

## The Liminal Irish Feminine Identity in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's Post-mnemonic Novels

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### Abstract

The question of Irish feminine identity has been the preoccupation of the contemporary Irish novelist Éilís Ní Dhuibhne (b. 1954). This article takes her two mnemonically significant novels, *The Dancers Dancing* (1999) and *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007) to examine the formation of Irish feminine identity in a transition from the late twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first. The article argues that Ní Dhuibhne achieves a seemingly innovative approach in defining the *liminal* Irish feminine identity via postmemory through the employment of landscape and folklore in its relation to female corporeal politics and female identity formation in Ireland. At the same time, Ní Dhuibhne through the application of landscape and folklore as Stieglerian technics in Irish feminine identity formation achieves epiphylogenetic memory that politically subverts the rigid notions of Irish feminine identity and makes room for the emerging Irish feminine identity at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Liminality, Irish feminine identity, Stiegler's technics, Epiphylogenetic memory

### Introduction

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, an outstanding Irish novelist, short story writer, and a folklorist, was born in 1954 in Dublin, Ireland. She holds a PhD in folklore and her scholarship in folklore and literature has informed all her works. She writes in both English and Irish. The article will examine the two most significant novels by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, *The Dancers Dancing* (1999) and *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007).

In *The Dancers Dancing* (1999), the story is narrated through a third-person point of view except the last part 'Now' which is related by the first-person point of view. It narrates the story of some teenage girls going on a camp in summer of 1972 to Gaeltacht, Donegal, an area where the inhabitants speak Irish, to learn Irish. The main character is Orla, a thirteen-year-old girl who has a very reserved personality. There are five scenes in the novel which makes Orla's coming of age complete when she goes to the burn, a small stream. In each scene, Orla is determined to get to the end of the burn even though she has been warned by the resident family that she mustn't go there because it is dangerous. However, Orla goes there and each time she overcomes a fear of herself

and gets to know herself and the world around more. Indeed, it is in the fifth scene of the burn that Orla gets her period for the first time. Her facing menstruation shows her consternation about it. Another problem she has to tackle with is to encounter her Auntie Annie in the village. Elizabeth, Orla's mother, has already given Orla some stockings as a gift to present it to Annie. But Orla does not like Auntie's traditional ways and her overall appearance which is why she has not told anyone that she has some relations there. She finally musters courage to meet her with her friend and roommate Aisling. After her first period, she starts to notice Michael, a peasant boy in the village who is about two years older than she. She falls in love with him and even though her love is very short-lived and the next week she will have to leave the village to home, she still remembers him. The point of view is changed into first-person and we see Orla who is now mature and apparently middle-aged and who has become a writer, telling us that her mother Elizabeth is dead and her father lives in another city. She is married and has children. While she is lounging at the beach it seems that she sees someone just like Michael with another woman and a child. Orla the writer reveals to us that her love for Michael has not diminished and she craves to see him again.

*Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007) is narrated from third-person point view. Even though the story revolves around the character Anna, an aspiring writer of some kind, there are other main characters that we delve into their lives by an omniscient narrator. The story for the most part deals with the lives of contemporary Irish writers and their struggle to pave their ways in the rat race of publishing industry to become famous and wealthy. The main characters who we read about their lives are Anna, Kate, Leo, Vincy. Anna sees Vincy Erikson, a journalist, in one of the book launches and they both develop a romantic relationship even though Anna is married. Kate, who is Anna's sister-in-law, the sister of Anna's brother's wife, has a crush on Vincy Erikson but she is rejected by him. In the meantime, Leo Kavanagh, an environmentalist, who lost his parents in a car accident, runs a group to stop the ever-increasing accidents in the roads of Ireland. Leo is in love with Kate. When Kate is rejected by Vincy, she has a mental breakdown and so she is sent to a mental hospital. Leo who lives in the countryside visits Kate and so they start to develop a romantic relationship and finally get married. Anna gets pregnant by Vincy and decides to leave her family, her husband Alex and her son Rory. However, every time she gets cold shoulders from Vincy who doesn't want to lead a conventional life. Anna gives birth to a girl and asks Vincy to find a house in order to move in together to no avail. Finally, when she is in her friend's book launch and when she finds out that her friend Lilian has already plagiarized her novel, she runs out in distress and in a surreal way she bumps into Vincy in the street and sees him with another woman journalist. In her quarrel and row with Vincy near a train station, she sees that Vincy tumbles on the rail and his head cut from his body. However, when she wakes up in the hospital, she sees her husband Alex and her son Rory on the bed beside her. Alex tells Anna that Vincy is not dead and she just imagines all those things and that Vincy has gone to Iraq to cover war. In desperation, Anna runs out of the hospital and finds a haven in a far-off place to start writing again. When Kate and Leo marry happily, they settle to live in the country in Leo's house. Kate gets pregnant and one afternoon when she goes for shopping, she has an accident with a truck and is killed.

The two novels of *The Dancers Dancing* (1999) and *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007) manifest this transition of Irish feminine identity as a technical movement or tendency. This results in a liminal feminine identity which best represents the contemporary Irish feminine identity. To analyze the concept, the article will examine some of the researches done on Éilís Ní Dhuibhne in

general, and the two novels in terms of memory or postmemory and its relation to liminal identity in particular. In addition, the concepts of liminality, landscape, and folklore *vis-à-vis* Ní Dhuibhne's work will also be considered.

As an heir to a long Irish literary tradition, Ní Dhuibhne also revises the meaning and the significance of the past, the West and the *Gaeltacht*, and strives to associate and redefine them in their interconnections with the human geography, the landscape, and the Irish folklore. Ní Dhuibhne's perspective towards the Irish feminine identity pursues Edna O'Brien's path of women's emancipation in Ireland particularly when O'Brien published her controversial *The Country Girls Trilogy* in the 1960s Ireland which depicts women's explicit sexual affairs in their everyday lives (Reader, 2001, p. 10). Ní Dhuibhne in the Celtic Tiger and post-Celtic Tiger era was in a state of transition which introduces and defines the new emergent Irish feminine identity formation in process which marks its defining nature as liminal. Ní Dhuibhne in her 1990s and 2000s novels succeeds in achieving the liminal feminine subject, that is, neither belonging to the Irish tradition nor the West's conception of female subjectivity.

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne was described as "a folklorist" and her works "feature strong, sometimes eccentric, contemporary women who stand up for their beliefs despite the consequences. ... her stories focus on the individual and choice, tying the present to the Irish past" (Perry, 1993, p. 245). It is interesting that in her interview she remembers how her father used to tell stories of the past, about his own life. How she assimilates those stories as a kind of memory, or as postmemory, is significant in her writing. It is in this respect that she acts the role of a transitional author in limning the female transitional identity i.e. liminal Irish feminine identity. She gets interested in rewriting the unwritten history of women (St. Peter and Ní Dhuibhne, 2006, p. 73). As Elke D'hoker states what plays a fundamental role in Ní Dhuibhne's works is the application of folklore and folktales to represent the values of a postmodern society (D'hoker, 2004, p. 137). On the other hand, Rebecca Graham argues that Ní Dhuibhne reapplies folklore from a woman's perspective to depict female characters, their sexual lives, and how these women try to subvert the strict conventions in Irish society and give ways to new identity politics of Irish women (Graham, 2017, p. 62-72). Graham also discusses the concept of folkloric cyborg women in Ní Dhuibhne's short stories and thinks that Ní Dhuibhne intertwines the subversive Irish folklore with contemporary issues (Graham, 2017, p. 62-72).

In an interview, Ní Dhuibhne has described herself as a "literary ethnologist ... who is interested in the detail of life" (St. Peter and Ní Dhuibhne, 2006, p. 70). In her article, Ní Dhuibhne believes that the use of folklores and legends enrich and enhance her stories to the extent of manifesting the dark sides of modern life (Ní Dhuibhne, 2014, p. 215). Jacqueline Fulmer glosses that folklore resists censorship because it can be transferred from one generation to the next in a way in which "no state or media can effectively control" (Fulmer, 2007a, p. 223). Another crucial element is the use of Irish landscape which Ní Dhuibhne exploits extensively in both novels and particularly *The Dancers Dancing* demonstrates Ní Dhuibhne's fascination with mapping and cartography as part of human geography in shaping Irish identity and in particular feminine identity. Oona Frawley in her article "Nature and Nostalgia in Irish Literature," associates the landscape with the sense of nostalgia and Irish identity formation and calls it "nostalgic nature constructs" in Irish literature as she argues that landscape is significant in shaping identities. Therefore, Irish literature applies natural landscape as a means of depicting social landscape (Frawley, 1998/1999, p. 264).

According to Frawley, "nostalgic nature constructs" in Irish literature "are recurring themes and ideas of nature, often picked up by subsequent writers, and particularly those of the last hundred years, in order to build a continuum of Irish identity through the centuries" (Frawley, 1998/1999, p. 264). I rather paraphrase "nostalgic nature constructs" as postmemory nature constructs in this study. Thus, as it can be seen, to use Leroi-Gourhan's terms, postmemory has both interior and exterior milieus or as the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard maintains, "Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are" (Bachelard, 1994, p. 9). This could be used as an evidence that postmemory by which an author like Ní Dhuibhne comes to terms with the Irish past is closely interconnected with place as a limited space, nature and hence the identity formation in a long-term process. The significance of postmemory is its transitional mode which marks yearning for continuity with history. Jacqueline Fulmer doubts Ní Dhuibhne's "civility" in her language and sees it as "her primary strategies of indirection" (Fulmer, 2007, p. 77), considers characterization in her works as "folkloric" and "magical" and contends that Ní Dhuibhne's "magical folk women" question the patriarchal Irish society (Fulmer, 2007, p. 77).

Susan Cahill sees the novel as establishing the liminal "productive space where history, identity and memory can be reimagined and rearticulated" (Cahill, 2009, p. 9). Cahill argues that by utilizing folklore and fairytales in the novel, Ní Dhuibhne questions the past and the history and her focus on the female body is disconcerting. Another important matter which Ní Dhuibhne highlights is the central role the landscape plays in the main character's understanding and her maturation. Cahill associates this epiphanic understanding with "the burn as a liminal space in the novel, since the burn is associated with temporal ambiguities and otherworldly presence" (Cahill, 2009, p. 10). This process provides the female subject with an identity. Erin Kerley sees "the 'unseen' spaces of the Irish country landscape – like the river the main character, Orla, frequents – to the experience of the adolescent Irish female" (Kerley, 2014, p. i). In fact, the "unseen spaces" are the unseen parts of female bodies and the consequent feminine identity formation that has always been concealed from the public eye.

Although there has been reasonable research on the mnemonic nature of Ní Dhuibhne's works, this article attempts to investigate her two novels based on the concept of postmemory and the post-mnemonic technics employed in the very textuality of her novels. Thus the questions which the article tries to answer are as follows: 1. How does postmemory function as a medium for identity politics in Ní Dhuibhne's works? 2. If postmemory functions as a medium, or as an identity maker, then how does it operate in Ní Dhuibhne? 3. What are the qualities or the features of Ní Dhuibhne's novel which make it different or distinct from other novelists' works? 4. In this respect, what factors, or elements, or criteria make identity, and in particular, the Irish identity, possible in the first place? In this case, the main objective of this research is to bridge the gap between the previous research on Ní Dhuibhne and the innovative way postmemory as a conceptual framework can offer.

### Theory

Postmemory was coined by Marianne Hirsch in her book *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012) and even though there have been a lot of coinages *vis-à-vis* the concept of a memory or remembrance coming after a memory without the individual

having a direct experience of the event, technically Hirsch defines it as follows:

“Postmemory” describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before— to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5)

While Hirsch sees postmemory as a way each generation remembers the traumatic past and tries to reappropriate it as if it experienced the trauma at first hand (Hirsch, 2012, p. 6), the present study does not see postmemory in Hirsch's "traumatic" terms of knowledge and experience but as a transition and continuity and rupture of a literary knowledge at the authorial level and the Irish feminine identity formation at the social-cultural level. At the same time, what is also significant in Hirsch's definition is the term "structure" that she uses to depict the architectonic of postmemory which I would like to examine in terms of spatiality and temporality while exploring Ní Dhuibhne's work. Thus when it comes to narrow down the broad concept of postmemory apart from its prototypical reference to the *Shoah* and the generation-after's remembrance of the event, we can take into account Ní Dhuibhne both as an Irish woman remembering her Irish past and the women's emancipatory movements and as her reflection in her novelistic and fictional characters who strives to interconnect her life with the lives of her fictional characters. The question of to what extent this postmemory helps Ní Dhuibhne to completely remember, create and imagine her Irish past and how she can reconnect that memory to her present life as an author requires a research beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the focus here is to address the following questions: first, how does she succeed in expanding the liminal feminine identity in her novels, and how does her postmemory assist her memory to accomplish this? How does Ní Dhuibhne remember the Irish landscape and folklore, and how does she expand and simultaneously separate herself in her shaping of the liminal Irish feminine identity?

In *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (1998) Bernard Stiegler argues that the Western philosophy since ancient times has overlooked the concept of technics and instead emphasized and paid attention to episteme as the sole constitution of the human's knowledge and subjectivity. The basic definition of technics as explained by Stiegler is as "apprehended as the horizon of all possibility to come and of all possibility of a future" (Stiegler, 1998, p. ix). Thus, Stiegler considers "technics" not as a horizon of the past history but as something to determine the future to come. Then, Stiegler refers to Plato's *Phaedrus* as the primary text in philosophy which repudiated this "technicization" of language i.e. writing as always considered to be secondary to oral language and which eliminates the presence of the subject, hence the "metaphysics of presence" in Western philosophy:

Technicization is what produces loss of memory, as was already the case in Plato's *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue's staging of the conflict between Sophist and philosopher, hypomnesic logography menaces the anamnestic memory of knowledge, and hypomnêsis risks contaminating all memory, thereby even destroying it. With the advent of calculation, which will come to determine the essence of modernity, the memory of originary eidetic intuitions, upon which all apodictic processes and meaning are founded, is lost (Stiegler, 1998, p. 3)

In platonic philosophy, the realm of pure or ideal memory is located in the world of ideas and accordingly the pure memory is anamnestic and intuitional and its "technicization" or its

materialization which is here through linguistic inscription of symbolic forms, which again later become more conventional and abstract, jeopardizes the pureness of the ideal memory originating from a transcendental, sublime realm of the ideas. What is implied here is the opposite side of remembrance i.e. forgetting in that the hypomnesic i.e. the extra auxiliary support for remembrance is considered secondary or a copy of anamnestic memory which is pure. Thus, this hypomnesic or auxiliary memory, according to platonic doctrine, induces forgetfulness. Stiegler notices the theme of forgetting in Heidegger's philosophy as Heidegger sees the being's *Dasein* as "historical" which is inscribed in technicity and then the determination of the originary meaning of truth, *aletheia*, is dependent on its "opposition to hypomnesic memory" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 4), which also constantly reminds us that the being is also defined as both remembrance and forgetting. However, as Stiegler notes what is significant in Heidegger's thought is to render the development and evolution of the subject in line with the development of the technic. The human subject is unthinkable without the technics surrounding and encompassing his or her environment. While the rendition of memory in its materialistic form and its de-sacralization in the Platonic sense has taken a long time to be taken into account in the Western philosophy, undoubtedly its existence and performance in the history of the human life cannot be ignored.

Stiegler then relies heavily on André Leroi-Gourhan's works on anthropology and its relation to technology. I will also take Stiegler's rendition and application of Leroi-Gourhan's concepts in this study which provides me with ample evidence *vis-à-vis* memory and consequently postmemory. In *Milieu et techniques [Environment and Techniques]* (1945), Leroi-Gourhan postulated the existence of two milieus: exterior milieu and interior milieu. While exterior milieu is material environment, interior milieu is the human's "cultural" and "intellectual capital" (quoted in Stiegler, 1998, p. 57).

In *L'Homme et la matière [Man and Matter]* (1943), Leroi-Gourhan discusses the concept of *technical tendencies* which are universal and only concretized in the ethnic groups. This tendency has been to exteriorize memory in many periods and particularly in the twentieth century which resulted in the invention of computer. Stiegler speculates about not the use of the tendency but the function it plays in the interior milieu (Stiegler, 1998, p. 131). The article also rather considers the function that the technical tendencies play in the overall human's materialization of memory which, according to Stiegler, arises from desire as "desire is the memory of desire" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 131). This desire is, however, confronted by the imminent feeling of death which urges us to immortalize ourselves through memory. Therefore, the exteriorization of memory is not individualistic but rather communal, and as Stiegler believes that group memory is "technological, the technical and the logical (or linked to 'language')" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 155).

In Stiegler's perspective, language is a kind of technic and allows us to contemplate the evolution of the technic alongside the language and later logographical and alphabetic writing which are considered the hypomnesic ways of preserving memory. Therefore, in order for the individual to develop, Stiegler distinguishes three types of memory: "genetic memory; memory of the central nervous system (epigenetic); and techno-logical memory (language and technics are here amalgamated in the process of exteriorization)" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 176-177). It is here that by appropriating Leroi-Gourhan's concepts of interior and exterior milieus and exteriorization as a way of preserving memory in spatial-temporal dimension, Stiegler adds the dimension of "epi-" to inform the extra and *hypo* dimension of memory inscribed in the human's evolutionary memory, hence the formation of Epiphylogenesis, which is defined as follows:

A recapitulating, dynamic, and morphogenetic (*phylogenetic*) accumulation of individual experience (*epi*), designates the appearance of a new relation between the organism and its environment, which is also a new state of matter. (Stiegler, 1998, p. 177)

Accordingly, epiphylogenesis is the unity of the *ethnic* and the *technical* as Leroi-Gourhan defines the technical as a "universal tendency" and the ethnic as "concretization" of this universal tendency (Stiegler, 1998, p. 43-44). Therefore, in Leroi-Gourhan's theory, *anthropogenesis* corresponds to *technogenes*, that is, both develop and evolve alongside each other and not separately. According to Leroi-Gourhan, the major technics are "linked to geographical zones" since "ethnic characteristics" are "determined by the life conditions imposed on peoples by geography" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 54) which consequently realizes the "tendency" of the "ethnic personality" (quoted in Stiegler, 1998, p. 54). That being the case, Stiegler supplements Leroi-Gourhan's "technical tendency" with time and thinks that "The unity of the ethnic group is governed by the relation to time, more precisely, the relation to a collective future sketching in its effects the reality of a common becoming" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 55). On this account, the tendency itself exists as a result of "the encounter of two sources, respectively intentional and physical, coming from the interior and exterior milieus. ... The encounter between the two milieus is the coupling of the human *qua* social being to matter *qua* geographical system, comparable to the structural coupling of the living and its ecosystem" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 59).

## Discussion

### Liminal Cartographies of Irish Feminine Identity in *The Dancers Dancing*

This part is to read closely Ní Dhuibhne's *The Dancers Dancing* (1999) and to investigate the ways in which she takes Irish feminine identity through postmemory and succeeds in limning a singular liminal Irish feminine identity at the dawn of the third millennium. I argue that Ní Dhuibhne accomplishes this negotiation between the past and the present with her special focus on the cartography of the land i.e., mapping and its relation to female corporeality and feminine identity formation. I also contend that by mapping the Irish landscape in the novel, Ní Dhuibhne strives to make the "landscape of the mind," (Tuan, 1981, p. 6) that is to make familiar the vast space of Ireland via a *hypomnesic* memory here also aided by her postmemory at the intersection of interior and exterior milieus and how *epiphylogenetic* memory enacts Irish postmemory to attain and realize the kind of liminality best manifested in the Irish feminine identity.

From the beginning of *The Dancers Dancing*, Ní Dhuibhne charts the landscape we are invited to see. The first part "The map" makes topography and cartography of the landscape like ancient cartographers who used to use their imagination to see the land from the sky. And here Ní Dhuibhne pleads us to "imagine" this landscape while we are "in an airplane" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999, p. 1). This plea for "imagination" is our first point of departure in incorporating the mapping with our imagination, that is, imagination as part of the mental process which is peculiarly of human and, to use Leroi-Gourhan's terms, interior and which this interiorized faculty has evolved alongside the environment throughout the ages in the human species.

Associating the land, the exterior milieu, with the human body and imagination, the interior milieu, makes it possible to see and then shape the land as landscape, to create it as our own image so as to reconcile our interior milieu with the exterior milieu, hence our identity formation in

general and feminine identity formation in particular. In addition, Ní Dhuibhne applies this Stieglerian technic as a way of making room for the Irish feminine identity formation. However, Stiegler sees imagination as a default: "Discovery, insight, invention, imagination are all, according to the narrative of the myth, characteristic of a *de-fault*" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 193). On the other hand, Yi-Fu Tuan points out that "Purposive movement and perception, both visual and haptic, give human beings their familiar world of disparate objects in space. Place is a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value, though not a valued thing that can be handled or carried about easily; it is an object in which one can dwell" (Tuan, 2001, p. 12). Thus "this is the earth, the place you live in" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999, p. 1) but before it becomes the familiar place for us to live in, the vast space has to be domesticated and transformed into a place before our minds' eyes. The crude mother earth is unknown, yet the place mapped and charted becomes known and familiar. From the beginning Ní Dhuibhne urges us to "look." Seeing and then perceiving the object i.e., the land from above in its phenomenological sense imprints its *topos* in our mind and makes topography possible in the first place. Ní Dhuibhne prefers "licentious cartographers" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999, p. 1) to modern objective ones in that they "decorate" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999d, p. 2) their maps. In this manner, she outlines a Stieglerian *epiphylogenetic* memory as the "licentious cartographers" add their "epi-" as their individual experience, combining it with "phylo," their tribal, ethnic, species *technics* and finally blending it with their genetic DNA transmitters so that they could create "the *who*" alongside "the *what*."

For Ní Dhuibhne, mapping is making love, the love affair between the mother land and the "licentious cartographer." However, it is also making familiar what is uncanny, unfamiliar i.e., the space of which is, in Tuan's term, intimidating, alluring and desiring. To quench this insatiable desire i.e., craving for the infinite, the sublime, the ideal, the vast space, we have to turn it into a *limes*, a limit which makes boundary or border for us. Of course, it is in the borders that our story of initiation begins which results in a new form of identity. What interests Ní Dhuibhne even more about the old maps is the use of the margins. Where you can follow the journey of "the burn" in its winding course and "the figures on their little journeys, back and forth and up and down and in and out, until they move out of the picture altogether, over the edge, into the infinity of after the story" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999, p. 2), the familiar, the finite, the limited, the *limes*, the place-bound cartography rests on the edges and margins of the infinite, the liminal, the *limen*, the threshold or in Ní Dhuibhne's term "after the story." This transgressing of the limit and transcending the story i.e., history, the interior milieu which is our social memory recapitulates this Stieglerian argument that our shared past, culture, non-genetic, non-zoological memory requires and necessitates its alliance and inter-development with the exterior, natural, and seemingly inert milieu. Our technical tendency as cartographers to exteriorize our social memory guarantees our group memory to be preserved for the generations to come which is but *techno-logical*.

It is in the next part "All Irish they speak too" that Ní Dhuibhne introduces her next significant *technic* i.e., Irish language. In that case, Stiegler thinks that "What is more important is the relationship between technics and time. This is especially so if it is true that individuation and 'intersubjectivization' are what is at stake in language. For what is given in speech is time, which is, as Heidegger says, 'the true principle of individuation'" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 13-14). Thus, the technic of language has a direct impact on individuation and even "intersubjectivization" that directly affects identity of the subject. The Irish language and the maps converge here. Her technical tendency is her fascination with the maps and cartography and the main character Orla

also shares this infatuation with the maps. However, Ní Dhuibhne juxtaposes the two maps of Tubber and Dublin which Orla has. Ní Dhuibhne associates the technic of Irish language with the referential technic of geography and topography of Tubber as pure, ideal Irish landscape in opposition to Dublin as a mongrel land of Irish-English. Having analyzed Leroi-Gourhan's concept, Stiegler adds that a technical tendency contains both history and geography which attempts to challenge "the process of invention at the level of ethnic groupings" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 25). By applying the Irish language as an interior milieu to the idyllic landscape of Tubber as an exterior milieu, Ní Dhuibhne is able to reconcile the age-old division of *tekhnē* and *epistēmē*. Tubber as place is desirable only when it tends to rurality, carefreeness, and most importantly the past as the *patial* Tubber and the *spatial* Tubber converge. When the past is dissolved in the present, the present collapses in the constant desire to reconstruct its history i.e., its identity. By crossing the place and entering the *Arcadian* paradisaic landscape, the borders between the past and the present are also crossed and the state of transitionality reigns. No wonder in the remaining part of the novel, the main character Orla has to undergo such a transition to attain a kind of feminine Irish identity which subverts the previous notions of femininity in the Irish literature and context. Orla is to begin her voyage of *unlearning* her present and *learning* her past and the Irish language in the *Gaeltacht*, Donegal. Stiegler sees this forgetting originating from a fall:

Contingency is what that which falls falls into, that which, stemming from what is below the stars, belongs to becoming, to unveiling, to the covering over and to the forgetting of what is: to fall is to forget. What falls is the soul. The soul is what possesses in itself the principle of its movement, the soul is its own principle, and technics (Stiegler, 1998, p. 96)

Orla as the figure of Epimetheus has to both learn and unlearn to become "the history of being" (Stiegler, 1998w, p. 209) through "knowledge of the ontological difference forgetting itself in the différance that is the history of being" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 209). By using language as technic, she unlearns or forgets to obliterate a rigid conception of being in time. Once again Leroi-Gourhan's statement that the major technics are "linked to geographical zones" is echoed and related here as Irish characteristics are "determined by the life conditions imposed on peoples by geography and consequently results in ethnic personality" (quoted in Stiegler, 1998, p. 54). According to Stiegler, *epiphylogenesis* is indeed the unity of the ethnic and the technical.

This sedimentation or memorization is part of the Irish technical tendency that is linked to geographical zones which consequently determines the ethnic characteristics of the Irish. The Irish nation is in a state of transition, between borders. The Irish natural space which stands for rurality, "healthier than the culture the students are accustomed to in the city" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999, p. 38), and "as the air is fresher, the fields greener, and the water clear" is subtly linked to the Irish language. Ní Dhuibhne wittingly connects the *phylo*-development of the Irish nation to the *technological* evolution of the Irish geography and language.

Orla epitomizes the "phylogenetic" reserve of her individuality "epi" that establishes her as an Irish girl to her environment. Orla "the who" with her new relation to the Irish landscape becomes "the what" to fulfill epiphylogenesis. In order to experience individuation, Orla has to become technical since "The concretization of the technical object is its individuation, its becoming-individual, that is, its organization as a becoming-indivisible" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 72). Orla's technicization also has to involve nature because technical evolution of Orla occurs in the burn. Therefore, her technicality becomes naturalized. Thus, by becoming technical and

naturalized, Orla achieves a becoming required for the Irish technical tendency as an ethnic group because "A becoming whose factor is technics understood today as system, tendency, concretization, *Gestell*." (Stiegler, 1998, p. 92).

By making a harmonious connection between the rural and Ireland, Ní Dhuibhne reconciles the Irish interior milieu with the rural exterior milieu and in doing so, she is successful. Inventing and reinventing are at the heart of the human's evolution alongside the environment which are in Stiegler's term *techno-logical*: "Most people Orla knows are constantly reinventing themselves and their environments" (Ní Dhuibhne, 1999, p. 189). Invention is at the heart of technics as such. Invention is related to the interior milieu. In that case, Orla's or the Irish people's interior and exterior milieus are ineluctably dependent on each other for their existence. Orla and the Irish people invent the environment and the Irish language as much as the environment and the Irish language invent them. It is a reciprocal relationship which is their epiphylogenetic memory as well and this the "paradox of exteriorization" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 175). While Orla as part of the Irish invention has to go beyond the boundaries of time and space, she also has to reinvent herself and her environment *différentially*. While Orla and her Irish tradition differs from others, they also rely on the deference as yet-to-come process which is in a never-complete project of becoming. It is at this point where the politics of memory with its consideration of language arrives the scene: "Speech, and later politics, proceed from this memorial participation in the divine, and thus from this theft. From out of this memory, in this speech, they come to *invent*" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 193).

By going through these *interior technics*, Orla becomes in a Stieglerian sense what and who she has to become, heritage of a long historical, social memory i.e., an interior milieu who desires the exterior space of freedom over the interior place of limitation, yet at the same time not repudiating the interior nor totally embracing the exterior. Orla acts within the domain of "epiphylogenetic structure" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 159) that makes her "already-there and its appropriation possible, as reappropriated expropriation, a maieutics of 'exappropriation'" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 159). The problematics of Irish language also derives from epiphylogenetic memory since "There never was a 'concrete language'; to express a situation is always to abstract it" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 179).

### **Liminal Folkloric Formation of Irish Feminine Identity in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow***

This part is to explore Ní Dhuibhne's *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007) in the light of postmemory. The article argues that Ní Dhuibhne's use of folklore in the novel is her technical tendency to overcome the problem of the Irish interior milieu and the exterior milieu so that the folklore acts as a vessel for inheriting memory, albeit in a symbolic form. I also argue that the Irish folklore is represented and symbolized in the Irish language, the landscape, and culture all of which can be considered as Stieglerian technics which form the Irish identity in general and the feminine identity in particular. By positing and outlining folklore as a technic of merging the interior with the exterior, Ní Dhuibhne achieves a liminal feminine identity. The Irish word for folklore is *béaloideas* which literally means "oral instruction" (Robitailié, & Shokouhi, 2017, p. 1-7). Seán Ó Súilleabháin defines folklore as follows: "Folklore is a very comprehensive term to connote the complex of oral traditions of all peoples. It embraces not only their popular beliefs and customs, but also their traditional tales, legends, songs, proverbs, prayers, charms and riddles – in fact, any type of oral literature which has a more or less set form. It also includes local social history or seanchas, ..." (Robitailié, & Shokouhi, 2017, p. 1-7). He accentuates that folklore stands for the

"continuation and survival of a very ancient way of thinking" (Robitailié, & Shokouhi, 2017, p. 1-7). In fact, folklore links the past to the present and I argue that folklore functions as a technic which connects generations of a particular ethnic group within that ethnic group's technical tendency and rather operates as a catalyst to facilitate this transmission of culture. The Irish language as an interior technic is linked to the Irish folklore and culture which according to Clifford Geertz is "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz, 1973, p. 89).

To reverse the technical-ethnic milieu in modern Dublin, the new system of signs in the construction of the Luas rail system demands that the Irish names of the streets be replaced with numbers, just like "moving from a Thomas Hardy sort of landscape into a modern American one, where a number – Route 3 – could evoke all sorts of memories and feelings" (Ní Dhuibhne, 2007, p. 29). By translating the Irish name to a number, the folkloric interior technic is challenged to make room for a new identity formation which at once clings to and subverts the convention. Stiegler explains that if one considers the physical geography from the perspective of ethnicity, then it can be regarded as a human geography (Stiegler, 1998, p. 55-56). It is here that the technical-ethnic as interior-exterior milieus interact that finally "frees the tendency's potential" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 58). Through industrialization, the interior milieu is transformed.

The contradiction Ní Dhuibhne makes in the novel regarding the Irish language as the representative of the Irish convention seems deliberate to question the roots related to it. Yet this questioning of the origin is not an absolute repudiation from the writer's part but it is strategic subversion. There has always been a "bond originally formed by, and between, humanity, technics, and language" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 13) and the human individuation and intersubjectivization are "at stake in language. For what is given in speech is time, which is, as Heidegger says, 'the true principle of individuation'" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 13-14). The connection between language and the ethnic group that Leo Kavanagh, one of the characters, makes corresponds to "anthropological" and "zoological characteristics of particular human groups" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 54).

There is a character called Charlene, one the most significant characters in whom the Irish folklore is reincarnated. Charlene is a minor character in the novel but her significant appearance throughout the novel cannot be overlooked. The scarecrow of the novel's title is linked to her and associates her magico-folklorically to the memory of the Irish nation. Charlene also augurs death. This feeling of death is significant in human identity formation as such. Stiegler reflects on the "feeling of death: death itself, labor, education, language, society, love" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 131) and this is accidental in his perspective because it entails everything: "this all comes only after this accident by which man enters into the disastrous feeling of death, into melancholy" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 131). Therefore, Charlene as the harbinger of death plays a significant part in the machinations or the technics used in the novel. Charlene acts a "rupture" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 141) in the apparent, smooth concatenation of events which find no way but to kill Kate, Leo Kavanagh's wife through accident at the end of the novel. The appearance of Charlene is "appearance of the technical. Leroi-Gourhan specifies this as the appearance of language" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 141). And here the technical language is Irish, the technic that Leo Kavanagh wants to preserve. In that case, "language becomes indissociable from technicity and prostheticity" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 145). Thus, Irish ethnic differentiation is possible in the Irish memory group "when human, is external"

(Stiegler, 1998, p. 155) because it becomes technological i.e. the technical and the logical. The logical is linked to language as such: "*there is a possibility of language from the moment that there is a possibility of the tool, and a language cannot be conceived that is not immediately an idiomatic differentiation, the ethnic differentiation of which it is perhaps but a case*" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 155-156). Here the tool is manifested in the Irish folklore which marks this ethnic differentiation. In the novel, the scarecrow is associated in the figure of a woman. Leo likens Charlene, the unusual, forsaken woman to scarecrows or even worse a cheap prostitute. Later we will see that this association of the scarecrow to a woman is not accidental from the writer's side. Scarecrows with their grinning, uncanny faces are harbingers of motherly love, energy, movement, and yet finally death. The use of scarecrow as a folkloric symbol can be considered a Stieglerian *techno-logical* stereotype. The scarecrow links the interior technic of an age-old culture with the crude Irish landscape of exterior milieu. From another perspective, the scarecrow is linked to the Irish feminine identity as here is the case where it is the sign of a derelict and frustrated woman and as it relegates the woman to a lesser social status. Through the use of folklore, Ní Dhuibhne tactfully depicts an Irish society and the changing position of Irish women at the brink of change at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Another important character is Anna who is implicitly associated with the fox of the novel. In Celtic mythology and folklore, "The wily fox was connected with a similarly canny human – the witch, who could assume the fox's shape in order to steal butter from her neighbors otherwise wreak havoc on the region. As foxes are known in farming communities for their nighttime raids on valuable chicken flocks, and the connection of evil witch and thieving fox seemed easy to those searching for a target for their anger" (Monaghan, 2008, p. 199-200). The folkloric technic manifested in her journey is beyond the masculine understanding. She has repressed her creative force due to her conventional roles of motherhood and wifeness. It is no coincidence that Ní Dhuibhne concentrates on the repressed female agency in Irish culture. Anna is associated with Dublin, symbol of modernizing Ireland not only in technological matters but also in social relationships existent among the Irish ethnic group. Anna's link to Dublin as a place which is restrictive and limited in Tuans' perspective and her searching and finding solace in the space of the unknown and the uncanny of extramarital love would have to be paid off when she loses all of what stands for a married conventional woman in Ireland. Thus, in order to attain independent feminine identity which rests on the borders or margins of marriage and betrayal, she has to detach herself from the physical geographical site of urban Ireland and to crave for the rural Ireland which can be seen in her magical-real flight from the hospital to the unknown space of a novel identity i.e., liminal identity at the end of the novel. She is incorporated to the unknown to reach this threshold. By associating each woman with a special place through a folkloric animal, the woman is also linked and even transformed to a landscape of mythical and Celtic folklore.

The association of scarecrows to women and the conventional epithets they bear as seductive, cheerful, rosy, and even death is part of Ní Dhuibhne's technical tendency and strategy to link the past to the present. It is not just part of the subversive process that feminists have already taken as part of their *detritorialization* but for Ní Dhuibhne it is also revisiting the past, making her *epi-memory* to have its impression and effect on her *phylo-memory* of her ethnic group so that she is able to *reterritorialize* the Irish woman's position. In fact, Ní Dhuibhne uses writing as a linguistic technic to account for the evolution of the Irish feminine identity alongside the Irish history. She employs writing as a post-mnemonic technic not only to preserve memory but also to

subvert it. In Ní Dhuibhne the post-mnemonic writing technic has reached maturity in depicting the Irish feminine identity's transition from a Celtic Tiger era to a post-Celtic Tiger era.

One can see that writing as a technical tendency is at the intersection of interior milieu and exterior milieu in Ní Dhuibhne. If we take André Leroi-Gourhan's distinction of interior milieu and exterior milieu as granted, then postmemory is at the juncture of these two milieus. Whereas the exterior milieu demands materialization and concretization of an intellectual/mental realm, and the interior milieu is the intellectual/mental activities of the humans, memory operates at the intersection of these two milieus, that is, the memory as an interior milieu is an intellectual/mental activity and furthermore its preservation in history has been done through its inscription as a symbolic and linguistic form and all the other mnemonic devices as part of its materialization process as an exterior milieu. The universal technical tendency for the Irish has created its own folklore, mythology, literature, and culture. The Irish ethnicity as an Irish technical fact has been to preserve the Irish language and even the Irish English as part of its national identity and its resistance to the colonial England. Thus, the Irish identity and in this study the contemporary Irish identity in Ní Dhuibhne's two novels adopts two milieus at the same time via postmemory that finally reaches an epiphylogenetic memory which at once bears individual, ethnic, and genetic imprints and traces and also acts as a technic.

Cartography is used as a post-mnemonic technic in Ní Dhuibhne. She Maps the space of Ireland as place. Mapping and cartography are done in both intellectual/mental manner as interior milieu and then as the materialization and concretization of the intellectual/mental as exterior milieu. To domesticate the vast space of the land and delimit it, space as "a zone of freedom" (Tuan x-xi) should be transformed to place as "a site of security" (x-xi). In fact, the space as an exterior milieu is technicized through the Irish technical tendency to gain exterior Irish fact to become place as interior/exterior milieu. Mapping and the Irish folklore as they have been used by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne in *The Dancers Dancing* and *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* account for the Irish technical fact where interior and exterior milieus have been intertwined and intersected to produce an epiphylogenetic memory as postmemory and the resultant Irish feminine identity formation.

The architectonics of postmemory in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne takes into consideration the epiphylogenesis and the evolution of technic in constituting epiphylogenetic memory as postmemory in contemporary Irish feminine identity formation. The third genus of memory which has been entwined with the technics has provided us with an all-inclusive memory which takes both the interior and the exterior milieus at once. In *The Dancers Dancing*, the girls as feminine bearers of Irish identity are separated from their families as the symbol of tradition and ethnicity. However, by entering the Gaeltacht, they are introduced to a nascent identity. In *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, Irish feminine identity is explored in the urban Dublin and its countryside which is under the influence and infusing of the Irish folklore as a technical tendency. Accordingly, the Irish feminine identity formation in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's works is manifested in the technical movement that is determined by its delimitations of memory through generations and throughout time.

### Conclusion

Not only does the (Irish) language derive from epiphylogenesis but also the question of time originates from "our 'Epimethean' or 'epiphylogenetic' problematic" (Stiegler, 1998, p. 210). Orla has to repeat this cycle of her ethnic technical tendency. Her technical tendency is to

interiorize the exterior and to exteriorize the interior to the extent to inform *epiphylogenetic* memory. In the macro-level, *epiphylogenetic* memory is of Ní Dhuibhne as a contemporary Irish author, intermingling her *epi*, experiential and individual memory with her *phylo*, collective and species memory, and adding and completing it with her female biology of genetic memory. By making cartography of the Irish landscape, Ní Dhuibhne maps the winding course of the Irish burn in its constitution of its *Irishness*. I would rather rename Marianne Hirsch's postmemory in Ní Dhuibhne's *The Dancers Dancing as epiphylogenetic* memory which is more inclusive of what the contemporary Irish feminine identity is or in the process of identity-forming.

Finally, all the three folkloric symbols of the fox, the swallow, and particularly the scarecrow are located somewhere in-between history and the present culture. They are the maternal, feminine imaginary landscapes redolent of the past interior Irish milieu. Ní Dhuibhne's folkloric *ethno-technic* rests on the mingling of the living and the dead, that is, they are neither alive nor dead but their existence is liminal. The metamorphosis of the characters to animals is leeway to circumvent the rigid definitions of feminine identity so that alternative spaces of identity formation would deem possible. In another perspective, the use of folklore as liming the liminality of the feminine character is at the heart of Ní Dhuibhne's work as to highlight the special condition of the Irish feminine identity in relation to her culture, and her body's vacillating relationship to her ethnic past, the Irish language and culture. We can consider all these a continuum of the feminine identity in development or evolution. In fact, they are the micro-technics available to Ní Dhuibhne. Thus we can conclude that Ní Dhuibhne's postmemory is another side of *epiphylogenetic* memory. Postmemory in this research has tried to demonstrate subversive practices in Ní Dhuibhne's two novels in order to account for the new Irish identity formation which encompasses silenced and repressed voices of difference among the new generation or the post-generation in the post-Celtic Tiger era.

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### Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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