting and a poem, Durcan’s ekphrasis creates itself as a new assemblage beyond authorial intention. The results neither belong to one another nor become the source of interpretation of the other. Also by adopting Kitaj’s words, “Painting is not my life. My life is my life,” Durcan in Give Me Your Hand articulates his concept of an art that retains its own autonomy separate from the author’s life. In short, Durcan’s ekphrasis provides a ground for the autonomy of art independent of grand narratives, such as the author as well as art history and nationalist causes.

That autonomy of art can be considered politically ineffective if one insinuates that art is isolated in its own realm. Herbert Marcuse, however, in The Aesthetic Dimension (1978) argues that although art is largely autonomous in its aesthetic form, it can subvert the dominant consciousness as revolutionary art, as expressionism or surrealism has done, and can resist the destructiveness of the monopoly of capitalism. The affirmative tendencies of art may lead art to be territorialized in established reality because they allow a work of art to pursue revolution only within the realm of art, not in reality. The political potential of art lies only in its own aesthetic dimension since the established reality has already been territorialized. Marcuse, accordingly, states that “The radical qualities of art, its indictment of the established reality and its invocation

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111 “There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book), and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. In short, we think that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity. The book as assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of the world” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 23).
of the beautiful image of liberation are grounded precisely in the dimensions where art
transcends its social determination and emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse
and behavior while preserving its overwhelming presence” (6). In other words, art per se cannot
change the world; it can contribute with its aesthetic dimension to changing the consciousness of
the people who can change the world. In this sense, Durcan’s distinctive style of magic realism
in ekphrasis can be understood in terms of the political autonomy of art. Although the magic in
Durcan’s magic realism contains in itself little power to change reality, the mode of production
of a given society, it can act as a subverting function in established society. Accordingly, the
functions of Durcan’s magic realism as an amalgam of the magic and the real demand close
inquiry, in that it retains the autonomy of art and, at the same time, the power to find an
alternative way out of the territorialized realms of national, sexual, and even biological
boundaries.

**Durcanesque Metamorphosis**

Before the investigation of magic realism in Durcan, a debate on Durcan’s style, that is,
whether it is surrealism112 or not, calls for close examination. Most critics of Durcan have
considered him a surrealist. In her introduction to Durcan’s *Selected Poems*, Edna Longley
observes that surrealism is Durcan’s “most powerful satirical weapon, crystallizing incongruitiess
between the ideal and the actual” (Introduction xii). As illustrated in “The Head Transplant,”
Durcan’s speaker is about to willingly give his head to his father who needs a new head. Thinking
about a new hybrid creature the head transplant will bring, such as “a bull with the head of a

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112 Whereas surrealism as in Rene Magritte’s paintings blurs the boundaries between the interior and the exterior, the
non-real and the real, magic realism not only takes on those two different realms but also resolves the conflicts
between them without antinomy as in Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis.”
daffodil” (l. 7) or “a nonagenarian pontiff with the head of a harlot” (l. 8), he is immersed in several surreal juxtapositions of his new father and a new creature. Peggy O’Brien, in her essay “Your Daddy, My Daddy,” also points out hybridity in Durcan’s style as a direct reaction “against a period of confusion, when fact and fantasy collapsed” (90), which is rendered by Durcan’s “comic surrealism” (90). More important, it is worth noting that Fintan O’Toole finds sources of Durcan’s surrealist style in socio-economic factors. Since the 1950s, Irish reality has been depicted by strange and surreal imagery due to a huge wave of emigration that left the land desolate. That absent imagery\(^\text{113}\) became a description of Irish reality that had to be rendered with a surreal quality. For O’Toole, Durcan’s style reflects on the base, “the rapid transformation of Ireland into an urban, industrial society in the 1960s and 1970s, and the extraordinary cultural porousness that resulted from this transformation” (30). Because of rapid changes in modes of production, Ireland had little time to prepare for the transition from modernism to postmodernism. In that peculiar period of hybridity between the premodern and the postmodern, Durcan has had to depict an Ireland where media imagery coexists with peasant politics, an obscurantist church, and a mediaeval sectarian conflict (O’Toole 32). Thus, the more Durcan wants to become a realist, the more he becomes a surrealist in that Irish circumstance.

Unlike surrealistic interpretations of Durcan, Derek Mahon, another influential contemporary Irish poet, emphasizes Durcan’s dislike of surrealism, “in which he detects, correctly, a streak of sadism” (166). For him, Durcan is “not a Surrealist but a Cubist” (166), who can be characterized by his use of the simultaneity of heterogeneous experiences. His comment on Durcan’s cubism is significant because the simultaneity of cubism is the notion that

\(^{113}\) In this regard, Samuel Beckett’s work, such as Waiting for Godot, can be read as an expression of the barren landscape of Ireland. Declan Kiberd in Inventing Ireland argues that the surroundings in Beckett’s texts, except for the tree onstage, seem decontextualized or devastated, since the background represents a geography deprived of a history (539).
one can suspend a chronological time frame by inducing atemporality, as proven in Durcan’s ekphrasis. On the other hand, McCracken insists that Durcan’s poetry has been “wrongly labeled, surrealist; it is realistic” (“Canvas and Camera Translated” 19). As she quotes Durcan’s artistic maxim, “I think I regard it as axiomatic that poetry has to be fundamentally cinematic and photographic and painterly as well as musical” (18), she argues that Durcan’s poems are made as a captured image of a painting or film. Durcan is a realist who takes a picture of a painting as raw material for his composition. He just replaces the real raw materials of social phenomena with paintings or films. Indeed, Durcan’s poems take on an extremely realistic format by his adopting a newspaper headline style. For example, there are poems that serve as camera or news report to describe a certain event as follows: “Irish Hierarchy Bans Colour Photography,” “Two History Professors Found Guilty of Murder,” “Margaret Thatcher Joins IRA,” or “Cardinal Dies of Heart Attack in Dublin Brothel,” in which satirical voices are aimed at social, academic, political, and religious hypocrisy. In addition, Durcan depicts highly detailed historical events in the following poems: “In Memory of Those Murdered in the Dublin Massacre, May 1974,” “In Memory: The Miami Showband – Massacred 31 July 1975,” or “The Bloomsday Murders, 16 June 1977.” All things considered, Durcan’s poems are similar to collages in which he cuts, pastes, and eventually creates a new work of art. Although he seems to be a genuine realist because he takes his raw materials from our real lives and objects, he also rearranges them in his own style. By appropriating authentic objects from reality, including paintings or films, Durcan makes a new assemblage in which each element retains its singularity but is rearranged in a new

114 McCraken also finds a filmic style in a Durcan’s poem “The Fairy Tale of 1937” dedicated to Andrei Tarovsky, a Russian painterly film director (“Canvas and Camera Translated” 19).
115 Durcan’s journalistic reporting of reality, however, also plays a critical role of indicting a press obsessed by sensationalization of affairs.
atemporal time frame; that causes his work to seem surreal. Durcan’s style of magic realism thus enables the real and the surreal to coexist in a distinctive manner.

As O’Toole has significantly pointed out above the peculiar condition of Irish life in which the distinction between the real and the surreal is dissolved, “The Persian Gulf,” already discussed in the previous chapter, shows how the real and the surreal coexist. The speaker with his family, in the real, kneels on the floor and recites the rosary. When he is tired of prayer, he sees his house on fire, which is, of course, the surreal. Praying in Gaelic, for the speaker, is “an abstract art” (l. 12), that is, another surreal element detached from reality. The Gaelic language spoken in the prayer and the fire become good examples of the magic in magic realism. The magic, however, is not always productive. As the two elements lead the family to destruction and territorialization, what concerns Durcan is the appropriate type of the magic, as Deleuze and Guattari seek not all kinds of deterritorialization, but more creative and productive one. If the two magical elements in “The Persian Gulf” produce harmful territorialization, another magic in the poem serves as deterritorialization as the speaker searches for a way out: “The skylight is our escape route in the event of fire” (l. 1). The speaker earnestly seeks an exit described as a skylight, from a suffocating circumstance in which the overbearing authority of Irish nationalism or his father prevails. In wishing that he could fly away through the skylight, as if he were a fly or a mosquito, the speaker wants a line of escape when he is territorialized by that authority. The desire to escape, to find a way out, plays a pivotal role in minor literature. Deleuze and Guattari observe, “The animal essence is the way out, the line of escape; A line of escape, and not freedom. A vital escape and not an attack” (Kafka 35). Finding a way out is closely related to animal needs because it is animal nature to escape from danger. In that sense, a character in Deleuzean minor literature such as Gregor transforms himself into an animal, which reflects the
magical element in magic realism, in part as an expression of his desire to escape from an oppressive reality. Durcan’s desire to escape can also lead his speakers to a metamorphosis into an animal or into other beings, that is, Deleuzean becoming-other.

Durcan’s diverse attempts to become other can be attributed to the rigid identity politics of Irish society. Self-reliant exclusive economic policy, the political neutrality during World War II, the priority of Gaelic ethnicity, and anti-modern Catholicism, which have strongly characterized “national” Irishness, serve as Irish territorializing forces. To get away from those callous identities, Durcan pursues various metamorphoses. The rationale behind Durcan’s becoming-other is that he acknowledges multiplicity or flexibility of the self as in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari or of Bergson: “Yes, Rosie, a human being is a river, not a rock. I love flowing, don’t you? I love everything passing. Death is not death. O Rosie – Rosie Joyce” (Diary 98). Durcan’s openness to all possibilities, Lucy Collins maintains, can be a rejection of the singular perspective through his “unwillingness to accept the univocal stance demanded by society” (216). More important, Durcan succeeds not only to Kavanagh’s concept of identity, incompleteness of the self, but also to the postmodern philosopher Gianni Vattimo’s concept of feebleness of identity (“Passage to Utopia” 329). In particular, Durcan’s perspective on identity serves to come to an end to ideological war and violence based on identity politics that stringently define people as nationalist, unionist, Catholic, or Protestant. Ducan thus questions that identity politics in terms of the flexibility of identity through becoming-other.

As for the flexibility of identity, Durcan shows in “Paul” that the speaker is asked to act as a mourner for a funeral mass. Strikingly enough, the funeral is for a man whose name is Paul. Although there is no clue as to whether the speaker Paul is supposed to be the dead Paul, he, at least, has the same name. The death of the man whose name is Paul seriously endangers the
various identities of Paul: the poet, the speaker, and the dead. By rendering “Paul” as the dead, the poet alive insinuates his death. In particular, since the man died in the distress caused by his broken relationship with his lover, which reflects Durcan’s autobiographical event of divorce, it is hard to say that the dead Paul has nothing to do with the poet. In addition, given that most Durcan’s poems have autographical voices, there can be a close linkage between the poet and the dead. More important, when the speaker before the coffin feels like a mother, especially when he mourns the dead as a mother comforts her baby, there is a strong sense of a tie between the speaker and the dead. In short, the three different agents are closely connected to each other; at the same time, they are to be considered separate entities in a logical sense in that the dead cannot write this poem. Durcan in that poem accordingly problematizes the concept of a unified identity. As for the multiplicity of identities in Durcan’s poems, McCraken in “Paul Painting Paul” observes:

Here, the presence of Paul draws attention, once again, to the multiplicity and the fragmentation of the self, and in particular to the disappearance […] He is named in the poem not to close the gap between poet and poem, but rather to widen it, to emphasise how no “self” is singular, how one’s identity is necessarily performative, and that what we are reading is a ‘logo’, a ‘signature tune’ fashioned as much by the reader as the writer. (Unpublished)

By revealing those gaps, Durcan relinquishes any attempt to establish a unified identity. Identity, for Durcan, is no longer a unitary concept, rather it harbors heterogeneous characteristics. Durcan’s attempts to escape the callous boundaries of self-identity, thus, can lead his speakers to diverse metamorphoses.
For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming-other of Kafkaresque metamorphosis, is one of the essential points in their theorization of a minor literature. For example, becoming-woman can represent a minority voice, that is, a woman’s voice in a patriarchal family in which a man or a father as the dominant wields domestic power. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari, in defense of the minority, assert the necessity of becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible, and becoming-revolutionary. Durcan as a writer of minoritarian literature assiduously expresses becoming-other. He says in an interview with John Knowles that “I always try to become the other, and I think this is true of all of us. The writer has to become the other” (22). Durcan’s experiments on becoming-other can be categorized into three groups: becoming-woman, becoming-animal, and becoming-imperceptible. If Durcan’s becoming-woman serves to subvert the hypermasculinity of Irish society, his becoming-animal personifies the search for a way out of the oppressive authority of his father, strict work ethics, and/or chauvinistic Republican agendas. Finally, Durcan gives up his authority as the poet to the extent that he wishes to erase himself and disappear. Those becomings, however, are by no means nihilistic because they challenge various strata of the majoritarian ideologies, as involved in acting as a male or the author.

_Becoming-Woman_

Before investigating how Durcan’s speakers become women, it is important to understand how Irish masculinity has been constructed politically. David Lloyd in _Oral Space_ maintains that there was a reconstitution of Irish masculinity in the nationalist modernization project. Lloyd’s point as a postcolonial scholar is that the remasculinization project is not solely attributable to military nationalism represented as Republican hypermasculinity against British colonialism, but also to “civic and cultural organizations, institutions and practices” (100), such
as the national theatre and the Gaelic League. Transformed from a once tumultuous male body under colonialism into a “disciplined and moral labouring” (100) one, Irish males as the Foucaultian docile body became geared into that state ideology that served to produce governable bodies for the sake of the nation-state. It is significant that there appeared “a modern division of gendered social spheres” (97) into a masculine public sphere and a feminine private sphere. A masculine realm started to represent civic and public domains, while a feminine one was limited to domestic affairs. Against that constructed gender compartmentalization, Durcan’s male speakers pursue becoming-woman in the private and domestic spheres instead of the conventional male public ones. As the title “The Butterfly Collector of Corofin” indicates, the protagonist spends most of his time at home collecting butterflies. Although he sometimes goes to a pub, a public place characterized as masculine space, he is not involved in any civic, national, or masculine debates with other men. In contrast to the pub scene in Joyce’ *Ulysses*, in which there are fierce nationalist debates with a vibrant description of Irish masculinity, what the collector does is just an unmanly imagining: “If only I could go back to being a caterpillar again” (l. 17). Separated from masculine nationalist agendas frequently issued in a pub, he chooses, rather, an extraordinarily private, unrealistic activity that can be regarded as within the feminine sphere. He, in effect, behaves like a woman at home. Attired in “a red cardigan / And skintight pants striped bluegreen / And white cravat stippled with yellow” (ll. 2-4), he “flutters” (l. 5) around home. Although he is old enough to profess his masculinity at the age of thirty five, he keeps asking someone, “‘Would you?’ or ‘Shall I’ or ‘Oh dear, no’” (l. 9) in a feminized voice. Those features of the butterfly collector make a stark comparison with Irish hypermasculine culture under which feminine males like the protagonist of the poem seek becoming-woman.
Durcan’s becoming-woman in a domestic realm aims at opposing Irish hypermasculinity. The speaker in “The Kilfenora Teaboy” explicitly refuses to join hypermasculine activities like gun fighting. He instead decides to do some domestic chores, such as making tea or managing a small sheep farm:

I’m the Kilfenora teaboy

And I’m not so very young,

But though the land is going to pieces

I will not take up the gun;

I am happy making tea,

I make lots of it when I can,

And when I can’t – I just make do;

And I do a small bit of sheepfarming on the side. (ll. 1-8)

Although the historical background of the poem is unclear, it is predictable that the speaker lives in the middle of war that tears the land into pieces, whether it be the War of Independence or Civil War. Unambiguous enough is that the teaboy does not proceed to a battlefield full of masculine struggle but remains in a domestic milieu making tea and working as a shepherd. What really motivates him is “the small bit of furze” (l. 9) completely detached from manly works and spheres. Moreover, like Bloom in Ulysses who serves his wife breakfast, the tea boy makes all the tea for his wife who sometimes even beats him, which inverts the stereotype of gender roles. In times of hypermasculinity, when all Irish men have to participate in physical
resistance to colonial authorities, Durcan’s speaker in a historically evaporated setting longs for life affirming tasks at home. Durcan suggests an alternative male image as a painter as well as a tea boy: “I’m a famous caveman too; / I paint pictures by the hundred / But you can’t sell walls” (ll. 32–34). Secluded from the violence ridden world, he draws many pictures in a quite private area, a cave. As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, it is Durcan’s perspective on art that can never be narrowed to a public relationship. Durcan refuses to produce an art intended to be interpreted in public terms. His politically and historically indifferent or irresponsible behaviors as an Irish man, especially in times of war, may not be socially acceptable. By doing feminine work in a domestic realm, the tea boy, however, runs against the masculinized grain of Irish society. Durcan’s male characters like the butterfly collector and the Kilfenora tea boy actively embrace domestic and private spheres as the expression of anti-hypermasculinity.

If those two poems take on typically feminine activities as an expression of anti-masculinity, Durcan more actively allows his speakers to take on female characteristics by obscuring their masculinity. The speaker in “I was a Twelve Year Old Homosexual” from The Berlin Wall Cafe reminisces about his alleged homosexuality in childhood. Forced to give up homosexuality by his “Mother” (l. 9) and “Father” (l. 9) who signify both the parents and the Catholic hierarchy, he is territorialized by the remasculization project to act as a man. Durcan criticizes that sexually hypersensitive social norm in the 1950s that banned even the playful friendship of the speaker who was just a twelve-year-old boy. Aside from whether he was a homosexual or not, he declares himself in opposition to a rigid concept of sexuality in stating that “I was a twelve year old homosexual!” (l. 16). Durcan also uses the homosexual theme to subvert Irish masculinity in his reading of a religious work, “The Separation of the Apostles.”

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116 After Austrian School’s The Separation of the Apostles (Fig. 9).
as discussed in the previous chapter regarding a postnationalist alternative, dancing. In the voice of John the Apostle, Durcan as an iconoclast dethrones the authority of macho characters by divulging that the Apostles are homosexuals: “My name is John – one of the twelve / Gay men selected by Jesus. / I think he selected us because we are gay” (ll. 1-3). Although the word “gay” has other meanings, they are meant to be homosexual given that they wear female dress, despite the cultural differences from the Israelites: “Long flowing dresses of all colours and fabrics, / Pinks and scarlets and greens, cottons and woolens.” (ll. 34-35). In particular, “In this most genocidal era of all” (l. 31), which implies the IRA terrorism of Durcan’s contemporaries, those colorful costumes make a stark contrast to the gunmen’s military or black uniforms. In his emphasis on femininity or, at least, on a homosexuality, Durcan challenges traditional sexual identity politics. His poems thus revise that Irish history and identity marked by strong masculinity as in the case of the IRA. As John Goodby maintains that Durcan’s womanism can go along with opposition to the IRA aiding acceptance (244), Durcan reveals anti-authoritarianism in his recognition of gender roles and their socio-cultural construction. By adorning male characters with female clothes, Durcan takes a line of flight from rigid Irish masculinity. Durcan’s homosexual experiment thus serves as an example of his reluctance, at least, or his resistance toward the Republic remasculinization project in the days of terrorism.

117 Neil Jordan’s film, *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005), resonates with Durcan’s critique of Irish masculinity. The protagonist adorned with colorful female clothes resists a strong heterosexual Irish culture. In particular, when he defeats the IRA gunmen by firing his perfume in a magic realist rendering, he challenges through his bold assertion of femininity not only the hypermasculinity of Irish society but also the violence of the IRA. In a similar context, Jordan’s other film, *The Crying Game* (1992), raises the issue of homosexuality in Ireland by featuring a former IRA member who does not want to get involved in the IRA mission.

118 Derek Mahon also observes that Durcan’s characters suggest a new kind of man considered a womanist (“Orpheus Ascending” 168). If a womanist can be originally defined as a black-feminist who differs from a white-feminist in that they are a minority of minorities, Durcan’s womanist tendency can be attributed to the peculiar condition in which his speakers are doubly oppressed both by colonial/postcolonial powers externally and by strong masculine figures internally.
As in the case of “The Separation of the Apostles,” Durcan’s becoming-woman is possible by virtue of transvestism. In “Katherina Knoblauch” from *Crazy about Women*, the theme of transvestism is introduced when the father of the speaker bids him stand beside the feminized landscape of the Danube in a female dress, “party dress with décolleté chemise” (l. 14). As “All his [the father’s] life he had daydreamed of the Danube” (l. 5), that typical Irish man becomes obsessed with his own masculinity by objectifying a landscape as female. Although “Papa put me up for auction” (l. 1), the speaker ironically does not feel intimidated or embarrassed but confesses, “It was the happiest day of my life” (l. 2), because he feels “smug with the Danube” (l. 18) in his female dress. By asserting that “every man will desire me” (l. 26), he does not worry about cultural castigation through his transvestism. The speaker is rather proud of himself on becoming a woman and feeling a part of the Danube landscape. More important, that happens on his “nineteenth birthday” (l. 8), the day when a boy’s masculinity as an adult is officially confirmed. Against all expectation and contrary to becoming a typical Irish man, the speaker chooses to become a woman by strongly insisting on his femininity against hypermasculine Irish society.

In “The Man Who Thought He was Miss Havisham” from *The Berlin Wall Cafe*, Durcan also shows two types of families in regard to transvestism. One is the family whose husband and wife are both transvestites, and the other is the family whose husband is the only transvestite. In the first example, “She slouching about in his battledress, quick on the draw; / He clicking about in her frocks, never slow to swoon” (ll. 7-8), they indulge in changing their sexual identities. At Sunday mass, at last, they perfect their transvestism:

He in ankle-length evening gown

119 After Conrad Faber’s *Katherina Knoblauch* (Fig. 10).
With yellow wig down to the waist;

She in fisherman’s waders and oilskins,

Short back and sides. (ll. 16-19)

Even in that public place, the Church, where sexual identity must be officially defined and observed, the husband completely becomes the wife and vice versa. Through their transvestitism, Durcan not only opposes the constructed concept of masculinity but also subverts the sexually stringent authority of the Church. On the contrary, in the other family, the speaker as a wife evicts her husband because he thinks of himself as Miss Havisham. All he does at home is play like a bride “In his wedding-dress, / Forever readjusting his trousseau, / Forever caressing the confetti on his shoulders, / Forever casting glances at the rose in his bosom” (ll. 26-29).

Strikingly, however, he voluntarily hospitalizes himself into a local mental hospital that treats its patients with electric convulsive therapy; that insinuates Durcan’s autobiographical element into the poem. Because he believes that he cannot live in the sexually callous society of Ireland, he decides to live in the mental hospital as a self-exile. Although the hospital brainwashes him to make him believe that he is a man, he still retain his own body memory, insisting on his femininity by sending a mail to his family in the name of “Miss H” (l. 43). By blurring that fixed sexual identity formed not only by family structure but also by religious authorities and the Republican agenda, Durcan’s becoming-woman, sometimes becoming-man of a woman, finds a way out of the territorialization of the family, the Church, and the State.

Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* maintain that becoming is not a simple imitation. In that sense, Durcan’s becoming-woman illustrated above sounds a superficial becoming because most of his becomings take place in a sort of imitation of woman through a
change of clothes. Although Deleuze and Guattari recognize the importance of imitation as well as the limitations of being transvestite, what is more important for becoming is its “function” in “not imitating or assuming the female form, but emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, the zone of proximity, of a microfeminity, in other words, that produce in us a molecular woman, create the molecular woman” (A Thousand Plateaus 275). The main function of becoming, thus, is not to become like something or resemble something, but to seek molecular politics that forsakes a certain abstract territory of identity. Whereas molar politics is concerned with abstract and virtual concepts, molecular politics seeks singularities hidden by grand narratives. One of the representative examples of the former can be found in modern chemistry, in particular, in Avogadro’s law: “the principle that equal volumes of all gases at the same temperature and pressure contain the same number of molecules. Thus, the molar volume of all ideal gases at 0°C and a pressure of 1 atm. is 22.4 liters.” Although a mole is a chunk of an averaged and abstracted concept, there are always energetic movements of molecules on the border of the artificial boundary. In dealing with those energetic singularities irreducible to some grand narratives, molecular politics seeks a way out of overwhelming territorializing forces. If a feminist insists on a specific identity as a woman by saying, “we, as woman,” that can lead to molar politics because she is still held to a specific boundary of sexual fundamentalism. That is why Deleuze and Guattari argue that even women have to pursue becoming-woman. In this sense, Durcan’s becoming-woman, despite that it still remains within the tradition of transvestism or imitation, it definitely has a molecular function – that is to resist the homogeneous concept of Irish manhood, which has been politically programmed as Lloyd demonstrated above.
Becoming-Animal

Durcan’s more radical experiments on identity can be found in his becoming-animal. That results from his anxiety, loneliness, and/or oppression from the outside. As those oppressions, in particular, come from work or a nationalist ideology, Durcan envisages his speakers’ attempts to escape from territorializing powers through becoming-animal. As Erik Martiny in “Comic Abjection in the Poetry of Paul Durcan” (2010) points out, Durcan in Cries of an Irish Caveman (2001) employs animal narrators, especially, bovine, in almost a third of the book (413). The speaker who says that he is a cow in “Bovinity” ruminates on affection. Forlorn of his lover, a cowlady who joins “The club of logic” (l. 24), the speaker decides to retain his animality by unreasonably staying in the middle of the road. In addition, in “Chewing the Cud in the Lower Paddock,” the speaker unceasingly looks forward to his lover’s attention. He feels restless because his lover refuses to acknowledge his existence, cattleness, or carnal spirituality. The speaker in “Animals who Meet on the Road” is also dejected because “there is not an ember / Of recognition in her eyes” (ll. 21-22). Although it is not clear who his lover is, Durcan’s becoming-animal is closely associated with his isolation. It is worth noting Martiny’s comment on Durcan’s metamorphosis:

The self-animalizing tropes he uses often seem to be employed to express a feeling of estrangment, a melancholic sense of dehumanizing abjection; Durcan’s personae do not really seem to choose to be transformed into animals; rather, they submit to their metamorphoses as a release from the pressures of the human condition, and paradoxically also as a way of signaling a very human sense of self-debasement. It should in fact more accurately be described as a
Gulliver complex fused with a kind of Kafkaesque Gregor Samsa syndrome.

(“Comic Abjection in the Poetry of Paul Durcan” 414)

For Martiny, Durcan’s becoming-animal has two meanings, that is, Durcan’s feeling of isolation caused by his lover’s refusal that causes him to feel humiliated like an encaged animal, and his attempt to escape from the pressure of his surroundings in order to find a way out. More important, Durcan’s becoming is something to which he willingly looks forward, rather than a mere byproduct of his dejection. Martiny observes in “Anxiety, Apprenticeship, Accommodation: Paul Durcan and his Poetic Forefathers” (2007) that there is a difference between Durcan’s metamorphosis and Kafka’s; that is, while the former is “deliberately chosen by the speaker” (103), the latter was “being endured” (103) when Gregor “found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect” (“The Metamorphosis” 89). Although not all Durcan’s becomings have been deliberately chosen, a certain becoming comes about through the speaker’s will, as do most of his metamorphoses. In this regard, as Deleuzean becoming is intentional as a writer writes a book or a sorcerer does magic, it can be said that Durcan’s becoming is more Deleuzean than Kafka’s in terms of the willingness of the speaker. In “Bovinity” the speaker puts it thus:

*It’s not something you’re born with,*

*Like a mouth or an eye.*

*It’s something you detect and cultivate –*

*It’s something you divine –*

*Bovinity!* (ll. 1-5, emphasis in the original)
The speaker voluntarily detects and cultivates and even divines the object of his metamorphosis, rather than just having inherited it. For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming is “not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation” (A Thousand Plateaus 238) because it lacks any resemblance, imitation, or imagination like dreams or fantasies toward the object of becoming. In other words, when it comes to becoming-cow, that does not mean either to physically play like a cow or to draw an image of a cow through any image training. Becoming is instead “a verb,” as Durcan uses the three verbs, “detect,” “cultivate” and “divine.”

Durcan’s speaker in “Hommage à Cézanne” hears a mysterious secret from a nineteen-year-old girl one morning that there is a horse on her staircase. Confused by that conundrum, he confesses that he does not know what it means. Shortly, however, he finds himself becoming a horse:

Am I dreaming?

No, I am not dreaming.

I can hear the sound of my own hooves

Stamping on the marble steps of her staircase.

I go back to sleep again

To the sound of my own hooves

Stamping on the marble steps of her staircase:

“You are the horse on my staircase, Paul.” (ll. 40-47)
A psychoanalyst may try to find the meanings of those symbols, such as a horse, a staircase, and the nineteen-year-old girl with regard to the speaker’s sexual desires. According to Deleuzean philosophy, however, they represent nothing, or the unconscious represents nothing. As the speaker once admits the obscurity of the mysterious message, its importance lies in that he is being metamorphosed into a horse, not the meaning of her words. Then, what leads him to become a horse can be the focal point of the poem. The first three lines show that the speaker is so busy in preparation for work that he shaves and makes coffee at the same time. In this hectic moment of getting himself ready for work like a machine, the oppressive force of work has already affected his life. When he tries to “get myself together for work, / Piece myself together for work” (ll. 1-2), he implies that he has been divided into several parts. When he goes to work, he has to become one self, the given identity subsumed into a capitalist work ethic that educates us to have one purpose and one spirit for the sake of a corporate interest. After meeting that girl and thinking about the mystery, he suddenly comes up with an idea of his duty at work: “I am supposed to be at work one hour ago. / What am I supposed to say to my boss?” (ll. 34-35). That is the source of his anxiety. Although he has been forgetting about the smothering work and his boss, he realizes that he is going to be reterritorialized in his work. It is at this moment when he becomes a horse hearing the sound of his own hooves. As Gregor in “The Metamorphosis” is transformed into an insect because he has had anxieties about working to support his family.

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120 Ronald Bogue aptly epitomizes the anti-representational philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari: “Throughout Anti-Oedipus Deleuze and Guattari object to the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious as a source of representations, and hence as an object of interpretation. The unconscious represents nothing, creates no symbols or signifiers, no veiled or distorted wishes that call for interpretation. The unconscious produces, and what it produces need only be described. Dreams indeed are filled with strange images, events, and words, people do make slips of the tongue or the pen, and neurotics do exhibit myriad and puzzling symptoms, but these oneiric elements, parapraxes and symptoms have no unconscious meaning. They simply are, and the only question is whether the heterogeneous connections produced by the unconscious open up new pathways or block the further proliferation of desire” (108, emphasis in the original).

121 His anxiety about work seems to be due to his strict boss at work inasmuch as the chief clerk himself comes to check up Gregor’s lateness. “He looked at the alarm clock ticking on the chest. Heavenly Father! he thought. It was
for Durcan’s speaker, the oppressive forces of work lead them to induce their becoming-animal to find a way out.\textsuperscript{122}

The speaker, finally decides not to go to work. Instead, he goes back to bed “to sleep again / To the sound of my own hooves” (ll. 44-45). Since he wants to dream about becoming-horse by returning to his bed, his becoming-animal, strictly speaking, sounds imaginative and different from Deleuzean becoming because Deleuze denies a fantastic dreaming of becoming. Nevertheless, Durcan’s dreaming as expressed in “Give Him Bondi” is not simple imagination but a conduit to true becoming:

My Theory of Daydreaming.

If one may speak well of oneself

I may say I have not craved

Conquest or complacency

But exclusively

The existence of existence,

The survival of survival,

The dreaming of the day. (ll. 100-109)

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half-past six o’clock and the hands were quietly moving on, it was even past the half-hour, it was getting on toward a quarter to seven. Had the alarm clock not gone off?” (90).

\textsuperscript{122} The motive of becoming-animal in the Irish context is aptly reflected in Steve Barron’s film, \textit{Rat} (2000). Suffering from his work and from his demanding wife, the 53-year-old protagonist Hubert turns into a white rat on his bed. In particular, the scene in which he escapes from his house into the city, chased by his family obsessed with secular success by taking advantage of his becoming-rat, effectively renders the animality of trying to find a way out of the territorializing forces of the family, the Church, the court, and the pressure of Irish society.
It is neither conquest out of binary opposition nor irresponsible complacency for which Durcan searches through his dreaming. Rather, it concerns the haecceity expressed as “The existence of existence” (l. 105) that Durcan aspires to achieve in the sense that Deleuzean haecceity\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} observe that “There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected” (261).} can be understood as that which cannot be defined by any territorializing force like a father, a state apparatus, and/or a nation. The concept of haecceity or singularity can be connected to the concept of becoming other because the Deleuzean becoming involves entering the zone of in-betweenness by leaving previous territories of identity. The becoming cannot be defined by any other established identity, yet it retains haecceity/singularity of a new individuality. In that sense, Durcan’s daydream above is not a simple daydream like a fantasy. His dreaming concerns haecceity and the desire to find a singularity out of customarily designated identity. Thus, Durcan’s becoming-animal via his dreaming can be understood as a way of escaping authoritative powers outside which confine him within a certain identity; his dreaming in search of haecceity detects and cultivates and even divines him to becoming-other.

The speaker of “The Butterfly Collector of Corofin,” discussed earlier, who once was transformed into a female, now wants to become a caterpillar. As Deleuzean becoming-animal is caused by oppressive forces surrounding an individual, the butterfly collector’s desire to become a caterpillar can be attributed to a harsh reality that is destroying him: “My life is a process of being crushed gradually to death” (l. 20). More than that, captured in a state “To be transfixed for ever in a cruel unrest” (l. 30) like a butterfly specimen on the glass wall, he feels that he is forcibly bound to an irresistible, inescapable reality. The suffocating conditions of his life are produced by some tyrannical existence:
Then, I will be collected by the Great Collector Himself:

He, the Invisible One, in the Country of the Long Grass
Casting wide his vast sieve-mesh net.

But what then? Does he put us all under glass
For ever – for the benefit of the keen-eyed arch-angels
Labelling us by our names and addresses. (ll. 21-26)

By casting a great net around the protagonist, the “Great Collector” (l. 21), whether a god or an incarnation of a nation, defines the protagonist’s identity through language and number. On the one hand, when it designates his name in language, he must be culturally defined. On the other hand, when it identifies him by address, he is geographically placed in a fixed locality. If the protagonist once defined and arranged many butterflies in a certain order, he is now being defined like the butterflies he has collected. As a result, the omnipresent one overwhelmingly invests him with a specific identity by spreading “his vast sieve-mesh net” (l. 23). That oppressive net exemplifies the Joycean nets: “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (A Portrait 220). Unlike the young artist who tries to escape the harsh, oppressive reality that incessantly defines, confines, and represses an individual in the name of nation and religion, the butterfly collector transfixed as a butterfly cannot fly away from the net of authority. His urge to become a caterpillar, thus, represents his wish to find a way out of the oppressive conditions of life and seek a new metamorphosis.
Although his attempt to break through the net seems hopeless, he prepares another metamorphosis:

But Black Time, like his Mother, is beckoning him home

For now he must hibernate in the cell of his bedroom

And survive the tragic winter of his innate contradiction. (ll. 33-35)

The innate inner contradiction of the collector signifies the hope for a metamorphosis through which a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. The metamorphosis does not, however, sound auspicious because after becoming a butterfly, he is most likely doomed to be transfixed as a specimen. He prefers to stay in the condition of hibernation as a chrysalis that can withstand outside oppression rather than to fully grow up into a butterfly. In particular, when “Black Time” (l. 32) beckons him home, that can signify Durcan’s atemporal utopia as illustrated in “Teresa’s Bar.” When a caterpillar encloses itself in a chrysalis, time evaporates in the darkness of the shell. In that black time, that is, Aion, he can finally take rest by becoming-chrysalis despite bitter weather conditions as those in Teresa’s bar can peacefully drink regardless of a downpour outside. For Durcan, words like “Black Time,” “home,” “hibernate,” and “survive” provide a means of escape from the net of oppressive powers.

Once Durcan’s becoming-woman is induced through the father’s authoritative voice and Irish hypermasculinity, becoming-animal as a way out, for Durcan, can also be tied to the masculine atmosphere. The speaker in “Lord United Ireland, Christmas 1989” becomes an octopus with eight arms. The main reason for his transformation is that his father, “chief of staff of the IRA” (l. 7), had only one arm and insisted to the speaker the superiority of having one arm.
Given that the IRA is preoccupied with the only one idea of a united Ireland, the father’s one arm represents an overbearing masculine resistance of nationalist propaganda. As for the solution to the formidably totalitarian atmosphere, the speaker says:

My solution

Was to insist that I had three arms,

As a consequence of which

I was stashed away in a psychiatric unit in Epping Forest

For three and a half years. (ll. 14-18, emphasis in the original)

Although the speaker raises a resistant voice against territorial force by claiming that he has three arms, he is instantly reterritorialized in a mental hospital, not because he has a psychological problem but because he does not conform to unitary Republican ideology. After release from the hospital with a new name, “United Ireland,” he then believes that he has eight arms of an “Octopus in search of his octopussy” (l. 39). The people around him, however, keep asking, “Are you United, United? / Are you Ireland, Ireland?” (ll. 35-36) and urge him to accept the ideology of a united Ireland supposedly congruent with his newly assigned identity. Unlike the nationalists engrossed with the head, as described in the poem, “Nights in the Gardens of Clare,” the speaker shows off his eight arms by concealing his head. He tries on purpose to erase his head: “You cannot see my head for my arms, / My snubby head. / My eyeless, mouthless, noseless head. / My blue bag of head” (ll. 42-45). Important for the speaker is not the head but

124 The ideology of the IRA can be compared to that of the 1916 Easter Rising nationalists. Yeats described in “Easter, 1916”: “Hearts with one purpose alone / Through summer and winter seem / Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream” (ll. 41-44). Although the Rising was an expression of national liberation different from the concept of unification of Ireland pursued by the IRA, the two groups of nationalists have a common in their obsession with only one purpose by sacrificing their and others’ lives.
the eight arms. Durcan’s denial of the head, the center of thought, resonates with those of Francis Bacon’s paintings that deliberately obscure human heads. As Deleuze in Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation reads Bacon’s erased head as an expression of his rejection of the brain as the central human part like the CPU of the computer, Durcan’s “eyeless, mouthless, noseless head” (l. 44) can be read as his rejection of the totalitarian thinking of the nationalist. He does not need any head or brain that dominates the rest of the body, eight heterogeneous arms or more. In the misery caused by the stony hearts of bigoted nationalists once depicted by Yeats, Durcan’s becoming-octopus identifies a way out.

In “Woman Washing a Pig”125 from Give Me Your Hand, the speaker as a child is found by his parents playing in muck like a pig. Although his oppressive father, who passionately speaks the Irish language, wants to beat his son, his mother washes the son after dissuading his father from punishing him. That is the moment when the speaker becomes a pig in the painting. The becoming-pig of the speaker, accordingly, results from patriarchal oppression; Durcan’s becoming-pig is deterritorialization, a way out of the range of the father’s voice. Unfortunately, however, his line of flight is blocked in the end as his father reterritorializes him:

And he settled for a lecture on the fundamental
Baseness of little boys, the fundamental
Baseness of swine and how if he ever
Caught me in a pig sty again
He’d trample me to death with his own feet. (II. ll. 28-32)
Durcan’s metamorphosis ends up with reterritorialization as the speaker is threatened again by his oppressive, disciplinarian father. After all, as in Gregor’s death in Kafka, Durcan’s metamorphosis seems to fail to achieve ultimate flight. Durcan’s failed deterritorialization, however, then enters another phase, becoming-painting:

In my pig sty in Trafalgar Square

At twilight

I lie down on the floor.

I let thousands of visitors

From all over London and the world

Walk over me.

Lying down with my pig

I get walked on, stood on,

Stamped on, trampled on.

There is nothing like getting walked on

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126 One of the common misreadings of Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature with regard to a Deleuzean concept of minor literature is that Kafka’s works are the ideal model of a minor literature. As the title indicates, however, his works are not the finished examples of a minor literature but various models “toward” it. A minor literature can be defined in terms of deterritorialization from the Oedipal structure as illustrated in Gregor’s becoming-animal in “The Metamorphosis” as a way out of an oppressive structure. Nonetheless, there is always the danger of the return of Oedipalization. In other words, “The Metamorphosis” is “the exemplary story of a re-Oedipalization” (Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka 14) because Gregor’s becoming-animal, a way of deterritorialization, becomes blocked and fails through his sudden death caused by the apple his sister throws at him. Failing to achieve absolute deterritorialization, Kafka’s “Metamorphosis” always has to run “toward” a minor literature.

127 Neil Jordan’s The Butcher Boy (1998) can be understood in terms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as in Durcan and Kafka’s works. The protagonist acts like a pig by making a terrible mess of his friend’s house and by defecating in the living room. His becoming-pig is caused by several factors including his father’s violence, his socio-economic deprivation, and the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. His metamorphosis, however, ends in failure as he is forcibly hospitalized in a psychiatric clinic and is, thus, reterritorialized.
To teach you perspective and tone. (III. ll. 1-11)

The painting, *Woman Washing a Pig*, was installed as a mosaic on the floor of the National Gallery of London. The speaker, who once behaved as a pig, is now transformed into a painting on which people from all over the world can walk over him. By becoming the painting, by allowing others to trample him, the second metamorphosis of the speaker achieves more significant results than does the first. Although the becoming-pig of the speaker is a failure, his becoming-painting in the gallery allows the speaker to escape not only from the domestic realm in which his father once oppressed him, but also from a rigid concept of self-identity through the transformation from a pig to a painting of a pig. Now, the poet, the speaker, the painting, and the text become intermingled. The speaker disappears into the middle of the painting, which is both the painting on the floor and the text, the poem. Starting from his attempt to escape from his father’s punishment, Durcan’s metamorphosis, as Martiny observes, can be traced back to his father’s overwhelming authoritarianism: “As in Kafka, another father-haunted writer, Durcan imagines this self-annihilating metamorphosis as a reaction to the father’s overweening presence” (“Comic Abjection” 421). To find an escape from his father’s authority, Durcan’s speaker has to conduct several metamorphoses, becoming-animal, becoming-painting, and ultimately becoming-imperceptible insomuch as he loses his own identity boundaries. By blurring all the borders that demarcate each of the realms, Durcan as himself becomes imperceptible as he gets walked on by nameless, countless visitors.

*Becoming-Imperceptible*

Durcanesque becoming-imperceptible via becoming-animal takes place in “A Snail in My Prime” as Durcan’s speaker becomes a snail, slime, and finally disappears. Derived from
Francis Bacon’s statement, “I would like my pictures to look as if a human being had passed between them, like a snail, leaving a trail of the human presence and memory trace of past events as the snail leaves its slime” (qtd. in A Snail in My Prime, no page), Durcan pursues the zone of in-betweenness to the extent that he loses his hardened identity. When he becomes a snail and carries his own shell, “Round and round I trundle my bundle of ego” (l. 67), the shell represents his fixed identity. His becoming-snail, – “I am not a womanizer, / I am a snail” (ll. 80-81), – however, is not complete enough to deterritorialize his identity, so that he should lose his shell to become a slug. To become a slug, he has to burn his shell to ashes: “When it is all over / And my daughters have eaten me, / Cremated me” (ll. 82-84). Cremated and digested, the speaker loses his physical stratum of a snail to the extent that he or his previous shell enters “into the bloodstream of sea lions” (l. 94). Finally, he becomes a slug by deserting his shell:

Slug love:

Older than the pyramids

Christ Jesus

I am a snail in my prime. (ll. 100-03)

The snail in its prime is a slug that has no shell defining its own territory or identity. What Durcan desires now is not a snail with its shell of callous identity but a slug with potentials to shape itself into various assemblages. Ruth Padel argues that Durcan’s poems are “not interested in snail as self-protection. Instead, they care for ‘slime’ – that pre-Socratic vision from the end of the poem” (131). What is primal matter for Durcan, not in the sense of chronology, but in the sense of identity, is to enter the zone before a snail forms a hard, irrevocable shell of identity. When the speaker says of a slug born long before the ancient Egypt or the birth of Christ, his
concern is not about returning to a certain period of time in a nostalgic manner. As Durcan constantly refuses to accept a nostalgia to which Irish nationalists were morbidly held on, the speaker looks forward to the era of the prime, neither in a chronological sense nor in a fundamentalist perspective in which there was the origin of the identity. Given that Ducan has consistently shown his atemporal tendency and followed Kavanagh’s anti-primitivism, it is certain that the words, “Older than” (l. 101) do not signify a certain period of historical time but the moment when no one can be defined by any cultural, religious standards. In that sense, Durcan’s becoming-slug resonates with Deleuzean becoming:

Accordingly, the term we would prefer for this form of evolution between heterogeneous terms is “involution,” on the condition that involution is in no way confused with regression. Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative. To regress is to move in the direction of something less differentiated. But to involve is to form a block that runs its own line “between” the terms in play and beneath assignable relations. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 238-39)

Durcan’s slug is by no means a regression to a form of less differentiation, a simple ameba-like organism. When Durcan underscores the snail in its prime, it has more to do with an involution in which no outside measurements can define the new entity, the slug without its shell. The involution of Durcan’s slug serves as potentiality harbored in the Deleuzean concept of Body without Organs.\(^{128}\) For there are no demarcated borders in Body without Organs, but everything pushes toward heterogeneous potentials and multiplicities, Durcan’s images of slug “A Snail in

\(^{128}\) “The body without organs is an egg […] traversed by gradients marking the transitions and the becomings, the destinations of the subject developing along these particular vectors” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 19).
My Prime” as well as of chrysalis in “The Butterfly Collector of Corofin” represent full potentials of becoming.

Durcan’s becoming-multiplicities via Body without Organ can be found in various changes in a speaker’s perspectives. His poems display multiple perspectives by shifting from one to another. Starting from a perspective of an object on the kitchen counter, “Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus” changes in its viewpoint to the maid’s. As in Paul Cézanne’s still-life works that retain different perspectives on a canvas, multiple perspectives in Durcan’s poems serve to blur rigid boundaries of identity. Among others, “The Grote Kerk, Haarelm,” an ekphrasis in Give Me Your Hand, shows multiple voices as well as metamorphoses of the speaker. Consisting of four stanzas, the poem contains four heterogeneous perspectives of the transformative speaker. In the first stanza, the speaker is a dog whose father is a man praying in his pew in the church. Becoming a dog, the speaker talks about his relationship with his father. In the second stanza, the speaker in the father’s voice describes his son and daughter. The daughter appears in the next stanza shelling peas in the church. Finally, in the last stanza, the speaker expresses the plurality of his soul, which becomes a spaceship, a nosedrip chandelier, a work of art colored in black and white, and/or a hospital on a city street. Not only is the speaker transformed into an animal or a building, but he represents a diversity of voices in one poem to the extent that he loses his fundamental one-single self-identity.

As for the loss of self, his ekphrasis of Jack Butler Yeats’s The Cavalier’s Farewell to His Steed grasps the moment of absolute deterritorialization, the ultimate goal of becoming-other. Yeats’s painting shows in its distinctive style smeared outlines of the figures; that image

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129 After Pieter Saenredam’s The Grote Kerk, Haarlem.
130 See Fig. 12 (Appendix).
resonates with Durcanesque becoming of hybridity that crosses over various identities not limited to a certain time or place. In his becoming, the speaker’s body cannot sustain even its own physicality by accepting other’s blood: “Blood transfusion; / Watching somebody else’s blood drip into me” (ll. 35-36). The speaker also bids farewell to everything: “Farewell to morality. / Farewell to identity” (ll. 11-12). More important, the speaker, as poet, proclaims, “Farewell to Poetry!” (l. 45). By denying the irresistible territory of poetry, Durcan as the poet of this poem hopes to disappear and not to hold on to authorship. Durcan talks about losing himself in an interview with John Knowles:

To me, all great art amounts to the death of the ego … The problem of the business of writing is that you start or are stuck with the ego, “I this,” “I that,” but if you can get going, suddenly you lose consciousness of yourself, an hour has passed and you don’t know it. (22)

What is indispensable to his concept of art is forgetting about oneself, the authorship. That is why Durcan appropriates multiple voices of women, animals, and others so long as he can erase himself as an author, another majoritarian, from the text. Thus, for Durcan, “To be a writer is to be nothing” (“The Toll Bridge” IV. l. 22). What Durcan as an author wants is become imperceptible, impersonal by slipping into other beings as in blood transfusion. It is important to note here that Eamon Grennan reads Durcan’s poems from the perspective of John Keats’s notion of negative capability.131 By insisting on Durcan’s necessity of the “willingness to exist in doubt and uncertainty [which] is the necessary counterpoint to Yeatsian certainties” (62), Grennan compares Durcan’s openness to all possibilities to Keats’s belief in the state of

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131 When Keats was opposed to those who systematically categorized knowledge, fact, and reason, he believed that a poet should pursue the state of uncertainty: “I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Keats, The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats 277).
uncertainty. He also attends to Keats’s notion of the poietical character\textsuperscript{132} that has no self, no identity in reference to Durcan’s self-disappearance. The Grennan reading of Durcan through Keats can resonate with Deleuzean becoming, in that they both strive for the condition of self-renunciation, absolute deterritorialization. The speaker in “The Knucklebone Player”\textsuperscript{133} in \textit{Crazy About Women} experiences his death and sees someone playing with dice made of his knucklebones. Even in the poem “My Daughter Siabhra in Moscow, 19 August 1991,” the speaker wants to be completely erased on his deathbed: “Dear Daughter – After all that has transpired, / All that I aspire to be is Nothing. / So, at my deathbed, you will smile: / You Nothing you!” (ll. 14-17) or “Beloved daughters, I would like to be cremated” (l. 1) by hoping to be “The thing in the end being The Mixture” (l. 59) as stated in the poem “A Cold Wind Blew in from Lake Geneva.”

In “Give Him Bondi,” that speaker also desires to be nothing:

Praying once for all

I am gutted of ego;

That I have at last learnt

The necessity of being nothing.

The XYZ of being nobody.

In so far as I care

\textsuperscript{132} “It is not itself – it has no self – it enjoys light and shade […] A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity – he is continually in for and filling some other body […] the poet has […] no identity […] When I am in a room with people […] the identity of everyone in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated –” (Keats, \textit{The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats} 336-37)

\textsuperscript{133} After Gustav Natorp’s \textit{The Knucklebone Player}. 
May I care nothing for myself,

Care everything for you. (ll. 524-31)

It is impossible to overemphasize that Durcan is by no means led to pessimism, since his necessity of being nothing comes not from his resignation but from his lesson of flexible identity. Moreover, the speaker thinks “Of being eaten alive / Under bottomless ceilings” (ll. 555-56) or that “I am come into deep waters / Where the floods overflow me” (ll. 566-67) both of which are associated with the image of drowning. Durcan’s drowning, nevertheless, has little to do with suicidal pessimism because one of the main reasons Durcan tries to erase all his boundaries of identity is found in his reaction to rigid identity politics of the nation-state as discussed earlier. Instead, that drowning image is very similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of Virginia Woolf with regard to the necessity of becoming imperceptible:

She [Virginia Woolf] says that it is necessary to “saturate every atom,”[^134] and to do that it is necessary to eliminate, to eliminate all that is resemblance and analogy, but also “to put everything into it”: eliminate everything that exceeds the moment, but put in everything that it includes – and the moment is not the instantaneous, it is the haecceity into which one slips and that slips into other haecceities by transparency. To be present at the dawn of the world. Such is the link between imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality – the three virtues. (A Thousand Plateaus 280)

That is the moment of absolute deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari pursue. A subject can become imperceptible, indiscernible, and impersonal as he loses his inveterate identity and

[^134]: “The idea has come to me that what I want to do is to saturate every atom.” (Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf 209)
enters the zone of in-beweeness in which there is no more analogical, symbolical relationship with the self and the other. That is the true moment of Deleuzean becoming, the goal of a minor literature. Thus, there is no reason that readers should read Durcan’s text as pessimistic resignation of his life as a marginalized minority. Durcan’s becoming-imperceptible as well as other becomings is rather part of Durcan’s experimentation in how to escape from the inflexibility of identity construction.

By becoming woman, animal, and even nothing, based on his concept of fluidity of identity, Durcan pursues a deliquescence, as Maurice Elliott notes, which “discourages the rigidity of borders and division, be they social, cultural, geographical or, indeed, sexual” (138). In that sense, Durcan’s poems can be compared to the “Circe” episode in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, in which various characters metamorphose into other beings, even beyond sexual and biological boundaries, by becoming woman or animal. Unlike traditional psychoanalytic discourses on the “Circe” episode based on the Oedipal triangle of “Daddy-Mommy-Me” that generates a guilty conscience, Bloom ceaselessly pleads that “I am wrongfully accused” *(U 15.762-63)*, “I am a man misunderstood. I am being made a scapegoat of” *(U 15.775-76)*, and “Slander, the viper, has wrongfully accused me” *(U 15.1770-71)*. Suzette A. Henke suggests a new reading of the “Circe” episode different from psychoanalytic interpretations. She contends that “Circe” questions Bloom’s status in an Oedipal configuration that constructs Bloom’s manhood: “By the end of the ‘Circe’ episode, Bloom has apparently been purged of both guilt and sexual humiliation in an odyssey that resembles Deleuzean schizoanalysis more than Freudian

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135 With a psychoanalytic approach, Mark Shechner analyzes “Circe” as representing the most anxiety-producing features of Joyce’s psychosexual nature. In particular, as to a prostitute, Zoe’s snatching of the potato given to Bloom by his mother as a talisman, Shechner states that it serves him “as a symbolic and psychological connection with what little remains of the past, and its loss is a symbolic castration and separation from Amor matris. His momentary unwillingness either to struggle to get it back or to relinquish it manfully is a tacit submission to pornocracy, government by whores” (109).
psychoanalysis” (120). While the latter establishes a rigid sexual identity domestically educated and confirmed, the former, always looking for a way out, tends to escape from the masterful gender definition. Moreover, unlike interpretations of psychoanalysis and symbolism both of which are based on similarities between a depicted object and an intended meaning, the “Circe” episode transcends a symbolically platitudinous relationship between the two and, rather, produces creative rhizomic assemblages in which diverse characters change their identities as they encounter each other. In this respect, “Circe” has no psychological, symbolic meanings, yet is a surface on which meaning plays (Monaco 119). In other words, “Circe” is a pure field of possibility, which enables unregulated assemblages among human beings, animals, and even the dead, as anticipated by Stephen when he walks on the beach in the previous episode: “God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain” (U 3.477-79). Thus, what we need in our reading of “Circe” with regard to Durcanesque metamorphosis is to investigate its kaleidoscopic changes in perspectives, rather than other psychological or symbolic readings.

Among the six principles of a rhizome proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus, 136 which forms the fundamental structure of a minor literature, the principle of asignifying rupture can be applied to this episode. That is the principle that denies a fixed essential subjectivity produced by a signification process, such as “A is like B.” The more diverse subjects cross over their bodies in “Circe,” the more difficult their significations become, since the formula of symbolism confronts sudden, unexpected assemblages in this episode. Bloom’s heterogeneous transformations range from a politician, a criminal, an emperor to a mother, the beagle’s metamorphosis into Paddy Dignam. There are few psychological

136 Principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography, and decalcomania (7-25).
interrelations among those metamorphoses. In addition, Bloom’s father, Rudolph “with feeble vulture talons” (U 15.259-60) does not always signify an Oedipal father’s authority, which subdues his son. The imperialism of Oedipus always territorializes other possible meanings into its own realm, that is, the classic family triangle. They are just a free assemblage that does not need an “A equals B” relationship: “How is that possible? […] / By metempsychosis” (U 15.1220-26). The means by which the beagle turns into Dignam is nothing but metempsychosis that problematizes a traditional concept of subjectivity and generates pure possibilities of subjectivity.

Durcan shares multiplicity and flexibility of identity with Joyce through his becoming-other. By transcending unitary and hardened territories of identity, Durcan and Joyce proceed toward a minoritarian literature. Eamon Grennan compares Joyce’s Bloom in the “Circe” episode who has openness to the other with Durcan. By pointing out Durcan’s distinctive style of rendering multiple voices, he observes:

_Ulysses_ must also have prompted Durcan’s natural inclination towards the metamorphic. In the Circe/ Nighttown chapter, metamorphosis is everywhere […] A ceaseless, dreamlike fluency of matter and character dissolves all borders, rattles all categories out of themselves, so the certain concrete world becomes infinitely plastic, fluid, and uncertain, and the borders dissolve even between such stubbornly separate entities as this life and the next world, or male and female genders. (69)

Once Joyce in _A Portrait_ first took the line of flight from national or religious orthodoxy, the nets of “of nationality, language, religion” (220) and from the rigid concept of identity as
illustrated in *Ulysses*, Durcan follows that line of flight through his various becomings, to the extent that he forsakes his own identity as an author. Because Durcan rejects “self-centeredness in favor of ‘the great Third Person that is in all of us’” (Lynch 144, emphasis added), his speakers are able to transform into various characters who enter the zone of in-betweenness. All in all, Durcanesque metamorphosis, starting from the search for a way out, ultimately problematizes the concept of a single, unified sense of identity. In standing “outside” Irish majoritarian identity politics, Durcan produces more creative potential for poetic genre and identity through his ekphrasis and experiments of becoming. Durcan’s minoritarian literature, thus, through its hybrid characteristics, creates new people and becomings by transcending majoritarian literature/ideology constructed by the nation-state.
Conclusion

One of the recurring questions as I conduct comparative research between Ireland and Korea is how we can defend national sovereignty strongly enough to guard against colonial power without falling into rigid identity politics? Although the two countries have many things in common, the processes of national emancipation were completely different. Whereas the Irish gained national independence by themselves through the War of Independence, national liberation for the Koreans was given by foreigners at the end of World War II when the Japanese emperor proclaimed Japan’s unconditional capitulation after the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. After the liberation war, Ireland established the Irish Free State in 1922 as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth. On the contrary, after World War II in August 1945, the American and Soviet military government that co-occupied the Korean peninsula hugely affected Korean political reconstruction, which was another foreign occupation. As Ireland and Korea went through different paths in the course of national liberation, they took different steps in ousting colonial vestiges. Ireland was able to maintain its cultural or religious identities, such as the Gaelic language and Catholicism, regardless of whether those characteristics have been politically invented. The rigid identity politics that founded the Irish nation-state, however, caused serious bloody conflicts by dividing Ireland into the North and the South. In contrast, in failing to liquidate Japanese colonial remnants, South Korea has been led by the pro-Americans and pro-Japanese, who reappeared by the American military government after World War II. It embraced new American colonialism in a new angle of an ideological war against the communist regime of North Korea. Because of the lack of legitimate national identity, the founders of the South Korea had to compensate their complex by becoming ardent anti-communists. At the same time, North Korea fell into bigoted identity fundamentalism with the
cause of anti-colonial nationalism as proved in the history of the Irish Free State. In that regard, a comparative research of Ireland and Korea poses a dilemma between securing national identity and avoiding doctrines of identity. While the Irish can warn the Koreans how dangerous it is to hold on to some rigid political identities, the Koreans can give the Irish a lesson regarding the necessity of keeping national identity in a creative way.

In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept of territorialization, I discovered suggestions for creative ways that we can maintain national identity without committing the violence of identity politics, which establishes the identity of an individual or a nation. Because human desire, by nature, different from a psychoanalytic definition, has deterritorial energies, we restlessly search for a way out of oppressive authority, as perpetuated by colonial power or state apparatuses. Every deterritorialization however, is not an aimless escape but results in reterritorialization that grants new identity. If the once oppressed nation of Ireland by British colonial domination successfully deterritorialized itself through the War of Independence, it was reterritorialized during and after the heady debates on nationalist identity politics that insisted upon and mandated certain essential characteristics of Irishness. Against that new territorializing force, Durcan and the rest of what has been called the “blank generation” in Ireland have used their deterritorial voices to create a less-oppressive and less-fascist concept of new national identity. In perceiving that they aspire to an alternative community, I borrowed Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of minor literature, in which the consciousness of the oppressed group is reflected, and applied the term in a contemporary Irish circumstance through the eyes of Paul Durcan. As illustrated in recent tragic history in Northern Ireland, the once oppressed nation under British colonialism suffers from the violence of identity politics by producing new social minoritarians. I supposed that the Deleuzean concept of minor literature can be applied not only
to the oppressed “nation,” but also to any discriminated groups of people, such as those who are excluded from a newly majoritarianized postcolonial Ireland. Durcan is the one who expresses different perspectives on the concept of nation and identity; because of that, he has lived as an exile in his own country, in which Irish majoritarian identity is thoroughly defined by the Celtic-Catholic-nationalist rubrics. My investigation thus focused on how Durcan challenges (deterritorializes) the majoritarian identity politics that founded the Irish nation-state, and what alternatives (reterritorializations) Durcan suggests to that ideologically rigid society.

To demonstrate how Durcan fulfills his minoritarian literary tasks, I appropriated creative theories of Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-Oedipus and becoming-other, Richard Kearney’s postnationalism, and postmodern hybridity, all of which raise question about a unified concept of identity. There are, in fact, gaps between those theories and Durcan’s poetry, for example between Deleuzean becoming and the poetic speakers’ metamorphoses. Although Durcan often adopts becoming-woman by means of transvestism, Deleuze and Guattari consider it a way of imitation, not a true becoming. Nevertheless, the main function of Durcan’s transvestism resonates with Deleuzean philosophy, that is, a deterritorialization of majoritarian identity politics. The function of Deleuzean anti-Oedipus was applied to Durcan’s criticism of his father and the state apparatuses. As the main concern for Deleuze and Guattari is to reveal a complicit relationship between patriarchal authority and state bureaucracy and apparatus, Durcan persistently delves into his father’s connivance with state power. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not discuss the concept of postnationalism, Durcan’s search of postnationalist utopia has a deterritorializational function as found in Deleuzean minoritarian literature. Although Durcan has not professed himself to be a postnationalist, postnationalist utopian hope and aura exuded from his poems are significant themes in Durcan’s minoritarian literature in deterritorializing
tasks. In addition, the concept of hybridity is a thematic driving force of Durcan’s minoritarian literature. As postmodern theories celebratorily embrace the concept of hybridity, Durcan actively appropriates it inasmuch as he develops the hybrid genre of ekphrasis between visual arts and literature in which the combination of the temporal and the spatial, the public and the private produce creative assemblages. My application of those theories served as methods to demonstrate how Durcan challenges the feebleness of Irish national identity constructed by the nationalists and their state apparatuses.

Because Durcan suggests a new model for Irish nationalism, that is, postnationalism, his poetry may sound judgmental and critical of nationalism. For example, when he condemns his father for insisting on using the Gaelic language, he ignores the significance of the native language, which can serve as a critical element of the cultural identity of a nation, since it unites the people, records their experiences, and captures the thoughts of the native Irish. In his rejection of Irish nationalism, Durcan also condemned the violence and terrorism so crucial to nineteenth- and twentieth-century diehard nationalists. For example, Durcan has no problem taking down the heroes and martyrs of those generations, so venerated by rabid nationalists. In one of his weekly radio broadcasts, Durcan astonishingly considers Patrick Pearse, leader of the 1916 Easter Rising, akin with 9/11 terrorist Muhammad Atta. His iconoclastic evaluation of Pearse was obviously startling enough to challenge the violence of the nationalist ideology that eliminated differences and diversities in the Irish mind. Although Pearse and Atta used violence to achieve their own political goals, their two reactions can be differentiated in that the former chose the militant resistance under a direct occupation of colonial power. It is no doubt that the nationalists relied on a too romantic concept of nation inspired by the French Revolution and republicanism. Durcan, however, tended to ignore their struggle to overcome the devastated
reality, under which their families and friends were exploited. It is understandable that Durcan noticed the violence of the contemporary IRA in their romantic, chauvinistic terrorism, so that he criticized that romantic origin of nationalism in the Easter Rising. However, it would have been almost impossible for the Irish to achieve political autonomy from colonial authority without exerting physical force. On the contrary, Durcan’s peaceful and artistic approaches to authority seem ineffective under a colonial circumstance. As Irish postcolonialist scholars have reevaluated the Easter Rising not as a homogeneous concept of nationalism but as an ideological gel of heterogeneous flows of social movements as discussed earlier, the militant resistance against colonial power needs further discussion with a more considerate understanding of the era. Moreover, his postnationalist suggestions of hybrid Irelands may come across as too ideal. As he aspires to a more European community out of a narrow boundary of Ireland, the European Union can be one of the ideal models for his postnationalism. The contemporary economic crisis in the EU, however, shows that the postnationalist community has many unresolved issues in reality, such as unequal power and economic relations in the EU. In addition, Durcan’s alternatives to engaging in or being seduced by nationalist identity politics – such as idling in a pub or dancing, instead – may be called into question with regard to their political effectiveness in reality, just as one might question the effectiveness of W. H. Auden’s sitting “in one of the dives / On Fifty-second Street” the day Germany invaded Poland (“September 1, 1939” ll. 1-2). When the alternatives Durcan offers are regarded as artistic ways to promote postnationalism, they can affect the inflexible consciousness of the hegemonic nationalists. Nevertheless, art is also actively appropriated not only by postnationalists like Durcan, but also by dominant nationalists who utilize it as propaganda. In that sense, art per se is a matter of appropriation, not simply a
rosy alternative, and this is where the cultural importance and political significance of Durcan’s work reveals itself manifestly as a project.

Despite some shortcomings that might be found in Durcan’s work and project, my study on Durcan tries to find his place, his standing, in a new minoritarian tradition in Irish literature. Just as postcolonialist scholar David Lloyd reevaluated James Clarence Mangan’s political significance under colonial domination in terms of minor literature, I trace a new origin of minoritarian literature back to Francis Stuart, Patrick Kavanagh, and James Joyce who lived as minoritarians on the verge of the establishment of the nation-state. As the newly established nation-state liberated from colonial power became a new majoritarian group, it was a significant task to find new minoritarians buried in the self-celebratory nation-state. In addition, because the concept of minoritarianism is not simply limited to the opposition between colonizer and colonized, I want to expand that concept to a postcolonial circumstance in which Durcan and his predecessors as well as his contemporaries in the blank generation became wandering minoritarians. The feelings of a minoritarian cannot be attributed solely to father-son conflict but to a broader power relation in which the father connived with the state apparatus. I read Durcan as an Anti-Oedipus who recognizes the complicity between his father and the state, through which he can challenge ideological state apparatuses. If previous studies on Durcan separately dealt with Durcan’s minoritarian feelings with regard to his difficult relationship with his father and his criticism of state apparatuses, mainly because of psychoanalytic approaches by which critics of Durcan often took no account of state power immersed in the domestic structure, my argument on Durcan’s anti-Oedipus filled the gaps between the father-son conflict and state power. In particular, Durcan’s awareness of the status of his father as a scapegoat exploited by
the state served to transcend a well known logic of psychoanalysis, that is, a son’s antagonism against his father and his father’s legacies.

As Durcan’s anti-Oedipal task is not just about defeating his father, his postnationalist project is not also about liquidating the nation’s past. Although Durcan has often been hastily considered a revisionist who condemns the inflexible ideology of nationalists and their violence, I have tried to demonstrate that he has more sophisticated viewpoints on local places in which he finds utopian aura than a revisionist has. In addition, his pursuit of utopia can be distinguished from Irish postcolonialist approaches. Whereas the postcolonialist critics presuppose utopia in a fixed place such as the west or pre-colonial time to return to, Durcan has no concept of utopia existing in a certain time/place. Durcan, however, goes along with postcolonial atemporal historicity that resists the nationalist progressive historicity that teleologically assumes the establishment of the nation-state based on an ethic of hard work. In Durcan’s postnationalism, he overcomes identity fundamentalism through atemporality and singularity. To further his task, Durcan freely conducts poetic experiments of metamorphoses, which call into question an immutable national identity. I note, in particular, a similarity between Joyce and Durcan whose desire for transformation can suggest a new motif in Irish literature, a tradition of metamorphosis. Along the lines of medieval magicians who searched for a way out, becoming-other has served to resist majoritarian ideology of an era, such as that of theologians who had hegemony in medieval times. In an Irish circumstance, the theme of becoming in minoritarian literature can thus create new assemblages that cannot be defined by dominant ideology of an era.

137 Although the Oedipus complex, from a Freudian perspective, disappears around the age of six in either way of repression or identification, the antagonism can be revealed as the return of the repressed.
This study on Durcan can contribute an alternative perspective to contemporary Irish studies. With scholars from the various fields and disciplines that make up Irish studies, scholars following revisionism in particular, and postcolonial studies especially, have retained conflicting points of view on nationalism, the post-independent Irish state, and modernization. While revisionists are dedicated to debunking reactionary militant nationalism, scholars in postcolonial studies have sought to discover various forms of subaltern social struggles organized under the rubric of nationalism. Revisionist historians assume that revising Irish history starts with the discarding of old myths of “romantic Ireland” with their iconoclastic tendencies. In stressing the obsession with the bloody sacrifice of the nationalists, revisionists try to expose pathologically violent aspects of nationalism. In this regard, Durcan’s poetry often has been discussed from a revisionist point of view. Irish postcolonial scholars, however, have considered nationalism contextually as the complex outcome of diverse local interactions. Unlike the homogeneous concept of the revisionists’ views on nationalism, postcolonial scholars argue that nationalism served the diverse representations of subaltern movements, such as anti-colonialism, socialism, and feminism. Whereas revisionists have been obsessed with the “high” history of nation and state formation from the perspective of political elites, postcolonial scholars have sought to explore various forms of non-elite histories or subaltern social struggles. That is the point that resonates with Durcan’s minoritarian spirit. Thus, by examining both the realms of revisionism and postcolonialism, my study of Durcan’s poetry can offer us a more coherent dialectical stance in regard to the binary academic opposition between revisionism and postcolonialism in Irish studies. Because one of the strengths of Deleuzean philosophy is not about reversing the master-slave/colonizer-colonized relationship but about inventing a new people beyond any such oppositions, Durcan’s postnationalist minoritarian literature can open a new field of discourse on
Irish studies and move practitioners beyond the scholarly polarity that separates revisionism and postcolonialism.

In order for postnationalism to become a fruitful alternative to contemporary Irish studies, however, it must acknowledge its innate weaknesses. When postnationalists willingly embrace postmodernist virtues and prioritize notions of hybridity and singularity, which call into question an inflexible concept of identity and a negligence of social minorities, they should understand the weaknesses inherent in those theoretical approaches. For example, some hybridities can bring about fatal effects on society, as Durcan showed earlier in “Backside to the Wind” – “Anglo-American mores” (l. 35) and “the Japanese invasion” (l. 37) of materialism. Durcan, however, does not accept all kinds of hybrid Irelands; equally important, Deleuze and Guattari stress that not all deterritorialization is good. Hybridity or deterritorialization is a matter of appropriation. As for the question of singularity, it is worth noting David Harvey’s warning about the weaknesses in postmodernism:

The third response has been to find an intermediate niche for political and intellectual life which spurns grand narrative but which does cultivate the possibility of limited action. This is the progressive angle to postmodernism which emphasizes community and locality, place and regional resistances, social movements, respect for otherness; but it is hard to stop the slide into parochialism, myopia, and self-referentiality in the face of the universalizing force of capital circulation. At worst, it brings us back to narrow and sectarian politics; it should not be forgotten, this was the path that allowed Heidegger to reach his accommodation with Nazism, and which continued to inform the rhetoric of fascism. (351)
Clearly, too much emphasis on singularity or otherness in postmodernism and postnationalism in defense of oppressive state power can cause not only the continuation of the socio-economic isolation of minorities but also a return to sectarian politics against which Durcan has long struggled. If Durcan had not been able to directly challenge the violence of the IRA in the name of respect for otherness, he would have fallen into the weakness of postmodern otherness that Harvey indicates above. Although postnationalists basically show respect for otherness, they do not indiscriminately sanction all differences. Durcan’s prompt reaction to the injustice of an illegal execution of a Nigerian activist in “56 Kent Saro-Wiwa Park” and his candid criticism of Gerry Adams and his IRA terrorism in “Omagh” aptly illustrate that postnationalists have a discerning perspective on the difference between an absoluteness of other and social injustice.

As I hope this study has demonstrated convincingly, when Irish postnationalism actively appropriates hybridity and utopia, it can produce more diverse discourses within the field of Irish studies. Cosmopolitanism, social justice, the peace process, even the simplicity of “just getting along” become agenda items as opposed to the old “values” of violence, sectarianism, and bigotry. Although Durcan deliberately dismantles old Irish martyrs and rebel heroes and nationalist rhetorical exaggeration from their protected pedestals, it is clear that he remains romantic about his nation’s future. Just as the French Revolution and the American Revolution were replete with utopian desires for a republican ideal, Durcan glimpses a utopian community in which he and new peoples celebrate the coming of a new era as peaceful freedom fighters, “who had guts, took action, and stayed,” “danced to ring upon ring,” and “[they] sang: As if a rock were naked” (“O Westport in the Light of Asia Minor” ll. II. 17, 28, 31). Durcan’s project, using minoritarian literature to forge a postnationalist Ireland, not only recreates and amplifies what Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus vowed to create in the smithy of his soul – the uncreated
conscience of his race – but also offers a twenty-first century “uncreated conscience” for Ireland and other nations struggling to move past nationalism. In that sense, he creates new assemblages of people to come.
WORKS CITED


APPENDIX (Selected paintings cited in the text)

Fig. 1. Ronald Brooks Kitaj. *The Autumn of Central Paris (after Walter Benjamin)*. 1972-73.

“Walter Benjamin was a German-Jewish writer who raised the work of ‘criticism’ to its highest levels in our time. He used strange and difficult methods of bringing together images from texts and from the world, not uninfluenced by surrealism … As to the general composition of this picture, I had in mind not only Benjamin’s own MONTAGE methods (which he considered an ‘agitational usage’) but also other models in his parlance … The COLLAGE implication in Benjamin’s treatment of THE BARRICADE is a paramount source for this composition … Benjamin cites barricade metaphors over and over again … There is another influence behind the PILE-UP (BARRICADE) of figures in this picture: THE MOVIE POSTER which arranged figures in this way through many years. This source is not exactly in Benjamin but it does accord with his interest in DREAMKITSCHE arising from ‘shocklike flashes’ which he saw the surrealists derive from obsolete popular imagery…” (Kitaj 19-20).
Fig. 2. Francis Bacon. *Study of a Figure in a Landscape*. 1952. (Left below)

Fig. 3. William Mulready. *Bathers Surprised*. 1852-53. (right above)

Fig. 4. Jan Victors. *The Levite and His Concubine at Gibeah*. c. 1650. (below)
Fig. 5. The Master of the Life of the Virgin. *The Presentation in the Temple*. c. 1460-75.

Fig. 6. Chaim Soutine. *Man Walking the Stairs*. 1922-23.
Fig. 7. Diego Velazquez de Silva. *Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus*. c. 1617-18.

Fig. 8. Jan Gossaert (Mabuse). *The Adoration of the Kings*. c. 1510-15.
Fig. 9. Austrian School. *The Separation of the Apostles*. c. 15th century.

Fig. 10. Conrad Faber. *Katherina Knoblauch*. 1532.
Fig. 11. Boris Anrep. *Woman Washing a Pig*. c. 1928.

Fig. 12. Jack Butler Yeats. *The Cavalier’s Farewell to His Steed*. 1949.