

**REEXAMINING ‘THE DANCER AND THE DANCE’:
POSTMODERN CONSIDERATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY
IRISH AND ITALIAN LITERATURE**

by

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Abstract

REEXAMINING ‘THE DANCER AND THE DANCE’: POSTMODERN CONSIDERATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH AND ITALIAN LITERATURE

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This dissertation considers the implications of a global, postmodern culture on the contemporary fiction of both Ireland and Italy and seeks to newly engage two seemingly disparate national literatures in dialogue with one another. While both cultures do share a similar religious background, I argue that comparisons between Irish and Italian contemporary literature instead arise from the pressures of a worldview based upon hyper-globalization and changing social norms. In reinterpreting Yeats’s question, “How can we know the dancer from the dance?,” I argue that values of wholeness and unity previously found in a modernist discourse are in themselves no longer valid points of argument, and that Yeats’s poetry itself demonstrates the symptomatic nature of this perspective; instead, one must now consider the fragments of

narration, narrative, and narrative discourse found in 21st century literature in order to create new forms of identification.

Furthermore, I seek to provide a more thorough understanding of contemporary literary criticism in this dissertation with respect to the Irish and Italian literature published right before and soon after the turn of the millennium. In doing so, I show that there is a difference in the way that postmodern literature has been understood and/or appropriated by the two national discourses. While Italian postmodern literature demonstrates a generally linear progression of development beginning with Pirandello and continuing through both Pulp and “Cannibali” literary styles in order to arrive at a contemporary global/postmodern discourse which reflects technology, music, consumerism and fragmentation, Irish contemporary literature lacks such a linear tradition of postmodern discourse; this could be attributed, as I argue, to a resistance to deep literary change, as well as to the “weight of tradition” as theorized by such scholars as Joe Cleary.

Topics of examination concern postmodern representations of technology, media, alienation, fragmentation, and communicative control in the works of writers such as Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Barry McCrea and Patrick McCabe (Irish) and Niccolò Ammaniti, Aldo Nove and Rossana Campo (Italian). Critical analysis focuses upon Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*, which provides the most relevant postmodern analysis of the ways in which literature and society respond to the contemporary global worldview.

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Introduction

“A new age has begun.” This phrase, uttered in so many contexts and across the boundaries of space and time, intrinsically embodies the concept of progress. Considering the development of science and technology and human achievement on a global scale, one is encouraged to simultaneously ponder the past and the future. But where are we at present? And how do we fit ourselves into the framework of historical progress? In order to answer these questions, one must focus upon the impact that global technology has had on both human subjectivity and consciousness.

I am drawn to the philosophical inquiries of Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian academic, because of his work on mass media and popular culture from the 1960s and 1970s, famous for popularizing the catchphrases “the global village” and “the medium is the message” (Powers 194-5). In his book *Hamlet’s Blackberry*, William Powers explains how McLuhan came to be preoccupied with the possibility that he, along with the rest of humanity, was being replaced by machines. Powers goes on to explain how McLuhan later theorized that few people failed to consider technology outside of its own realm, and he argues that technologies themselves have more of an impact on humans than their content, for “our tools are really extensions of our bodies” (197).

McLuhan is not the only theorist to focus on the ways in which technology and the body coalesce. In the 1991 treatise “A Cyborg Manifesto” by Donna Haraway,¹ the author examines the ways in which humans, both male and female, have developed so far as to construct social reality according to their shared status as “cyborgs,” or “fabricated hybrids of machine and

¹ From *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York; Routledge, 1991.

organism”². Haraway later goes on to demonstrate how machines of various natures exemplify the notion of freedom for humankind; the best machines are all “made of sunshine” and “light and clean,” according to Haraway, which provide idealistic models for humans who are both materialistic and “opaque” (153).

New technologies such as the Blackberry, iPhone, and iPad, force our minds to function systematically in a less linear and individualistic and in a more group-oriented manner. In this way, we as postmodern, fragmented ‘selves,’ are beginning to understand Postmodernity as best we can, all the while creating new points of contact and new representations of how we can lessen the disparity between the inward ‘self’ and the outward world.

While Powers and McLuhan are exclusively concerned with technology, I view their rationale as more encompassing of the contemporary quotidian. I instead consider Postmodernity itself to be an extension of the body, where all of the key signs and symbols point to this current emphasis upon group-orientation and finding points of connection, no matter how insignificant, capricious, or artificial they may be. My analysis of the postmodern ‘body,’ or the ‘dancer and dance,’ as I will later hypothesize, strongly relates to contemporary issues of both cultural- and self- identification in a globalized world. It is in this space, between the local and the global, in which I seek to establish new forms of connection and to analyze disparities between contemporary works of Irish and Italian fiction. In doing so, I seek to emphasize the importance of Postmodernism to these two specific cultures and literary realms.

² “By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation. In the traditions of 'Western' science and politics-- the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other - the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination.” Ibid (1).

Why the Postmodern? And Why Irish and Italian?

Growing up in a mixed Irish and Italian household on my mother's side, a common combination of second or third generation New Yorkers, I noticed early on the similarities between these two cultures, including the fact that both groups were staunchly Catholic. Of course, one can simplify the shared connections between cultures based solely upon religion. However, my interest in the Irish- Italian connection was more personal; why, for example, did many of my Irish dancing friends have Italian last names? Or why, I asked myself after a trip to Italy at the age of twenty, did the Italians have such a fascination with Irish culture? Imagine my surprise when I noticed an (incorrectly spelled) Irish proverb painted on an arch in a pub in an Italian *paesino* on the outskirts of Turin. As I took my personal inquiries to the literary field by reading popular literature of the two countries, I came to notice not only some very particular similarities, but also some marked differences within those similarities. For example, why was technology becoming more crucial to the plots and settings of contemporary literature throughout the years, to an extent well beyond that of a mere desire to represent a contemporary perspective? Why were the consumer brand names of Nokia or Eircell, or SMS, showing up with such frequency within both of these national literatures? In another line of personal inquiry, why were both Irish and Italian characters conflicted with similar symptoms of fragmentation, even if they might not be due to the same reasons? It is, for instance, not a stretch to see the stylistic literary connections between Patrick McCabe and Niccolò Ammaniti; had McCabe been Italian, he

would have, in my opinion, surely been accepted by Ammaniti, Nove, and other members of the *Giovani Cannibali*³ as an honorary member.

While I do aim to carefully analyze selected texts from two specific Western European countries in this dissertation, I ultimately believe that the characteristics pertaining to Postmodernism in contemporary fiction are unlikely to be exclusively unique to Irish and Italian literature. Instead, the patterns and categories which I focus upon could conceivably extend to other national literatures, not only to suggest similar literary trends, but also to provide theoretical access to deeper social significance.

From a purely literary standpoint, I have chosen to juxtapose Irish and Italian texts for the simple reason that these national literatures are rarely placed in dialogue with one another, and even more rarely outside of a religious frame of reference. Much attention has been given by critics to French and American Postmodernism with significantly less attention to literature outside of these two specific contexts. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule; Samuel Beckett and Umberto Eco are two primary examples, for both have been extensively noted by critics for their incorporation of postmodern elements within their literary work. On the whole, however, and perhaps partially due to a discrepancy in literary distribution of national text on a global scale, current Italian and Irish fiction suffers from a lack of extensive investigation pertaining to Postmodernism. Even with these notable discrepancies, I still believe that postmodern literary criticism is the most fitting filter through which one is able to best extract meaning, thereby coming to some sort of literary understanding, of the contemporary texts with which I engage.

³ “Young Cannibals” literary movement in Italy mixing Pulp fiction, highbrow and lowbrow literature, the grotesque, etc., from approximately 1996 on. For more, see Lucamante, Stefania. *Italian Pulp Fiction*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001.

In delving into a comparative study of the themes, narratives, and writing styles of contemporary Irish and Italian fiction, I began to question what kind of a parameter and what kind of framework would be the most effective in providing clear points of reference. Because I was interested in the literature arising during the so-called Irish “Celtic Tiger” years⁴, as well as the general fiction which was being published at the turn of the new millennium in both Ireland and in Italy, I decided to focus specifically within this time period. For this reason, the range of my texts generally represents a ten- year span from approximately 2000 until 2010. I have selected works of Irish and Italian fiction which best reflect the postmodern features delineated by my dissertation chapters. On a general level, these novels depict the various characteristics of contemporary life which are theoretically identified in the literary criticism of Jean-Francois Lyotard, Frederic Jameson, and Joseph Cleary and are texts which both successfully create parallels and bridge gaps between the Irish and Italian cultures. Furthermore, these novels are chosen based upon the status of literary production and general notoriety, for most of the authors have continuously written from the millennium and beyond and enjoy a history of literary appreciation by critics and consumers alike.

Of course, there are minor exceptions to this time span; a good example of this exception would be Roddy Doyle. The reasons for these exceptions are to examine and hypothesize key contrasts between earlier, pre-millennial key works, such as *The Commitments*. I did not find the need to engage with the pre-millennial works of contemporary Italian authors, for the turn of- and post- millennial works of these writers were able to stand on their own and did not require examination of prior texts in order to come to conclusions relevant to my areas of analysis. In generally adhering to this ten- year time frame, the categories of comparisons and contrasts

⁴ I define Celtic Tiger in the “Definitions” section of this chapter.

began to surface on their own; at the risk of sounding trite, it was as though I were looking at a metaphorical ocean in which postmodern fragments began to surface, both forming concrete shapes while at the same time in ever flowing and changing form. These shapes of fragments in flowing form provide a basis for my chapters. What results, then, is a free-flowing discussion of the three key topics: technology, music, and consumption culture.

In the chapter “Hyper-use and Control of Technology,” I focus upon the variety of ways in which current Irish and Italian fiction reveal how technology and media are appropriated, controlled, and manipulated in contemporary society. Music becomes a key postmodern narrative fragment in “Music As the Soundtrack of Contemporary Life”. Never before has mass market music become such an identifiable, global entity as in the contemporary quotidian, and current Irish and Italian literature reflect this condition wholeheartedly. Finally, in “Shopping Malls and Simulacra, Prada as Power: Consumption Culture and Global Competition,” the ways in which consumer culture permeate contemporary fiction begin to surface. Moreover, these brands, labels, and images become fundamental as to how their fragmented references contribute to larger narrative discourses. Through these categories, therefore, the literary ‘postmodern condition’ is advanced, for it newly embraces new forms of difference, calls previously accepted narrative relationships into question, and ultimately helps to elucidate key characteristics pertaining to the contemporary quotidian.

Reexamining The Dancer and the Dance

As much as it would be pleasant to think that a fragmented, chaotic postmodern framework would suit a work of literary criticism, in reality some framework beyond that is called for. As a result, I began to reflect upon William Butler Yeats's metaphor of the dancer and the dance. When approaching modern and postmodern Irish literature, somehow it is always necessary to go back to Yeats. My research into contemporary Irish literature proves that still to be the case and, by extension, shows how Yeats's work applies more universally to current fiction beyond the constraints of a specifically Irish context. Yeats himself, considered by most critics to be squarely within a modernist perspective, is still not without postmodern elements. Much has been written, for instance, about the way in which Yeats's "The Circus Animals' Desertion" (1939) is an early example of Postmodernism, for it is a poem about writing poems and indicates a withdrawal from both modernist literature and earlier, modernistic thematic interests (Ingersol 33-34).

While I do not seek to rewrite Yeats as a Postmodernist, I do still see his poetry as symptomatic of the Postmodern; if one thinks about continuity with the avant-garde, in which writers and artists like Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, Proust, and Mann reflect "... radical indeterminacy in form and strong statements of social engagement," then we do see how traditional and mythological tropes of unity and cohesion in the Modern no longer satisfactorily answer questions pertaining to the radical social change which was occurring at the time ("Modernism" 1). I truly began to see this tension with the Modern and embracing of the Postmodern with Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1919), another poem which has controversially been associated

with a discrepancy in Yeats's modern mentality⁵. One way of considering this is, according to William Johnsen, through the lack of expectation fulfillment in the order/disorder dichotomy, as well as his use of antithesis. In the second stanza, it is written:

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

⁵ I am only one of the many writers, scholars, and historians to fit Yeats's great poem within a contemporary context. *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe's 1958 "modern African" (Appiah 1992) novel about the Umuofia people and their struggles with regard to the influence of Western culture, appropriates text from "The Second Coming" in order to illustrate the ways in which Yeats's poem resonates with the quotidian of societies vastly different from those of Western Europe. Also, Adam Cohen, in his 2007 *New York Time's* opinion piece on Yeats and the war in Iraq, elucidated how "The Second Coming" was applicable to current events pertaining to the war, where "The story of the Iraq war is one of confident predications that never came to pass: 'We will find weapons of mass destruction'; 'we will be greeted as liberators'; 'the insurgency is in its last throes'" (Cohen 2/12/07). Finally, Yeats's poem is relevant to such contemporary elements as primetime television; in an article on *The Sopranos*, Giancarlo Lombardi demonstrates how the poem, which is used both as the title of an episode and as a driving force in the plot, "evokes the profound instability of the present... predicting an apocalyptic future that defies all hope" (Lombardi 197).

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?⁶

In his analysis of this stanza, Johnsen shows how the antithesis in the repetition of “Surely” helps to undermine the expectations of the poet: “If mere anarchy is now loose,” he states, “order surely develops out of disorder, as second comings surely follow first ones. But the “vast image” invoked by the expectations of theory gives Yeats what he did not already know: ‘Twenty centuries of stony sleep were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle’ (Orr 87). In this dichotomy, the antithesis undermines the intention of Yeats to use his metaphors as a unified system. We do not, for instance, have any indication of order resuming. In addition, history’s antithetical movements are repeated, but not explained; according to Johnsen, “... Yeats’s ignorance of... the rough beast is likewise an issue of power, repeated, *but not explained*, by “history’s” antithetical movements. The poem reenacts Yeats’s limits but in the service of posing a question with the hope of a real answer. The question makes the reader as well see his inability to see... the Semitic double, except as a representation of ...historical Christianity’s sacred power” (87-88). In this sense, Yeats’s representation of power through the “beast,” his questioning with an inherent limit to its answer, and the lack of any certain sense of a return to order, even through the disorder associated with the “beast,” points a finger at a more postmodern approach to history and to poetry.

However, my questions concerning the poem were not answered with a mere look at Yeats’s metaphors pertaining to Christianity and the beast. Instead, my focus was aimed at the

⁶ Ibid Ref. 6.

first lines, in which the poet states, “Turning and turning in the widening gyre, / The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...”⁷ Here, we again have a counter-argument to Yeats’s Modernism. *If Yeats was so intent upon pushing cycles such as his ‘gyre, I began to ask myself, then why is he breaking the cycle by sending the falcon off course?* In this analysis, I aim to focus upon the structural element of the cycle. It is well known that more historically based thematic elements dominate and propel the poem forward. Why does Yeats purposefully feel the need to break one of his sacred cycles here, both at the outset of the poem and within one of the crucial moments of rhetorical questioning?

In taking these poetic elements of Yeats into consideration, I began to contemplate the poet’s relevance as one evidently caught between two literary movements as useful to my own contemporary areas of literary inquiry. It is all very well and good to assume that one or two poems can counter a modernist form, but could the tendency to incorporate postmodern elements be taken further? Moreover, how could a “modernist” poet like Yeats provide the framework to my contemporary work on the Postmodern? Finally, what would be the one poem which would prove the division between Modernism and Postmodernism for my purposes?

The answer, I found, was in Yeats’s “Among School Children” (1928), and specifically in the concluding question, “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” When William Butler Yeats asks, “How can we know the dancer from the dance,”⁸ he projects the very human perspective of an attempt to cope with time, aging, and the ultimate mark which one leaves as a legacy. According to Helen Vendler,⁹ Yeats’s comparison of the dancer and the dance, where

⁷ Yeats, William Butler. “The Second Coming.” (1919).

⁸ Yeats, William Butler. “Among School Children” (1928).

⁹ Vendler, Helen. “W.B. Yeats: Among School Children.” Oct 18, 2001.
<http://athome.harvard.edu/programs/vendler/>

one cannot be separated from the other, reflects an organic whole; as such, the artist, art form, and work of art are intimately related. Moreover, the particular steps which assist in fashioning an individual's identity also contribute to the formation of a legacy, or what will remain of an individual after he or she has yielded to the constraints of time and age.

However, Yeats's reflection of, and concern for, a unified, organic whole is no longer always relevant or desirable in contemporary society. Postmodernism has taught us to refrain from focusing on cohesive entities, in which theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Frederic Jameson have shown us that grand narratives of space, time, and culture can no longer be considered feasible as unified wholes. Moreover, "Among School Children" itself has proven to support Postmodernism through what Paul de Man would call the intersection of explanation and difference, of naming and staging, or particular to the poem, "the intersection between grammatical and rhetorical meaning" (Orr 24). Using the semiotic context of Ferdinand de Saussure, who "describes and exemplifies the pragmatic, "postmodern" play of the surface in modernist discourse,"¹⁰ Ronald Schleifer explains how a high modernist poem such as "Among School Children" becomes an example of postmodern rhetoric:

Eliot's anxious need to find a grounding method in the chaos of Joyce's vision and that of his own, like Yeats's need to articulate a visionary, transcendental resolution of experience not only in the apocalyptic, "symbolist" poetry of the 1890s but even in a high modernist poem such as "Among School Children," seems to

¹⁰ Ibid 23

encompass the tension between the old concept of metaphysical meaning and the new concept of pragmatic function. Perhaps it is the enabling tension of modernist practice. But the transformation from cause to effect, from cause to functional explanation, or, in Saussure's terms, the transformation from a mode of understanding based upon the diachronic discovery of the origin to one based upon a synchronic apprehension of relationships between and among phenomenal data, is at the heart of what I call the postmodern rhetoric of modernism.¹¹

Orr 24

In his understanding of Yeats, Schleifer reveals certain truths of "Among School Children." On one hand, the poem demonstrates an anti-modern force which self-subverts its own Modernism. As such, what moves the poem beyond these purely modernist standards, thereby symptomatically questioning modernist assumptions, is the poem's inconclusive resolution of a discovery of the origin with that of tensions (what he calls "apprehension of relationships") between the observable appearances or experiences important to Yeats's poetry (what I believe he means by "phenomenal data").

An attempt to sequentially analyze the various ways in which "Among School Children" demonstrates the tensions between metaphysical meaning / functional pragmatism versus the discovery of the origin / apprehensional relationships between observable appearances or experiences is intellectual fodder of a span sufficient for another time and another literary

¹¹ Originally from Schleifer, Ronald. *Analogical Thinking: Post-Enlightenment Understanding in Language*. Michigan; The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

discourse. However, in order to truly focus on the way in which these tensions bridge the Modern and the Postmodern, a specific emphasis upon the final lines of the poem is crucial; these lines, of course, inquire, “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” In concentrating on this powerful poetic moment of inquiry, it is important to reconsider the final words of Yeats from a new angle; how is it that with this knowledge of a fragmented, schizophrenic, globalized, and hyper-technological new millennium, the words of Yeats are still applicable?

In order to answer this question, I seek to refocus the ideas born from Yeats’s dancers and dance in a new direction. Instead of focusing upon the organic whole of choreography, which results from individual steps, use of music, placement of bodies, etc., I propose to shift the emphasis to the “pieces”, or the symbols: technology, consumer culture, music, and fragmentation of the “self,” as indicators of the postmodern elements which help us to rectify our inability to fully understand or cope with our comprehension (or lack thereof) of where we stand as a contemporary society with less distinguishable global borders and cultural peculiarities. For this reason, I have entitled my critical work, “Reexamining ‘the Dancer and the Dance;” Through an analysis of current Irish and Italian fiction, it is evident that literature calls previously accepted narrative relationships into question and ultimately helps to elucidate the postmodern condition, thereby taking Yeats’s dancer and dance from the Modern to the Postmodern.

In “Where We Have Been, Where We Are Going: Exploring the Postmodern Tradition in Irish and Italian Literature,” the cohesive relationship between Yeats’s dancer and dance is first questioned. As is often historically the case, each generation questions that of the previous one; in the case of Modernism, therefore, Yeats’s poetry helps to identify the unrest lurking underneath a traditionally modernist discourse and which reflects in part the tenets of Postmodernism to come. By first aiming a critical eye at the pre-millennial precedents pertaining

to Irish and Italian literature, one can clearly identify the way in which contemporary issues of consumerism, technology, presence of mass media music, and fragmentation have been surfacing throughout the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As such, Yeats's narrative questioning of the dancers and the dance, which is symptomatic of Postmodernism's emphasis upon the loss of singular narrative functions (Lyotard) and narrative relationships through *difference* (Jameson) have been breaking down for some time. In doing so, these breakdowns allow the "dancers," or "dance," as disparate traits of postmodern literature, to rise to the forefront and to assume meaning through their own formations and/or transformations.

The second chapter, "Hyper-use and Control of Technology", demonstrates that the ways in which technology is appropriated, controlled and manipulated in contemporary Irish and Italian society question the unified whole which Yeats seeks in his concept of the dancer and the dance. In reconsidering these Yeatsian entities from a postmodern perspective, then, technology and media act as one of the pieces, or "fragments," which questions the connections and establishes new, ever fluid and changing relationships between the narrative characteristic, 'narrative,' and narrative voice.

Likewise, the contemporary representation of music again reinforces this idea of the dancer and the dance as narrative pieces, rather than as fixed, complete wholes in "Music as the Soundtrack of Contemporary Life," and it is an additionally telling indicator of a move from pre-millennium modern to post-millennium postmodern ethics. Since music, in this contemporary context, takes on a clearly individual literary identity, it helps postmodern writers to undermine Yeats's unity of dancers and dance. Yeats likely envisioned the unity of dancers and the dance with, and perhaps even propelled by, music; we see this, for example, in his choice to often

accompany his plays¹² with both instrument and lyric. Conversely, music in a contemporary context has the ability to stand on its own without relying upon the support of the dancers which, in the past, would bring it to life.

Finally, the breakdown of the dancer and dance unity is proven in “Shopping Malls and Simulacra, Prada as Power: Consumption Culture and Global Competition,” in which consumer culture represents a second “patch” in the pastiche of Yeats’s choreography. Globalized consumer culture, like technology, is a postmodern entity which can either stand on its own or relate in myriad ways to other characteristics of contemporary texts. While Joyce would have been familiar with referencing names such as the Celyon brands of the Belfast Tea Company¹³ and Italo Svevo with his main character, Zeno’s, preferred brand of “Virginia” cigars¹⁴, none of these brand name references have been used with such frequency and in so many aspects of individual narratives as can now be noted in contemporary Irish and Italian novels.

A Note Concerning Definitions

In undertaking any sort of research associated with literary criticism, it is important to establish parameters and measures which will be useful in providing a framework for a specific hypothesis. In the case of Irish and Italian contemporary literature, I will utilize and adhere to the subsequent definitions:

¹² Yeats writes extensively, for example, on his choices regarding instrumentation for his play *Four Plays For Dancers* (1921)

¹³ Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. New York: Vintage International, 1990. Pg. 71.

¹⁴ Svevo, Italo. *Zeno’s Conscience*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 8

“Celtic Tiger”

Because it is fundamental to a contemporary discourse on Ireland, the term “Celtic Tiger” will be relevant to my research. Many of the fictional Irish works upon which I focus incorporate the term either overtly or within fictional narratives; moreover, many of these same literary works were written before the rapid decline, or the “taming” of the Celtic Tiger economy. In particular, I define and focus upon the term ‘Celtic Tiger’ according to its historical moment; that is, the moment when American investment bank Morgan Stanley first labeled Ireland a Celtic Tiger in 1994, as a result of the country’s “low inflation, few tariffs, rapid export growth, a commitment to privatization, and a willingness to do almost anything to attract transnational corporations” (Kinkaid 2005). In this time period, Ireland transformed from one of the European Union’s poorest countries to one with exceptional growth potential and monetary expansion. Part of this growth is attributed to the creation of a strong work force and new jobs, thereby providing a solution for Ireland’s perennial emigration issue.¹⁵ In addition to job growth and increased employment opportunities in a variety of sectors, other factors, such as economic openness to global markets, low tax rates, and investment in education propelled the Irish economy forward.¹⁶ Ireland’s interest in becoming economically self-sufficient from Britain also factored into the success of the Celtic Tiger, for in a world now focused upon globalism and the international exchange of goods and services, Ireland was able to move away from a pure focus on small scale agricultural production and took advantage of the open markets in diverse fields, such as that of technology and the health services.

¹⁵ <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2006/06/How-Ireland-Became-the-Celtic-Tiger>

¹⁶ Ibid.

Interestingly, some of the texts which I utilize comment upon the negative effects of the Celtic Tiger and even go so far as to foreshadow its decline. This projected decline, fueled by private debt and the collapse of the construction and housing market, has been fully realized since early 2009¹⁷ and up until the time that my dissertation is currently being written.

“Postmodernism”; “The Postmodern”

I have rooted my theoretical basis in Postmodernism due to its ability to best express the trends, connections, and discrepancies within the literature with which I engage. Because Postmodernism is considered to be concretely indefinable¹⁸ by nature, and in itself a pastiche of definitions and terminology, I have established certain parameters in approaching my critical analysis.

Because Postmodernism is defined in such a variety of ways by a wide variety of so-called “postmodern” literary critics, it is impossible to reduce Postmodernism in literature to a single definition or series of characteristics. However, we can generally follow what Ihab Hassan identifies in the “new anti-literature,” or what we might currently call postmodern literature, as being different from the Modern due to evasion, silence, and absence: “Whatever is truly new in it evades the social, historical, and aesthetic criteria that gave an identity to the avant-garde in other periods. The force of evasion, or absence, in the new literature is radical indeed; it strikes at the roots and induces, metaphorically, a great silence. But the same force...bursts into a great babel of noises... (t)he most audible of them the cry of outrage, the voice of the apocalypse”

¹⁷ <http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2009/0302/irelands-boom-ends-with-a-vengeance>

¹⁸ Aylesworth, Gary. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/>

(Hassan 3). Indeed, the pattern of literary evasion begins with the Irish and Italian bridge authors delineated in Chapter One and finally takes full shape within the literary voices of the contemporary quotidian.

Hassan's understanding of postmodern literature as "the literature of silence" nicely ties with current literary traits of Postmodernism which he identifies as the general presence of violence lacking meaning or value; outrage and apocalypse, parody and literature as a game; the crisis of the Self where the Self is unknowable; radical irony, and the refusal of order (4-10). He also categorically juxtaposes Modernism as that which embodies Urbanism, Technologism, "Dehumanization," Eroticism, Antinomianism, Experimentalism through Elitism, Irony or Abstraction, while he delineates Postmodernism as "a response, direct or oblique, to the Unimaginable that Modernism glimpsed only in its most prophetic moments" (34-39). While he maintains the same categories as those of the Modern, creating continuity between the two literary epochs, he specifies clear changes in doctrine and discourse. While his list is lengthy and encompasses Modernism versus Postmodernism as a movement, some of the juxtapositions most relevant to postmodern literature are the following:¹⁹ Conjunctive, closed Form (M) versus disjunctive, open Antiform (P); Design versus Chance; Hierarchy versus Anarchy; Master/Logos versus Exhaustion/Silence; Distance versus Participation; Totalization versus Deconstruction; Synthesis versus Antithesis; Presence versus Absence; Genre/Boundary versus Text/Intertext; Hypotaxis versus Parataxis, Metaphor versus Metonymy; Signified versus Signifier; Metaphysics versus Irony; Narrative versus Anti-Narrative, and Paranoia Versus Schizophrenia. Hassan's list, which is a postmodern trait in itself, comes from the late 1970's and early 1980's; as such, it

¹⁹ All following juxtapositions are Modern (M) versus Postmodern (P). From "The Dismemberment of Orpheus" in *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*. New York; W.W. Norton and Company, 1997.

lacks knowledge of further developments in postmodern literature which have come within the last thirty years. That being said, however, it is still relevant to turn- of and post-millennium literature and arguably provides the clearest categorical comparison between Modernism and Postmodernism.

Hassan's work is fully relevant to and reflects the literature with which I engage; however, for the sake of a postmodern illusory "continuity," I have chosen to primarily adhere to the two definitions of Postmodernism which Jean-Francois Lyotard and later Frederic Jameson present in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) and *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), respectively. In the former, Lyotard establishes that Postmodernism is defined as "incredulity toward meta-narrative (in which-k.v.) the narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (Lyotard xxiv). It is the latter which ultimately ties to the thesis of the dissertation; that is, that Yeats's grand narrative of the whole is no longer feasible in contemporary society.

For the purpose of comparison between the Irish and Italian texts which I have chosen, I will often interchange the terms "contemporary" and "Postmodern". While clearly not all contemporary literature is Postmodern by definition, I focus upon the wide variety of fictional works which best represent this theoretical viewpoint. The Irish and Italian texts with which I engage support Lyotard's definition of Postmodernism, or the object of his study, as "...the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies" (Lyotard xxiii). Lyotard includes countries such as Ireland and Italy in this definition, as they are considered to be developed nations and fundamental participants in the European Union. The relationship of science and technology to the crisis of the narrative is a sub-topic to Lyotard's definition. An interchange of terminology also supports the condition of Postmodernity elucidated by Douglas

Kellner, which shows that contemporary postmodern society is not fully comprehended without the incorporation of social and economic elements pertaining to globalization²⁰.

In the second half of my definition of Postmodernism as stated above, I ascribe to Jameson's definition of the postmodern condition as "(t)he new mode of relationship through difference" (Jameson 31). As is the case for Lyotard's perspective of Postmodernism, here again in Jameson one can identify how Yeats's complete narrative whole is no longer feasible; instead, difference creates new relationships within and between the various parts of narration. Jameson micro-manages Lyotard's larger crisis of the narrative by outlining specific categories which affect the already denigrated self and ultimately come to represent a more specific, more delineated view of the postmodern condition. A key sub-topic pertaining to Jameson's understanding of the narrative above is his understanding of Postmodernism as "the consumption of sheer commodification as a process" (Jameson x); I will compare this definition and sub-topic in order to emphasize the traits which are endemic to the majority of postmodern literature; fragmentation, schizophrenia, pastiche, pure reliance upon technology, depthlessness, the hyper-real and the simulacral. These are the traits which recur within the span of both Irish and Italian contemporary literature in both pre-and post-millennial contemporary narrative. My goal, therefore, is to incorporate the theoretical background of Lyotard and Jameson in order to provide a standard against which the various texts either conform or diverge.

²⁰ For more, see Kellner, Douglas. "Globalization and the Postmodern Turn".
<http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/globalizationpostmodernturn.pdf>

“Postcolonialism”; “The Postcolonial”

Secondarily to Postmodernism and as a related form of literary criticism, Postcolonialism and the Postcolonial become especially useful when analyzing certain aspects pertaining to contemporary culture as noted within current Irish and Italian fiction. In the case of Italy, Postcolonialism is important when considering the status of recent immigrants and the arrival of migrants into the country. While the nature of my Italian research does not draw heavily on the Postcolonial, this same theoretical basis is nevertheless relevant to both specific narrative moments and key plot points within current Italian fiction.

Likewise, it is impossible to ignore postcolonial theory in the case of Ireland. A general understanding of the postcolonial contemporary situation is understood through the criticism of Benedict Anderson and Edward Said. These two critics have commented upon, or alternatively, have questioned Ireland’s position as a post-colonial entity, where Said, in particular, has worked closely with Irish and Irish-American scholars who represent the concerns of both Northern Ireland and the Republic. His interview, given in Dublin on June 24, 1999, is particularly important to an understanding of intellectual and political literary mediation and for his attention to micro-culture in the larger post-colonial, postmodern society. Said emphasizes difference, resistance, and the reexamination of all-encompassing narratives such as Colonialism. In doing so, he places himself squarely within the patchwork of postmodern culture. Most importantly, concerning Postcolonialism, I shall rely heavily upon the analyses of Joe Cleary, whose *Outrageous Fortune* illuminates the Irish situation from the time of Colonialism onward yet consistently projects an eye toward contemporary Ireland. As such, Cleary’s work rightfully keeps the political aspects of Ireland’s troubled history in mind always as a possible explanation for current socio-cultural trends.

“Global”; “Globalization:

Any examination of the categories pertaining to contemporary literature, even beyond that of an Irish and Italian context, must naturally include some understanding of globalization and the global. For this reason, my multi-leveled definition of globalization follows the eight level hierarchy of William I. Robinson, as defined in his essay “Nine Theses on Our Epoch”²¹:

First, the essence of the process is the replacement for the first time in the history of the modern world system, of all residual pre (or non)- capitalist production relations with capitalist ones in every part of the globe... Second, a new ‘social structure of accumulation’ is emerging which, for the first time in history, is global... Third, this transnational agenda has germinated in every country of the world under the guidance of hegemonic transnationalised fractions of national bourgeoisies... Fourth, observers search for a new global ‘hegemon’ and posit a tri-polar world of European, American, and Asian economic blocs. But the old nation-state phase of capitalism has been superseded by the transnational phase of capitalism... Fifth, the ‘brave new world’ of global capitalism is profoundly anti-democratic... Sixth, ‘poverty amidst plenty,’ the dramatic growth under globalisation of socioeconomic inequalities and of human misery, a consequence of the unbridled operation of transnational capital, is worldwide and generalised... Seventh, there are deep and interwoven racial, ethnic and gender dimensions to this escalating global poverty and inequality... Eighth, there are

²¹ From *The Globalization Reader, 4th Edition* by Frank J. Lechner and John Boli. United Kingdom; John Wiley and Sons, 2012.

deep contradictions in emergent world society that make uncertain the very survival of our species- much less the mid- to long term stabilisation and viability of global capitalism- and portend prolonged global social conflict.

Lechner 23-26

These definitions are relevant to both Irish and Italian contemporary literature as identified in the material of the five chapters of the dissertation. My understanding of globalization will bridge the definitions of Postmodernism which I have established with specific characteristics pertaining to Irish and Italian contemporary culture. Moreover, I will agree with the connection which Douglas Kellner notes between the new Postmodernity and globalization, where “to properly theorize modernity one must articulate globalization and the roles of technoscience and new technologies in its construction” (Kellner 286). Some examples, to be outlined in the following chapters, include a postmodern literary response to world music, global fashion and commerce, the homogenized use of technology, and the degradation of the subject.

In examining the various ways in which Postmodernism in current Irish and Italian fiction breaks down literary narrative wholes, I do not seek to denigrate, reinvent, or falsely reinterpret the standards of Modernism which the work of Yeats has come to proudly model. Instead, I intend to demonstrate that one can view his unity of the narrative whole as also acting as a functioning, relevant element to a postmodernist discourse. As a result, the “new” lies in the myriad ways in which these narratives can mutate, coalesce, and / or ultimately break apart, thereby providing new layers of richness and creativity to contemporary fictional narrative. What ultimately surfaces, then, are the ways in which the “national” literatures of Ireland and Italy

mutate into more universal entities, providing further freedom for the local to become increasingly and unceasingly tied to the global.

Chapter One: Where We Have Been; Where We Are Going: Exploring the Postmodern Tradition in Irish and Italian Literature

"I have come to believe that the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth" (Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*). Eco's words, written in his 1989 fictional work, provide a fitting introduction to an examination of a bridge between the Modern and the Postmodern. Of course, great past works of modernist Irish and Italian literature, such as those of Joyce and Beckett, Pirandello and Svevo, focused upon individualism and disbelief in absolute truth. Nonetheless, these authors and playwrights still subscribed to a belief in meta-narrative, thereby upholding a more modern credence in some sort of function or truth. Postmodernism, as we know, is a breakdown of these beliefs of unified truths and is the absolute refutation and incredulity of meta-narrative. Through his focus on mankind's attempt to confront "enigma" through the interpretation of "truth," Eco shows the ways in which Modernity is both reductive and illusory. Instead, Postmodernism questions these systematic, more traditional and linear attempts at deciphering the world and reveals that the true "truth" lacks any linear model and cannot rely on interpretation in order to create neat, orderly "Grand Narratives."

Historically, however, authors, poets, and playwrights have tried to push the boundaries of their respective worldviews, providing key precedents for future writers. Several authors, in particular, confront changes in epochs and worldviews through their reflection of both modern and postmodern trends. As such, these authors act as bridges between the Modern and the Postmodern, often using fiction in order to question, challenge, or comment upon socio-political and cultural change. However, there are always inherent dangers in discussing these 'bridge

authors': on one hand, writers and critics determined to keep an author solidly in one literary movement or another become very defensive. In school, for example, one is taught that James Joyce is a Modernist and Paul Auster is a Postmodernist, even if each author still provides examples of Postmodernism or Modernism, respectively. On the other hand, reductive thinking provides the response, "All authors can be examples of all genres." While this could be true to a certain extent, in that authors at any moment embody a wide range of literary examples reflecting different times and movements, it is too general a statement to provide an effective literary context for a particular author.

Italian and Irish 'Bridge' Authors

In order to address this conundrum regarding Irish and Italian modern and postmodern bridge literature, therefore, it is useful to focus briefly upon authors who consistently demonstrate qualities of both literary movements within their fiction. Of the Italian writers, I shall take Luigi Pirandello and Italo Calvino into consideration; of the Irish, my focus will be upon James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Flann O'Brien, and W.B. Yeats. I will also briefly mention John Banville and the Anglo-Irish fiction writer Laurence Sterne. I will discuss these works by taking an unconventional path and by following two trajectories; for the Italian and by following a postmodern gesture, I allow the critics to approach the individual authors important to the history of postmodern fiction, rather than to discuss authors and critics as separate, linear entities. For the more historically based Irish analysis, I use a content-based approach which allows individual authors to surface at key historical moments within each particular work of criticism.

Probably the most influential Modernist to the postmodern Italian literary movement is Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936). Of course, Pirandello's Postmodernism is questionable, as he is often positioned squarely within the realm of Modernism. However, an example such as *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* reveals other, more contemporary and less traditional aspects of Modernism. According to William V. Spanos, *Sei personaggi*, for example, is "... a literary forebearer of open form in modernist literature..." for it represents an approach to truth that is "disclosive not relative"; likewise, the text critiques 'universal' qualities of art (Petruzzi 80). Similarly, Anthony Petruzzi finds that Pirandello, through his combination of realism and commedia, instead critiques a realist conception of truth.²² As such, these critics correctly question the status of Pirandello as a fully modernist playwright. Also, in the speech of the characters, or "personaggi," Pirandello rejects the idea that language "reflects a stable meaning which is accessible to each and every person."²³ In this sense, Pirandello speaks to the individual, allowing him or her to pick fragments of meaning which provide unstable and varying 'truths' and which will never be the same for each individual reader or audience member.

Like Pirandello, Italo Calvino (1923-1985) clearly walks the line between Modernism and Postmodernism. While the majority of Calvino's work fits squarely within a modern context, his later works undeniably reflect the author's move from a modern to a postmodern literary mentality. This change is also related to both the influence of the French literary school of *Oulipo*²⁴ on Calvino's writing and to his growing interest in mathematics. In *Le città invisibili*, for example, Calvino focuses upon the retelling of Marco Polo and Kubla Khan through the

²² Petruzzi, Anthony. "Hermeneutic Retrieval and the Conflict of Styles in Pirandello's "Sei Personaggi in Cerca D'Autore." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Summer, 1997.

²³ *Ibid.* Pg. 53.

²⁴ "Ouvroir de littérature potentielle."

context of a checkerboard. In his tale, Marco Polo tries to explain the variety of cities to which he has traveled to an aging Kubla Khan. Because the emperor does not speak the same language as Marco Polo, the explorer must use individual examples, signs, and symbols from the cities in order to be understood. This self-interpretation is in itself very Postmodern; like Khan, the reader is forced to interpret details regarding the individual cities for him or herself.

Le città invisibili is a further fitting example of the bridge between Modernism and Postmodernism in its tension between linear and non-linear signs, symbols, and content of individual chapters. While Calvino is clearly Modern in his meticulous ordering of the chapters which follow careful patterns, as well as his maintenance of a larger grand frame narrative of the conversation between Kubla Khan and Marco Polo, he is, at the same time, clearly Postmodern in his fragmentation of chapter content. Take Zaira, the “city of bastions,” for example; in this city, it “...does not tell you its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning-rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls” (Calvino 10-11). Here, the city points to a shared value of memory; however, these memories are neither concrete nor systematic. The past is, for example, “like the lines of a hand”; furthermore, the past is represented through extremely diverse objects such as banisters and windows, all marred by marks. Through these examples, therefore, Calvino demonstrates the ways in which his fiction bridges the gap between a thoroughly modern mindset and that of an individual coming to terms with a new literary movement ready to confront the challenges of Postmodernity.

Similar to the Italian writers mentioned above, many Irish writers also bridge the gap between modern and postmodern literary movements. In the introduction to the dissertation, I

showed the ways in which W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) bridged the gap between the Modern and the Postmodern through examples such as “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” and “The Second Coming”; while many scholars of Yeats continue to push the playwright and poet as *the* exemplum of the modernist literary establishment, the nature of his poetry instead calls for greater dedication to further examination in the light of Postmodernity.

Like Yeats, James Joyce’s (1882-1941) Postmodernism is also highly questionable, for even the great postmodern critics again argue his viability as a Postmodernist²⁵. Many scholars, for example, argue that the death of Joyce, along with that of Virginia Woolf, ushered in the advent of Postmodernism²⁶. In this particular critique, author and critic Jim Ruland, for example, firmly states that “...Joyce isn’t a postmodernist” and that “Joyce is a modernist but distinct from other modernists and because one can’t be something and post- something simultaneously, he creates crises of classification”²⁷. Ruland declares Joyce an “ultramodernist” and uses the words of critic Derek Attridge in order to define ultramodernism as “the particular manner in which Joyce accumulates details, multiplies structures, and over-determines interpretation”²⁸ ; as such, Joyce thereby succeeds in setting *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake* apart from other modernist works. However, Ruland still ignores the fact that this “something else” has been open to postmodern interpretation, called “chance” by Attridge. In fact, in the same passage which Ruland quotes, Attridge continues on to state the following:

²⁵ Richardson, Brian. “The Genealogies of “Ulysses”, the Invention of Postmodernism, and the Narratives of Literary History.” *ELH*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 67, No. 4, Winter, 2000. Pp. 1035-1054.

²⁶ Ruland, Jim. “James Joyce and postmodernism: A conflicted catechism.” *Los Angeles Times*, 6/16/09.

²⁷ *Ibid* (4).

²⁸ *Ibid* (4).

Yet the particular manner in which Joyce accumulates details, multiplies structures, and over-determines interpretation achieves something else as well, and something that I believe sets these texts apart from most other modernist works while it relates them to our own cultural moment: it makes possible, and *relishes*, the random, the contingent, and -- emerging out of these as a necessary effect -- the coincidental. Rather than attempting to control the mass of fragmentary detail to produce meaning, Joyce's major texts *allow* meaning to arise out of that mass by the operations of chance. Attridge 120

In the above passage, Attridge makes a solid case for Joyce's Postmodernism through his emphasis upon random orders of events through the context of chance, rather than a narrative based solely upon purely linear sets of determined events. While Attridge associates this style with a more contemporary "cultural moment," one must not forget that both Joycean fragmentation and random narrative events, based upon chance and which produce meaning, work against unified grand narratives of so-called 'modern' fiction. When chance is taken into consideration, then, it is acceptable to notice and to reconsider the literary similarities between the fictional works of a purely postmodern author such as Paul Auster with that of an untouchable "Modernist" such as James Joyce.

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) reflects postmodern tendencies in his narrative voice and writing style. For example, Brian Finney perceives Beckett as an exemplum of the Postmodern in his ability to bridge silence and the "real." Instead of focusing on grand narratives which cannot be sustained, Beckett's work reflects the 'here and now' in its ability to reject these linear

narratives in order to focus more succinctly on itself and what it will be. Finney explains further in the following:

Without such metanarratives, Lyotard argues, each work of art, "working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*," becomes a unique event describing its own process of coming into being. This is what Beckett's fictions do. Each one starts out anew, inventing its rules as it goes along. Its subject is itself, the narrating voice creating a world out of language. Before, between and after the jabber of words that constitute the fiction is silence. How to express silence through sound? Beckett is preoccupied with this dilemma from the beginning of his career. Unlike pigment and musical notes, words signify beyond any writer's control. "Is there any reason," Beckett asks a friend in 1937, "why that terrible arbitrary materiality of the word's surface should not be permitted to dissolve...?"

Finney 842

Beckett's final question in the above begs connection to postmodern fragmentation. Aside from the satire and irony which permeate Beckett's work, the author and playwright hints at the postmodern condition through his emphasis upon the fragmentation of the subject. His trilogy *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (*Malone muert*, 1953), and *The Unnamable* (*L'innommable*, 1953) is, as Finney puts it, "an exercise in self-destruction,"²⁹ where characters often face psychological moments of displacement, fragmentation, and alienation. These themes permeate a

²⁹ Finney, Brian. "Samuel Beckett's Postmodern Fictions." *The Columbia History of the British Novel*. Ed. John Richetti. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. 842-66.

wide variety of Beckett's novels and plays and place him squarely as a bridge author caught between the Modern and the Postmodern.

Along with Beckett, Flann O'Brien (born Brian Ó Nualláin, 1911-1966) is critical in providing a foundation for the eventual development of a postmodern sensibility in Irish theater and literature. His novels, which are at any moment a combination of wit, satire, and pure humor, speak to the human condition by examining the range of voices which represent it. However, both his theme and narration often push the boundaries of the modernist mentality of the era. In his 1941 Irish language novel *An Béal Bocht*, for instance, O'Brien, writing under the pseudonym Myles na gCopaleen, parodies the great Irish language texts popular during the Irish literary revival and satirizes the people "... who wanted to romanticize and sentimentalize the Gaelic people and culture, remnants of a dying language and a dying way of life" (O'Brien xv).

To an even greater extent than *An Béal Bocht*, O'Brien's *At Swim Two Birds* (1939) is emblematic of the author's early postmodern sensibility. The humorous novel plays with narrative form and depicts a pastiche of writers and narrative voices; great Irish fictional and mythical figures, along with the dialogue of four diverse narrators, complicate the text to the point of quasi-absurdity. As such, according to Kim Mullen, "(n)one of these discourses is privileged; none has the last word" (McMullen 62). Under O'Brien's pen, the sacred, mythological terrain of Irish culture and literature is often decomposed, plagiarized and parodied, subsequently creating a clear model for the contemporary literature of Ireland to come in the new millennium and beyond.

A more contemporary example of postmodern fiction which acts as a bridge between the Modern and the Postmodern is John Banville (born 1945), whose literary style mirrors the

scientific precision which is currently so coveted in television and media. While Banville's writing is often considered to be located squarely in the Postmodern, I instead place him as a bridge author for his use of both traditional modern and contemporary postmodern literary theme and style; because of this dichotomy, Banville is a fitting bridge author with literary sentiment clearly spanning Modernism and Postmodernism.

Often stylistically compared with Vladimir Nabokov, Banville's prose in works such as *The Sea* (2005) is devoid of deep emotion; instead, the reader is left with a sense of both profound despair and *ennui*. Indeed, the author's postmodernism has been especially noted by Roberta Gefer Wondrich through Banville's particular connections between love and desire; these traits are indicative of the postmodern tradition as delineated by Brian McHale:

...(P)ostmodernist fiction has thoroughly exploited both love and death not only as topics but essentially as formally relevant features of the novel, by systematically foregrounding the relation existing between author, characters, and reader, all entangled in a web of love, seduction, and deferred annihilation, thus transgressing the related ontological boundaries. Wondrich 80

In this sense, Banville's postmodern fragments of text and narrative help to form meaningful interactions between the various worlds of the text and of the reader.

Finally, any mention of Irish and Italian authors who straddle Modernism and Postmodernism must also go to the both beloved and much maligned novel of Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), entitled *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. The novel, which was first published in 1759 and reflects the digressive, witty, and satirical nature of its protagonist and his fragmented, stream of consciousness writing method, is often considered as an early example of postmodern literary style. On one hand, a heavy emphasis upon nostalgia and parody with respect to Tristram Shandy's persona reflects these same two defining characteristics of Postmodernism. Moreover, the novel, which is a novel within a novel, plays with narrative form centuries before its time:

Perhaps the most startling of Sterne's "innovations" in *Tristram Shandy* is the deliberate ten page gap (pages 241 through 250) in the text- "the chapter which I have torn out," according to the narrator. A careful reader will note that the page numbers jump from 240 to 251! In addition, the novel contains pages which are entirely blank; pages with chapter heads but no text; a page with a large inked area; gaping holes in the text; and copious amounts of dashes and asterisks (many denoting obscenities).

Kopito 3

In this sense, *Tristram Shandy* reflects the Postmodern in its ability to play with ironic absence and stylistic subversion; the incorporation of fragmented signs and symbols is only one way in which the reader is encouraged to both engage with the text and to ultimately formulate his or her own conclusions based upon these fragments.

Where We Have Been; Where We are Going

When regarding the historical scholarship associated with Italian and Irish Postmodernism, it is important to consider the collection of works which have addressed the subject and have proven to be lasting in their ability to correctly identify postmodern works of importance. Of contemporary Italian fiction, important recent critical works are Remo Ceserani's *Raccontare il postmoderno* (Bollati Boringhieri, 1997), Filippo La Porta's *La nuova narrativa italiana* (Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), Alberoto Casadei's *Stile e tradizione nel romanzo contemporaneo* (Il Mulino, 2007), Stefania Lucamante's *Italian Pulp Fiction: The New Narrative of the Giovani Cannibali Writers* (Rosemont, 2001), and Rocco Capozzi's "The new Italian novel" from Peter Bondanella and Andrea Cicarelli's *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel* (Cambridge UP, 2003). In Ireland, four important critical works are Joe Cleary's *Outrageous Fortune* (Field Day, 2007), Seamus Deane's *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790* (Oxford UP, 1997), David Lloyd's *Ireland After History* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), and David J. Lynch's *When the Luck of the Irish Ran Out: The World's Most Resilient Country and Its Struggle to Rise Again* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Remo Ceserani's *Raccontare il postmoderno*, first published in 1997 and republished in 2009, is one of the first serious works of criticism to approach the Italian literary Postmodern. Ceserani systematically approaches the history of Italian Postmodernism, beginning with the importance of great epochal change. The first great "mutamento," he sees, occurs between the Settecento and the beginning of the Ottocento, and the second in the first years of the 1980s; both of these changes, he suggests, are based upon changes in the various areas of social life, of the imagination, of human communication, and of advances in the marketing of cultural production (Ceserani 19-20, 28). He then goes on to delineate the various factors, such as film, literature,

and stylistic traits such as camp and kitsch which countered previously held notions pertaining to the high modernism of such authors as Yeats and Eliot, Pound and Joyce (30). Two founding influences which opened up the Postmodern to an Italian audience, Ceserani clarifies, are Peter Carravetta and Paolo Spedicato, two authors and critics who contributed to an Italian understanding of American Postmodernism through a Heideggerian interpretation. This Heideggerian Hermeneutic philosophy, which focuses on the openness, fragmentation, and temporality of a text in opposition to ideas such as “spazialità”, logocentrism, and critical expectation³⁰, also broaches the term “post,” as in Postmodernism, or the condition of being in an epoch of what comes after, or posthumous, to the great traditions of occidental culture (40). This discourse, Ceserani clarifies, was the first important attempt to open up the postmodern discourse in the cultural and literary environment of Italy (41). Next, both Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard become important to the discourse in the 1970s as two critics fully engaged with the postmodern experience. Finally, Ceserani takes on the task of interpreting Frederic Jameson and his various writing on the Postmodern in order to illustrate the connection between Marxism, capitalism, consumerism, and the arts. He is primarily concerned with Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke UP, 1991), in which the author presents some of his most famous contributions to the discourse of Postmodernism: nostalgia, pastiche, fragmentation of the subject, space and hyperspace, etc.

In later chapters, Ceserani rightfully brings up questions and answers regarding the problems which remain concerning Postmodernism, such as the completeness of the project, the

³⁰ “L’esigenza fa emergere l’essere del testo nella sua temporalità e frammentarietà, di contro a spazialità, logocentrismo e aspettativa della fine della letteratura per esprimere il giudizio critico, e l’attenzione ermeneutica alle forme aperte o *dis-closive* come all’intertestualità rimangono sostanzialmente estranee a questi interventi.” Carravetta, Peter and Paolo Spedicato. *Postmoderno e letteratura. Percorsi e visioni della critica in America* Milano: Bompiani, 1984. Pg. 11.

social-political effects of Postmodernism, as well as how to interpret the literary Postmodern. In this particular line of inquiry, Ceserani introduces the work of David Harvey, Brian McHale, and Linda Hutcheon to an Italian audience, including Harvey's schema comparing and contrasting modern and postmodern literary characteristics from *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Blackwell, 1990).

Ceserani's most innovative chapter critically analyzes the early stage of the postmodern tradition within Italy. After discussing various reactions between Italian and American students, Ceserani comes to explain why an appropriation of Postmodernism as a viable movement in Italy continues to pervade Italian literary criticism; this is, he explains, due to the nature of Postmodernism to be both lacking and manipulative in style, thereby placing the reader on an uneven literary plane:

... (I)l plurilinguismo o il pluristilismo della linea espressionistica della letteratura italiana sono cosa intrinsecamente diversa dalla manipolazione stilistica del postmoderno... È proprio la mancanza di uno stile nelle opere postmoderne, e la tendenza a mescolare e manipolare gli stili... che spiega, a mio avviso, il rifiuto ostinato, da parte degli storici e dei critici letterari italiani, di riconoscere la letteratura postmoderna come tale. Persino gli scrittori, impegnati nel creare la nuova letteratura, sembrano spaventati all'idea di raccogliere alcuni dei temi tipici dell'immaginario postmoderno, quasi temessero di esserne trascinati lontano e di perdere il controllo del loro stile letterario. (165-6)

In the above, Ceserani proposes that the reasons why Italian Postmodernism has received negative critical appraisal has much to do with the style of traditional Italian literary expression, as well as the lack of pure, concrete style which postmodern literature projects. As a result, he proposes that young authors also shy away from embracing the postmodern style for fear of negative criticism, as well as the fear of a “lack of control” for what concerns their literary style. Ceserani goes on to explain that Italian literary critics are stubbornly attached to the idea of literature as representing the “reality” of life (166). However, Ceserani proves that writers such as Umberto Eco in *Il nome della rosa* (Bompiani, 1980) and Italo Calvino in both *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* (Einaudi, 1979) and in the non-fiction essays of *Lezioni americane: Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Mondadori, 1988) do successfully reflect and incorporate key aspects of the Postmodern within their literature, even if Italian literary critics refuse to focus upon these particular connections (167). In fact, he notes that Calvino is both highly valued on postmodern American university reading lists and that in *Lezioni americane*, Calvino was “pronto a tracciare forse la migliore mappa descrittiva della società e della cultura postmoderna che sia stata messa a nostra disposizione da un intellettuale contemporaneo” (173). As for the case of Eco, Ceserani views the writer as having best exhibited the Postmodern in his ability to marry the experimental novel with the consumer novel. *The Name of the Rose*, along with its authorial explanation in *Postille* (Bompiani, 1983) continues to have worldwide renown, where the novel is indicative of a clearly postmodern pastiche of language, genre, and symbolism. Eco himself has expressed his place as a Postmodernist in the *Postille al nome della rosa*:

Actually, I believe that postmodernism is not a trend to be chronologically defined, but, rather, an ideal category- or, better still, a *Kunstsollen*, a way of operating. We could say that every period has its own postmodernism, just as every period would have its own mannerism (and, in fact, I wonder if postmodernism is not the modern name for mannerism as metahistorical category).

Eco 530

Eco continues on to show how the historic avant-garde acts like Postmodernism in certain respects, but how it ultimately fails to go any further due to a metalanguage that speaks of impossible texts; “The postmodern reply to the modern,” Eco clarifies, “consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently” (530).

Ceserani concludes with a brief dedication to the works of Antonio Tabucchi (1943-), in which the critic celebrates Tabucchi’s work as indicative of “operazioni molto raffinate di intertestualità sia delle costruzioni narrative che mettono in scena il dubbio ontologico della conoscibilità o interpretabilità di ciò che avviene in noi e nel mondo in cui viviamo” (Ceserani 203). He particularly delineates this effective narrative construction which alerts us to the doubt surrounding our worldview in *Il gioco del rovescio* (1981), in which the word *rovescio*, as “backhanded” or “topsy-turvy,” alludes to the dominant thematic elements of the stories; the title reflects, according to Ceserani, a systematic turning upside down of meaning, of the truth of the narration, of the word *rêves*, of the word *sever*, of the back-and-forth use of French and Spanish, and of the final perspective pertaining to the central painting, *Las Meninas*, of Velázquez (203). Throughout his emphasis on the topsy-turvy nature of the short story, Ceserani

proves that Tabucchi's unconventional literary style aptly fits with the standards of broken narrative form proposed by Postmodernism.

The second key text to reflect the tradition of the Postmodern in Italy is that of Filippo La Porta's *La nuova narrativa italiana*. In the text, La Porta continues the same themes which Ceserani had begun in *Raccontare il postmoderno*. Like Ceserani, La Porta sees the onset of the "new Italian novel" as beginning in the first years of the 1980s; however, he goes on to specify, in true postmodern form, the exact characteristics³¹ which identify this new type of narrative. Also, La Porta reaffirms Ceserani's findings concerning the "dopo," or after, as first discussed in the Heideggerian Hermeneutic discourse of Carravetta and Spedicato; he states, that in the new generation of young narrators, there is often the strong sense of the 'after' in such concepts as the anticipated end of the Novecento, the 'after' of after the end of the world, the 'after' of after the end of Modernity; in all, the knowledge that we are now irrevocably broken with, or 'after,' the models and traditions of the past (La Porta 13). Like Ceserani, La Porta also validates both Eco's and Calvino's central roles as the pioneers of postmodern Italian literature; for Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, this Postmodernism is found in the fact that there is no more "story" to be told; rather, what is left are only maps, atlases, catalogues, and superficial,

³¹ "Dunque, per tracciare subito una *sinossi* schematica e certo incompleta (da verificare poi autore per autore): assenza di manifesti, poetiche, gruppi organizzati...permalosa insofferenza per etichette generazionali; gusto della catalogazione e mania di repertori; centralità via via declinate del Viaggio (come fuga in un altrove, ricerca di sé o dell'autentico, resistenza morale...) nelle storie raccontate; indifferenza alla Profondità e descrizione minuziosa delle superfici; enfasi sentimentale... e ben calcolata prudenza nell'esporsi troppo; lirismo spesso incontrollato e arroccamento di un io sempre più debole (e vigile); attitudine posmoderna (e *italianissima*) a eludere il tragico e a spettacolarizzare (e così esorcizzare) i conflitti; contemplazione giocosa dell'apocalisse...; autorappresentazione perlopiù nobilitante o molto indulgente; assenza di padre e rapporto manipolatorio con la tradizione (tutto può servire, anche a costo di essere disinnescato e di divenire *Kitsch* di quart'ordine); una certa refrattarietà alla forma-romanzo...; una sussiegosa estraneità ai generi della cultura di massa; assenza di particolari sperimentazioni sul piano linguistico...; retorica dell'Estremismo, gusto estetizzante della Radicalità...; attrazione per la Realtà e per l'Altro, per la Vita Quotidiana e la Gente Comune, ma incapacità a rappresentarla...; e infine il mito della Letteratura, dell'Arte, molto più presente di quello prevedibile del mercato e del successo..." (La Porta 9-10).

minute descriptions that lack profoundness or interiority; instead, for Eco's *Il nome della rosa*, we are inundated with stories pertaining to Postmodernity: These stories are "accattivanti come una telenovela, istruttive come un Bignami di filosofia, divertenti come un quiz, precotte come un cibo in scatola, già pronte per diventare un film di successo, che non sembrano però avere alcun rapporto con la 'verità' di un'esperienza o di una situazione" (La Porta 11). With these postmodern characteristics in mind, La Porta reaffirms Calvino's and Eco's places as central to the postmodern Italian discourse, leaving little to be refuted by critics who continue to question the validity of the postmodern 'canon.'

What La Porta also successfully proves within *La nuova narrativa italiana* is the influence which Calvino holds over younger Postmodernists, chief among them Andrea de Carlo (1952-). La Porta specifically sees this influence in the humor of De Carlo which emphasizes the acute sense of *alterità*; he specifies that "L'Altro in De Carlo appare perlopiù oggetto di disgusto o di disprezzo o di annoiata osservazione: il famigerato sguardo della giovinezza, così enfaticizzato e in fondo ammirato, non risulta poi tanto candido e inoffensivo" (31). In fact, La Porta hones in on this youthful perspective, especially as it applies to De Carlo's debut novel, *Treno di panna* (Einaudi 1981). The novel, which recounts the daily quotidian of a Milanese photographer in Los Angeles, is also celebrated by La Porta for the "lightness of touch", or *levità*, which strongly demonstrates the influence of Calvino; this is particularly noted through De Carlo's use of an inordinate amount of details concerning the narrative perspective, as well as in the humor which is delicate, *puddico* (prim), and attracted to the details of daily reality (31-32). However, La Porta's understanding of what he identifies as the characteristics pertaining to *Treno di panna* becomes important for novels which De Carlo will publish in the future.

De Carlo's literary style is notable for its representation of the balance between the postmodern tension of consumerism, technology and fragmentation of the 'Self' and more ethically-minded issues pertaining to the contemporary quotidian. For instance, the work of De Carlo encourages a reader to consider the following question: "Is our obsession with technology and consumerism wrong? And if so, what are the physical, economic, and / or emotional perils of Postmodernity?" Later works, such as *Pura vita* (Bompiani 2001), *Giro di vento* (Bompiani 2004) and *Durante* (Bompiani 2008) truly begin to engage with these questions, for the disparate thematic elements, fragmented characters, hyper-use of technology and, in some cases, stylistic narrative experimentation are strongly relevant to the contemporary quotidian as we know it.

What La Porta omits, however, is that in the same moment that De Carlo, as author, critiques contemporary society (and especially contemporary Milanese society, which is often considered to be cold, money hungry, and hypocritical) through his characters and his plot elements, the author himself embraces this same culture through his own hyper-reliance upon his continued ability to craft 'ideal' consumer novels. De Carlo's fiction consistently lands on Italian bestseller lists, and De Carlo has produced very textually simple, reader-friendly novels. De Carlo further plays into the consumer aspect of his novels through his emphasis on the global translation of his literature; his novels have been published in more than twenty world languages,³² thereby securing his place as a globally appealing writer.

Moving away from a discussion of De Carlo, La Porta later discusses the extraordinarily late access of Italians to the idea of Modernity as seen through the "miracle" of economics, consumerism, and secularization; however, what he also notes is the tension between the persistence of a pre-industrial Italian attitude toward the self and the family and that of a modern

³² http://www.andreadecarlo.com/www.andreadecarlo.com/Traduzioni___Translations.html.

sensibility: “...(G)li autori di cui parlo si adattano plasticamente e fantasiosamente al misto di modernità e arretratezza che caratterizza la nostra società, si mimetizzano dentro i più vari generi narrativi, *si travestono*³³ dentro le identità più improbabili” (47). While he places Aldo Busi, Sandro Veronesi, Ermanno Cavazzoni, Giovanni Pascutto, Enrico Palandri, Silvia Ballestra, and Enrico Brizzi under this umbrella category of ‘modern’ dress-up, La Porta is particularly concerned with the work of Pier Vittorio Tondelli (1955-1991), who best represents narrative transformation. In Tondelli’s novel *Altri libertini* (Feltrinelli, 1980) and then in his *Camere separate* (Bompiani, 1989), La Porta identifies a balance in the use of postmodern traits such as expressive exuberance, nostalgia, alternativity, the suggestion of voyage and / or flight, and a focus on sentimental kitsch, masking, and alienation in order to succinctly narrate the so-called ‘realities’ of both postmodern and contemporary life; however, Tondelli particularly succeeds in presenting these traits through a specifically Italian contemporary lens. La Porta identifies Tondelli’s attempt to do so in *Altri libertini*, in which the critic states that “...questo romanzo d’esordio si mostra però tutto *italiano*, proprio nel senso di voler imbrigliare il negativo attraverso l’enfasi teatrale e la cantabilità (gridata o sommessa)” (50).

La Porta’s last chapter discusses the ‘Giovani Cannibali,’ or ‘Young Cannibal’ movement, in great detail.³⁴ Instead of focusing on the particular literary traits which these authors have in common as Ceserani does, La Porta instead shows how Italian tradition encouraged the growth of this genre of novel; in support, he writes: “E sappiamo che nella nostra tradizione letteraria si trova tanto orrore sanguinolento e di cartapesta (basti pensare ai romanzi ottocenteschi di Guerrazzi)” (260). From this history arose the shared values of pulp fiction and the monstrous and grotesque within the Cannibali tradition. Later, La Porta discusses the

³³ Italics in the original.

³⁴ To be further defined and discussed below.

qualities of pulp literature in detail and how it relates to that of the *Giovani Cannibali*; however, he never fully fleshes out the relationship between pulp and the *Giovani Cannibali*. He places several authors squarely within the pulp fiction tradition, notably Niccolò Ammaniti, Giuseppe Culicchia, Carlo Lucarelli, Simona Vinci, and Aldo Nove.

While La Porta only briefly mentions Aldo Nove's and Niccolò Ammaniti's influence on the pulp genre, both authors have proven to be two of the more prolific and enduring writers of the contemporary literary tradition, as mentioned above. La Porta does, however, spend time in a discussion of the work of Giuseppe Culicchia (1965-), whose *Tutti giù per terra* (Garzanti 1994) was Culicchia's first bestseller, effectively portraying the consumer, television, and youth culture which has come to pervade so much of contemporary literature. Of Culicchia, La Porta specifies the following:

Credo che la cifra di questo libro non consista neppure nel lungo, verbosissimo, iterativo monologo contro i messaggi pubblicitari, le innumerevoli rappresentazioni del cibo (geneticamente manipolato), i replicanti giapponesi, l'unto di McDonald's, le Sacre Famiglie, ecc., ma in altro. Nello scoprire che quello che nei romanzi precedenti era disagio psicologico, disadattamento alla società dei consumi, qui si traduce in una 'infermità ontologica, in un buco nero dell'esistenza in cui, quasi con mossa preventiva, ci si lascia sprofondare volontariamente. (271)

Following *Tutti giù per terra*, Culicchia would revisit these same themes of verbosity versus fragmentation, psychological disturbance, and consumer obsession in a post-millennial context, as I will later discuss in the dissertation.

The greatest limit to La Porta's work is one which arises through both space and time and through the problematic nature of postmodern, contemporary fiction to be always changing and mutating. This weakness centers around the issue of linear authorial relevance or irrelevance, in which each chapter contains authors who have either remained critically important, such as Andrea De Carlo, or who have somewhat faded in their literary influence. At the time of its printing, La Porta's work was, as far as my knowledge goes, the only critical text to deeply cover all of the writers important to current fictional discourse within a very specific ten year span of Italian literary history. However, it is my hope to expand the in-depth work which La Porta first analyzed by turning the lens on authors who continue to have notoriety well past the turn of the millennium, as well as to formulate a new way to consider contemporary fiction not based upon genre or style, but rather on inherent postmodern traits which recur and bridge a wide variety of Italian and Irish contemporary fiction. That being said, however, without *La nuova narrativa italiana*'s foundational work, my effort would have been most difficult.

Other Critical Works and Works in Translation

In addition to the critical works concerning the Postmodern and the contemporary novel mentioned above, further works of criticism in both Italian and in English contribute to the understanding of current Italian fiction. In Italian, Alberto Casadei's *Stile e tradizione nel romanzo contemporaneo* is useful for its analysis of technical considerations regarding the

contemporary Italian novel. For example, Casadei examines the “coordinates” of the Italian novel from the 1980s until today. He focuses particularly on the socio-political and economic factors which helped to shape the contemporary Italian novel, through dynamics such as the relationship between consumerism and the novel. What ultimately results, Casadei specifies, is the rise of thematic elements pertaining to the contemporary novel in four categories:

- l'iperbolicità (caratterizzata da esibiti eccessi, p.es. crimini iper-violenti, linguaggi iper-gergali, ecc.);
- il saggismo (caratterizzato dalla presenza dell'io-autore in funzione di testimone e interprete di eventi real-fittizi);
- l'autobiografia (che presenta la vita stessa dell'autore come *exemplum*, peraltro anch'esso a volte *fictum*);
- l'allegoria (riportata al suo consueto valore interpretativo di secondo grado, ma senza una presunzione di completezza, e quindi di validità universale)

Casadei 54

In the above quotation, Casadei has successfully encompassed the four thematic categories of hyperbole, self-wisdom, autobiography, and interpretive, incomplete allegory, all of which do fittingly represent a large majority of contemporary fiction. In this way, he has successfully advanced the work which La Porta had previously hypothesized in *La nuova narrativa italiana*. This ability to concretize traits of contemporary Italian fiction is partially due to the fact that

Casadei's work comes almost four years after the publication of La Porta's novel and is able to better analyze literary trends through a longer period of historical time.

Casadei also considers the year 1994 to be crucial to the development of the contemporary Italian novel. This is because it was not only a year of best sellers, symbolic in the evolution of the "editorial- narrative" emphasis begun in the 1980s; he writes, "infatti viene raggiunta una sorta di culmine di una delle tendenze sopra individuate, quella del postmodernismo intellettualistico, e nel contempo si profilano nuovi sviluppi sul versante della libertà espressiva apparentemente antiretorica, che troveranno una diversa declinazione negli anni successivi" (63). As examples of this type of novel which married "intellectual postmodernism" and "anti-rhetorical free expression," he provides works such Susanna Tamaro's *Va dove ti porta il cuore* (Baldini & Castoldi, 1994), Enrico Brizzi's *Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo* (Transeuropa, 1994) and Giuseppe Culicchia's *Tutti giù per terra* (Garzanti, 1994). The year 1994 was also notable for the creation of Quentin Tarantino's film, *Pulp Fiction*; this film was partially responsible in providing the name and context of the genre of Italian pulp fiction.

Like La Porta and Ceserani before him, Casadei analyzes the character of pulp fiction as it has now developed into the 1990s and beyond. He states the following:

Oggi possiamo affermare che il *pulp* italiano è stato un fenomeno bifronte: da un lato ha costituito una maniera sin troppo facile di esposizione del 'marcio' sociale e culturale in forma banalmente grottesca e velleitariamente trasgressiva; dall'altro ha rappresentato nei casi migliori un allontanamento dalla logica

autoriproduttiva della letteratura commerciale degli anni Ottanta, che giungeva a concepire la forma-romanzo come una mera organizzazione di un sapere già precostituito, a livello intellettualistico o emotivo-sentimentale. (70)

Following in the footsteps of La Porta, Casadei affirms that pulp fiction supports the consumer appetite for the banal and grotesque, playing fully and unabashedly into these ‘lowbrow’ types of literary tendencies. However, he also notes that current pulp fiction has gone beyond that set forth in the 1980s, suggesting that pulp now distances itself from a style of literature which pre-constructs intellectual or emotional/sentimental knowledge. Casadei uses Ammaniti and Nove as primary examples, thereby placing them now purely within the pulp genre. He also draws many connections to film, not only through Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*, but also through films such as Oliver Stone’s 1994 film *Natural Born Killers* and the literary-cinematic influence of Stephen King (72).

A clear example of the Italian pulp tradition can be found in the fictional works of Aldo Nove (1967-). These short stories represent the mass consumer and mass media fixation of contemporary Italian society. Nove’s most famous collection of stories, *Woobinda* (1996) and *Super Woobinda* (1998), focus on pop culture and the infiltration of television and the media within public and private spheres. According to Rocco Capozzi, the tendency of characters to spout out television commercials and to focus upon their horoscopes within Nove’s short stories acts as a mirror to Nove’s young readership; Capozzi states that “(t)he success of the hilarious *Woobinda...* and *Super Woobinda...* launched a successful career from which young readers

began to quote phrases and expressions”³⁵. The focus on consumerism and the appropriation of mass media is only one way in which Nove’s collections of stories fit well with the tenets of Postmodernism. Fragmentation of the body and the *anima*, alienation, and hyper-reliance on technology, just to name a few, are further categories which course through Nove’s work and tie him squarely to the contemporary literary Postmodern.

Like Aldo Nove, Niccolò Ammaniti (1966-) was traditionally associated with the Cannibali movement and now represents a wider, more mainstream contemporary literary public. While he was initially one of the contributors to the founding anthology *Gioventù cannibale* of 1996, he is more famous for bestselling novels such as *Ti prendo e ti porto via* (Mondadori, 1999) *Io non ho paura* (Einaudi, 2001) and *Come dio comanda* (Mondadori, 2006). These three novels depict gratuitous language and overt scenes of both physical and sexual violence; however, Ammaniti depicts these scenes in a style that Rocco Capozzi believes to be a seamless cohesion of graphicness and naturalness; he writes:

... (I)n Ammaniti’s style, such graphically explicit elements³⁶ are expressed with a naturalness that reflects the high level of desensitization contemporary readers have when confronted with violence or what only recently was still considered to be obscene language. Thus Ammaniti demonstrates to his reader how explicitly violent and sexual images from comic books, cartoons, the cinema, and mass media in general have saturated our literary language. (225)

³⁵Capozzi, Rocco. “The New Italian Novel.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel*. Bondanella, Peter and Andrea Ciccarelli, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

³⁶ He specifies, pornography and frequent use of obscenities.

What Capozzi ultimately identifies is Ammaniti's ability to move beyond the rigorous standards of a Cannibali context in order to embody a more postmodern, mainstream one. Of Postmodernism in particular, the author's writing has clearly progressed throughout the years, from an original focus upon a clearly Cannibali discourse to one which concentrates more intimately on the daily challenges of consumer culture and mass media, with particular respect to the fragmentation and alienation of individual subjects.

Of all of the writers mentioned, Ammaniti is the most indicative of the discrepancy between a disdain of consumer culture and, at the same time, the need to rely upon it. His fiction, which often reflects the distortion of contemporary consumerism and mass media, has taken particularly well to the large screen, as indicated by the film versions of both *Io non ho paura*, and *Come dio comanda*; *Io non ho paura* was directed by the noted Italian film director Gabriele Salvatores, and Ammaniti's newest film, *Io e te*, is in production under the direction of Bernardo Bertolucci. *Ti prendo e ti porto via* is also in production³⁷ and is to be directed by Goran Paskaljevic. In this sense, the distortion of postmodern consumerism and mass-media culture which are often present within key plot fragments of Ammaniti's novels come to represent current reality, as they have proven to successfully and seamlessly move from the page to the screen.

Italian Pulp Fiction and the "Giovani Cannibali"

In her edited collection *Italian Pulp Fiction: The New Narrative of the Giovani Cannibali Writers*, Stefania Lucamante analyzes the important Italian literary movement of the "Giovani

³⁷ <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/427680/Ti-Prendo-E-Ti-Porto-Via/overview>. *The New York Times*, 8/8/2011.

Cannibali,” or “Young Cannibals,” which was notable for its popularity among young, transgressive authors. Lucamante attributes the first growth of *Giovani Cannibali* as occurring in 1996, well after the death of Italo Calvino and before the turn of the new millennium (Lucamante 13). This was, above all, a movement particular to Italy and functioned in response to traditional Italian viewpoints regarding so-called ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ literature.³⁸ While it is still possible to hear the term *Giovani Cannibali* bantered about, it has somewhat fallen out of fashion, as many of the original *Cannibali* authors have since been absorbed into the genre of contemporary fiction. Also, as Lucamante denotes in *Italian Pulp Fiction*, these authors have been marginalized and criticized by academics as endemic to the popular culture which represents excessive commercial marketing, repeated use of a “slangish jargon of obscenities,” and striking images of violence (14).

However, the elements which the critics denounce in the writing of the *Giovani Cannibali* are exactly those defining the unique nature of the genre. According to Lucamante, this literary classification is considered to be different from Italian pulp fiction by *Giovani Cannibali* writers; this is because the term *pulp* “...does not connote the essence of their narrative approach as precisely as the term *cannibalism*, which conveys more accurately, they argue, the intrinsic notion of appropriation, with the subsequent mutation of previous literary approaches and tradition that lies at the core of this new narrative trend” (15). Moreover, the name ‘*Giovani Cannibali*’ comes from a particular anthology of stories, entitled *Gioventù cannibale. La prima antologia dell’orrore estremo*, published by Einaudi in 1996 (15).

³⁸ While several Irish authors with whom I engage, and Patrick McCabe in particular, would comfortably fall under the category of *Cannibali* writing, he is Irish and therefore not traditionally associated with the literary movement.

In addition to the crucial semantic difference between Italian pulp fiction and the *Giovani Cannibali*, other important influences on the movement included movies and music. For instance, in the early period of the *Giovani Cannibali*, Quentin Tarantino's 1994 American movie *Pulp Fiction* is influential in its correlation to the specifically Italian tradition of the *giallo*, or Italian thriller (15). Finally, the movement's name alludes to the British rock band "The Fine Young Cannibals," whose alternative style and lyrical content were familiar to both an American, Anglo-Irish, and Western European musical audience in the period of 1985- 1992.

But how do authors of the *Giovani Cannibali* connect with Postmodernism? In order to answer the question, one must look at the thematic and stylistic trends of contemporary fiction writers who exhibit both postmodern and *Cannibali* traits. Throughout the years, many of the authors specifically associated with the *Giovani Cannibali* have come to embrace more postmodern tendencies; this is because, as the genre of the *Giovani Cannibali* faded away, many of the shared themes began to find a place within postmodern Italian literature. These themes include but are not limited to: mass media and consumerism; pornography; obscene and/or youth language, humor and/or horror.

Lucamante identifies key authors who are slightly different than those delineated by La Porta and who currently represent more general contemporary and postmodern fiction with respect to the *Giovani Cannibali* tradition. For Lucamante, these authors are Aldo Nove, Niccolò Ammaniti, Isabella Santacroce, and Rossana Campo.

In addition to Nove and Ammaniti³⁹, two key female writers associated with the *Giovani Cannibali* and whose fiction stylistically reflects postmodern traits are Rossana Campo (1963-) and Isabella Santacroce (1970-). Campo, in particular, is regarded for her ability to reflect a new

³⁹ See discussion Pp. 23-25.

style of strong female literary voice, beginning with her work entitled *In principio erano le mutande* (Feltrinelli, 1992). While the work follows a generally linear progression through a fixed sequence of events, for the protagonist looks for the pursuit of love and happiness but ends up pregnant by a married man, what is new here is the way in which the language provides the female with a strong, unconventional voice. According to Sharon Wood:

... (W)hat is striking about the novel is its vigorous affirmation of female sexuality, its vibrant and demonic language, and its self-deprecating humor... the first-person narrator lives her freedoms with *brio*, even while acknowledging the pull of the traditional family unit and the traditional kind of love story women are expected to enjoy. Female desire here is unabashed and refuses reticence, claiming for itself the right to self-expression and self-fulfillment, embracing the disasters of love with resilient good humor. (165)

At times, Campo's language can be obscene, violent, sexually provocative and certainly 'unladylike.' However, the situations in which her protagonists find themselves, such as the narrator of *In principio erano le mutande*, clearly demonstrate the realities of women's struggles within contemporary life. Campo's literature, which consistently favors a female perspective, ties with the Postmodern through the portrayals of both fragmented language and fragmented literary subjects. Many of her troubled main characters remained unnamed, a symbolic gesture which portrays both the anonymity of individual women and the collective experiences which women ultimately share. Her other novels, such as *Il pieno di super*, focus on the consumer and media

fixation of a group of hard-talking, sexually curious girls, often with the threat of a fragmented and broken home environment in the background. As of late, Campo has become more engaged with the immigrant experience; in *Lezioni di arabo* (Feltrinelli, 2010), she juxtaposes the marginalized world of Betti, an Italian woman, with that of Hassan, an Arab who owns a grill; both characters struggle to find their places with or without each other and within the foreign context of Paris. In tackling the issue of the contemporary immigrant experience, Campo illustrates postmodern fragmentation of the individual by employing a decidedly global perspective; this shared worldview is relevant to the primary issues of globalization within current society.

Finally, Isabella Santacroce is a fitting connection between the *Giovani Cannibali* and postmodern literature through her heightened emphasis upon the fragmentation of the individual. In her works such as *Fluo. Storie di giovani a Riccione* (Castelvecchi, 1995), *Destroy* (Feltrinelli, 1996) and *Zoo* (Fazi, 2006), Santacroce is truly able to enter the mindset of an individual's psychological disturbance. Santacroce's fiction is also intimately tied to the contemporary Postmodern due to the weight which she places upon music's role in the daily quotidian. Santacroce herself has been involved with the music business, for she has collaborated with rock singer Gianna Nannini on lyrics for her album *Aria* in 2002⁴⁰ and on her new album, *Io e Te*, released in January, 2011⁴¹. She was further influenced by musical history in her novel *Fluo*, for the narrator is obsessed with Kurt Cobain's death; according to Stefania Lucamante:

⁴⁰ <http://www.giannanannini.com/en/bio/index/2/>

⁴¹ www.zona-musical.com/postt380223.html

The psychological involvement of the narrators in these artists' lives produces a surreal, free indirect speech in which the protagonists feel as if they were actually members of the 'group,' the same kind of surreal (and scary) proximity produced by reports in tabloids and on television on Lady Diana's death... Music, television and fashion, they are all means to pursue dreams, as well as an escape from an Italian provincial reality that is both celebrated and hated.

Lucamante 28

Santacroce's characters often reflect reality in the desire to escape from this same reality; for the narrator of *Fluo*, it is music which provides this escape. On the contrary, for the female narrator of *Zoo*, it is her desire to express herself through the shards of her life. These shards altogether include a mother who is manipulative, powerful, and hateful to her, a father who is put on a pedestal, and the narrator herself, who struggles to exist within the "zoo" of her broken family dichotomy. Like Ammaniti and Campo, Santacroce strikes a realistic balance between the use of violent, obscene, and fragmented language and the creation of scenes indicative of the contemporary quotidian; as such, she deftly moves her fiction from a purely Cannibali writing style into a more encompassing, postmodern context.

While writers like La Porta, Ceserani, and Casadei are fundamental for comprehensive, serious analyses of the status of contemporary Italian fiction, other writers, such as Lucamante and Capozzi, have successfully brought their critical understanding of the Italian contemporary novel into English. In doing so, they assist non-native speakers to better understand the trends associated with this particular type of national literature.

Ceserani, La Porta, and Casadei all agree on one thing: that the contemporary Italian novel is particular to an Italian context, and while it does reflect great contemporary and postmodern trends, there are still traits intrinsically associated with an Italian readership. For Ceserani, it is the slow, methodical appropriation of postmodern theme and narrative style; for La Porta, it is the difference in Italian attitude toward Modernity and consumerism; for Casadei, it is the way in which contemporary and postmodern Italian fiction questions, and ultimately renders, the overarching concepts of “Tradition” and “Style” null and void.

The Case of Ireland’s Fiction: A (Hi)Storied Tradition

Tangential to the slow acceptance of contemporary fiction in Italy, Irish literary critics continue to disseminate a resistance to postmodern fiction. Historically, for instance, there is no Irish Calvino who clearly bridges the Modern and the Postmodern in the Irish canon. Instead, it is only when an emphasis on globalization in social culture, reaching its crux in the Celtic Tiger economy, begins to change Irish society that a more open mindset to Postmodernism begins to set in.

Moreover, there is a continued absence of a strong presence of postmodern literary criticism in Ireland; one is hard-pressed to go beyond the odd journal article or the primary critical work of Joe Cleary in finding relevant and convincing postmodern literary criticism. This is especially interesting considering Ireland’s deeply engaged relationship with literary Modernism. As such, it is evident that Ireland never came to the forefront of Postmodernism and is arguably still finding its way in this respect. Take, for example, the case of an article written in

The Guardian UK in 2006; of Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood*, it is written that "McCabe has written a brilliant and disturbing profile of an individual and a place in often violent transition. In the process, he's also raised the bar for the contemporary Irish novel; which, in a country such as Ireland, where good writers often seem as commonplace as pigeons, constitutes no small achievement"⁴². This criticism of the potential of contemporary Irish fiction clearly verbalizes what Remo Ceserani suggests about the fears of young Italian authors with respect to critical backlash, albeit in an Irish context. Perhaps the tradition set forward by Yeats and Joyce is a heavy load which only brave, unabashed souls choose to bear, and possibly refute, by writing in a contemporary fictional context.

Unlike literary criticism of the contemporary novel tradition in Italy, however, Ireland's critical analysis with regard to fiction remains much broader and diverse. Of course, the same postmodern theoretical contexts can be applied to Irish fiction, for the work of Jameson, Lyotard, Huchon et. al. are equally as applicable to an Irish writer like Patrick McCabe as that of Niccolò Ammaniti. The difference, however, lies in the sheer fact that so little recent literary criticism of Irish fiction has chosen to employ a postmodern theoretical background. Also, it is important to note the difference in space/time gaps regarding Irish and Italian contemporary fiction. While the time span between Calvino and Ammaniti, for example, is relatively small, the time span between the first and most recent Irish postmodern authors is much greater. As such, my approach to an analysis of Irish authors will be slightly different than that of the Italian. I will instead focus on the historical path of individual critics and their particular analyses of authors as they arise, rather than focus solely on one author, theme, or literary genre at a time.

⁴² Welsh, Irvine. "The Man from the Mountains." *The Guardian UK*, 4/11/2006.

Furthermore, criticism of the Irish contemporary novel is not examined to the same extent as in Italian fiction, with many fewer critical texts available for consideration. Often, critics of Irish literature are too caught up in the “Postcolonial Complex,” in which they tend to assess *all* Irish fiction through this literary lens. While it is proven that postcolonial issues do become central to many works of current Irish fiction, it is not always the only or best way to analyze this type of contemporary literature. Tangentially, the literary tradition of Ireland is often considered purely in terms of history, in which it is believed that an understanding of the contemporary novel can only be reached through a historical and chronological context of the events which shaped Ireland as a nation. While this is a practical line of critical discourse, it is not as thoroughly focused upon literary development. As such, it is difficult to find cohesive works which speak at length about the influences of schools of literary thought, such as that of Postmodernism, as applied to the contemporary Irish fictional context. With this in mind, I have chosen to focus on the six following texts: Joe Cleary’s *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Field Day, 2007); John Ardagh’s *Ireland and the Irish: Portrait of a Changing Society* (Penguin, 1995); David Lynch’s *When the Luck of the Irish Ran Out: The World’s Most Resilient Country and Its Struggle to Rise Again* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Seamus Deane’s *Strange Country* (Oxford UP, 1997), David Lloyd’s *Ireland After History* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), and *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge UP, 2006), edited by John Wilson Foster. Again, while these are only a selection of the critical works touching upon Irish contemporary literature, they each speak to the country’s literary tradition and support the traits inherent within the context of the contemporary, often postmodern, Irish novel.

As arguably the most important recent critical work on the status of the modern and contemporary Irish novel, Joe Cleary's *Outrageous Fortune* successfully marries Ireland's historical and postcolonial background with the history of the country's development of the arts in such areas as literature, film, theater, and music. Though Cleary's time span focuses on the years 1800 to 2000, he is particularly interested in the second half of the twentieth century for the following reasons:

Irish cultural criticism in the late twentieth century has been invigorated by the social volatility of the country as it has made the long, difficult transitions from postcolonial economic depression to consumer opulence in the South, and from a strange late colonial war to an even stranger and still unsettled 'peace' in the North. In the course of the accelerated overhauls of state and society conducted on both parts of the island during the later decades of the last century especially, many older belief-systems many structures of feeling have been obviously disaggregated.

Cleary 1

These belief systems, which span socio-political, cultural, and religious categories, have proven to be particularly flexible and mutable within the span of recent Irish history. Cleary specifically points out the economic prosperity of the Republic's "Celtic Tiger" economy and the changes in North / Republic relationships, but the breakdown of older belief-systems further encompasses changes in education, religious, and cultural practice. In using the term "disaggregated," Cleary truly hints at the way in which Irish cultural production has responded to the fragmentation in

contemporary society; in fact, the Irish novel has historically demonstrated openness toward traits of Postmodernism well before that of other western European countries⁴³. Furthermore, in considering the breakdown of socio-political and cultural standards, Cleary brings up an interesting point which clearly ties Ireland and Italy together, helping to further understand the shared historical background which is crucial to the formation of literary history. He states that in Ireland, “(t)he uneven development of capitalism has also opened up economic cleavages between the more industrialized north-east and the rest of the island in ways that have generated compelling economic incentives in the north-eastern region⁴⁴ to maintain the link with Britain” (44). In this sense, Ireland’s ties with Britain in the northeastern sections of the island were crucial for propagating economic stimulus throughout the country, yet only doing so through the context of a country caught between two divisive political discourses. In the case of Italy, power is likewise centralized in the north, while the south continues to suffer economic sluggishness. In both Ireland and Italy, therefore, economic wealth is concentrated in specific areas of the northern regions, leaving the rest of the respective countries either to ‘catch up’ by demonstrating rampant consumerism or to remain irreparably economically behind.

In general, Cleary is interested in keeping close ties between the Postcolonial, economic, and global when considering the development of Irish cultural history. As is proven in Irish history and made manifest within Irish fiction of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Postcolonialism is not only the result of the subjugation of one territory over another; instead, Cleary views it as an international process which must always be considered within the context

⁴³ In writing of the debate between Ireland’s realist/anti-realist tradition, Cleary clarifies the following: “We can detect as early as Thomas Flanagan’s *The Irish Novelists, 1800-1850* (1959), moreover, the emergence of an alternative current that begins to view the more fragmented, ruptured, distressed Irish novel form less as deficiencies to be mourned than as interesting anticipations of twentieth-century modernism or even postmodernism” (49).

⁴⁴ Meaning Northern Ireland.

of the global (45). In reasoning that postcolonial national literatures must be considered in this way, for “the determination of a specific national configuration must be conceived as a product of the global” (45), we as readers are better able to note the various ways that Postcolonialism can seamlessly fit into a postmodern and contemporary fictional context.

An important historical point which Cleary sets out to debate and ultimately support is Ireland’s place as a colony. In effective rhetorical style, he first presents traditional general arguments as to why Ireland cannot be considered as having true colonial status: first, because it was always an intrinsic part of Western Europe (20); secondly, because Irish nationalists never compared themselves with non- European colonized peoples in Asia and Africa or elsewhere, comparing themselves only to white settler peoples instead of indigenous groups (21); and thirdly, because the Irish, like the Scots, were “co-partners and beneficiaries in the British Imperial enterprise” (21). However, Cleary systematically dissects these arguments, using both western and non-western historical criticism to prove his case. Overall, he proves that these arguments are rendered invalid because one cannot assume the mentality of a subjugated people; peasants, he states, who did not consider themselves ‘oppressed,’ did nothing to diminish the oppression of a system such as feudalism, which is based upon an inherent imbalance of power and economic wealth (26). Because of these inferences based upon the cultural perceptions of historical groups of people which are impossible to validate through the span of time, Cleary ultimately proves that “none” of the arguments effectively “constitutes a decisive objection to the proposition that Ireland was a colony” (21).

Cleary later continues the historical line of thought by examining the development of the nineteenth-century novel through the context of Imperialism and by analyzing the effect of capitalism upon Irish culture in twentieth-century Ireland. The latter discourse is relevant to a

discussion of Postmodernism and the development of the contemporary Irish novel through the continued connection of Capitalism and Postmodernism.

Throughout his critical work, Cleary successfully ties the Postmodern and the Postcolonial together, relying upon Jameson's understanding of ruptures for explaining many of the socio-political and cultural occurrences within Ireland's history⁴⁵. Frederic Jameson and Benedict Anderson are particularly important in tying together the author's shared postcolonial and postmodern discourse. Cleary focuses on Jameson's and Anderson's "co-ordinates" which first establish a modernist cultural field and then break it down. Cleary demonstrates the ways in which this modernist sensibility is deconstructed by stating that, "(f)or both Jameson and Anderson, the gradual disintegration of the co-ordinates that had sustained the modernist cultural field prepared the ground for the contemporary (post-1970s) ascension of postmodernism" (83). As a consequence, Cleary proves the ways in which Postmodernism historically affected the Irish condition. Generally, these political issues reflect Ireland's desire to become a key member of the European Union; global capitalism, technological innovation, the secularization of the Catholic Church, and gender and sexual liberation (96).

⁴⁵ One strong example occurs when Cleary demonstrates the critical socio-political rupture which occurs between 1920 and 1960. He says of this epoch: "... (A)ll of these different critiques of Ireland in this period seem to meet up somewhere in the liberal centre of the intellectual-cultural field at least to create an iconic version of what is now commonly called 'de Valera's Ireland.' In that iconic version, the whole post-independence epoch before the Lemassian turn has become practically a byword for a soul-killing Catholic nationalist traditionalism and in the parlance of much contemporary cultural debate 'de Valera's Ireland' now serves as a reflex shorthand for everything from economic austerity to sexual puritanism, from cultural philistinism to the abuse of women and children. In many ways, the reaction that led to this stark image of the post-independence state was probably not only inevitable but also even radical and progressive in most of its post-1960s versions. As Frederic Jameson has noted, every strong movement of rupture with an old order seems to require 'a powerful act of disassociation whereby the present seals off its past from itself and expels and ejects it; an act without which neither the present nor past truly exist, the past not yet fully constituted, the present still a living on within the force field of a past not yet over and done with.' In this sense, the now-conventional negative image of 'de Valera's Ireland' may be understood not just as a creation of post 1960's 'Lemass Ireland,' but also as a necessary condition for the latter's self-constitution. For 'contemporary Ireland' to emerge, in other words, it had first to create the 'de Valera's Ireland' that would be its repudiated antithesis" (7-8).

As to the contemporary literary condition in particular, Cleary identifies a focus on neo-naturalism, which appropriates traditional Irish naturalism and mutates it into a new form embodying elements of the Postmodern. It is interesting to note that the model for this type of naturalist literary production is the poet Patrick Kavanagh and his work *The Great Hunger* (1942), not W.B. Yeats; on the other hand, the best narrative example of Irish naturalism is Joyce's *Dubliners* and *Portrait of the Artist*, not *Ulysses* (97). While Joyce's work touches on the low-class urban experience, much of naturalism focuses on the experiences associated with the rural poor.

While these writers do employ naturalism in order to counter the ideals set forth by idealistic Revival literature, Cleary effectively points out that it is difficult to consider naturalism as radical beyond its dissidence and commitment to social reform (97). As such, he counters the belief that certain forms of contemporary literature have formed based upon American and British Postmodernism, instead seeing a new kind of "neo-naturalist" literature as arising more succinctly from the tradition set forth by naturalism. While it is innovative for Cleary to believe that works such as Brien Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990); Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992) among others, and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* (1992) are neo-naturalist because they have mutated from a shared tradition of Irish naturalism, it is impossible to ignore the clearly postmodern traits which also identify this type of neo-naturalist literature. These include, as Cleary points out, the comic-grotesque and kitsch, such as in the work of Patrick McCabe; bursts of manic energy, as in the all-female dance scene of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and the commercial thriller nature of *The Crying Game*. Moreover, cultural production of this nature is now a global phenomenon as well, for these examples of literature, theater, and film are fully recognized and appreciated by international audiences.

Cleary concludes a discussion of the move from Irish Modernism to Postmodernism in arguing contemporary conjectures which comment on the quality of Irish contemporary cultural production. This inquiry encompasses not only literature, but also music and film and folk culture versus contemporary culture. Of course, questions of highbrow and lowbrow culture come into play, as well as the shift from high culture to popular culture and widespread cultural distribution and consumption. At the conclusion, Cleary ultimately asks the question which relates to Irish culture in particular, but has much more universal and global considerations:

At the end of the day, the most fundamental difference between Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett and Bono, Geldof and O'Connor⁴⁶ is not that the former are high brow and difficult whereas the latter are low brow and easily acceptable. To argue as much is merely to reduce everything to a formalism that overlooks the fact that modernist 'difficulty' was, rather, an index of refusal to conform to already established norms of language or value. Popular culture by definition can make no such refusal, and if the 'giants' of late twentieth-century Irish popular music⁴⁷ are altogether more accessible than were their modest precursors this is because they must perforce be content to operate within the constraints of the already established lifeworld of their time. (109)

⁴⁶ Bob Geldof, singer-songwriter and political activist responsible in part for the 1985 "Live Aid" concert for African nations in famine situation; Sinéad O'Connor, Irish singer-songwriter and socio-political activist.

⁴⁷ I believe Cleary also means literature as well, since he extends the connection later by demonstrating the relationship between Van Morrison and W.B. Yeats.

What Cleary ultimately rationalizes in the above, then, is that postmodern consumer culture acts as the primary defining factor in an Irish consideration of the Modern versus the Postmodern and in the embodying of particular contemporary cultural standards. No longer are the concerns of highbrow and lowbrow culture defining factors of genres such as literature and music. This change is due to the way in which popular culture is intrinsically tied to by now well-established norms of language and value. As such, cultural components of contemporary Ireland therefore demonstrate a need to conform to and function within these already well defined socio-economic and cultural parameters often tied, in Cleary's contemporary understanding, to both the possibilities and constraints of the Celtic Tiger.

While Cleary recognizes three different stages of naturalism and categorizes writers who represent different stages, what is particularly interesting about the discourse is the way in which Samuel Beckett again acts as a bridge figure. While it has already been acknowledged that Beckett represents the bridge between a modern and postmodern Irish literary mentality, Cleary also finds him important in his place between the first and the second generation of naturalist discourse; that is, between the first thematic concern with the "disenchanted, anti-romantic thrust" that is negative as opposed to the same expression "...which has become instead comically gross and satirical- the object is no longer to deliver a savage critique of society so much as to parody the conventions of romance and of naturalism alike by pushing them to absurd or zany extremes" (156). This second level of naturalism sounds very similar to that of the neo-naturalism of a postmodern text such as Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* (2007). In fact, Cleary uses McCabe as an example of how contemporary writers recycle tropes of naturalism in postmodern ways:

In this neo-naturalism, the older tropes and conventions of naturalism are recycled in a more knowing and self-conscious and often deliberately exaggerated and ludic or parodic manner. The emergence of this neo-naturalism may signal that well-established naturalist conventions have finally become exhausted through overuse and can function now only when they are deployed with a self-reflexive tongue-in-cheek irony. (175)

The above passage, which focuses on the “recycling,” “parody,” “self-reflexive” and “irony” of neo-naturalism sounds suspiciously like a postmodern analysis. Later, Cleary reiterates naturalism’s close ties with the bourgeoisie, where he simultaneously criticizes the middle class while recognizing that the middle class has always been, and will remain, its fundamental addressee (178); this again is a strong reminder of much postmodernist writing, in which the author parodies, satirizes, or criticizes the contemporary middle class while still recognizing that it is the author’s primary vehicle for socio-economic viability⁴⁸. In fact, Cleary ends the chapter by questioning if Irish writers have ever, or will ever be able to, “...develop new aesthetic practices which are both modernist and self-reflexive” (178). By so efficiently tying together the characteristics of neo-naturalism and Postmodernism, it appears to me that he has already done so.

As a final note, Cleary’s last chapter is useful in understanding the uniquely Irish relationship between narrative, history, and music. Because Ireland’s cultural history is so tied to its music, from the traditional instruments of the ancient Celts to Laurence Sterne’s novel

⁴⁸ I think of Giuseppe Culicchia’s *Brucia la città* and Éilís Ni Dhuibhne’s *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* as two primary examples.

Tristram Shandy as ‘the first musical novel’; from racist depictions of an Irish-American “Paddy” to the ballads of Irish resistance and the overcoming of English oppression, Cleary recognizes a hesitance for contemporary critics to consider music as an example of viable “Irishness”.

However, Cleary finds a linear line of identification between contemporary, ‘cheap’ music such as that of the Irish rock band “the Pogues” with that of Ireland’s historical and postcolonial background. Because the Pogues are devoid of political or cultural ‘depth,’ they are tied with a popular culture which is indicative of “modern subaltern carnival and consumerist excess that stretches from pre-modern to postmodern times” (266). The Pogues, therefore, are again a perfect example of a musical bridge between the Modern and the Postmodern and the naturalist and the neo-naturalist. Furthermore, Cleary relates the Postcolonial to the contemporary discourse by showing that the Pogues also create new modes of contemporary expression of ‘Irishness’ through their music. In support, Cleary demonstrates how the Pogues have contributed to the new form of postmodern, and specifically Irish, musical expression:

(T)he Pogues’ comedic scrambling of musical and semiotic codes might be regarded as symptomatic of a typical postmodern impasse, one in which they would be interpreted as a retro/avant-garde band destined to live in a world of copies and repetitions, doomed to be able to generate ‘novelty’ only by ever more antic recyclings of the now-exhausted styles of the past in a world without belief in a substantively transformed future. Yet even if they could not escape this impasse, the Pogues still exploited it with an exuberant and unapologetic bravado,

helping to create an Irish (and British) musical scene less dogmatically in thrall to the old tradition/modernity opposition than before. (276)

What is particularly interesting, however, is the way in which contemporary Irish novelists have responded to the tradition set forth by the Pogues. This will become evident in a later chapter of my dissertation with regard to Roddy Doyle, in which his main character, Jimmy Rabbitte, displays an evident hatred for the band. This hatred of the Pogues is particularly ironic, since Rabbitte sets out in both *The Commitments* and in *The Deportees* to create a musical group which redefines a traditional sense of “Irishness.”

Like Cleary’s *Outrageous Fortune*, *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* focuses on the connection between history and Irish literature. For the purposes of the history of contemporary and postmodern Irish writing, it is most useful to consider both Terence Brown’s discussion of “postmodernists” Samuel Beckett and Flann O’Brien and Eve Patten’s chapter on contemporary Irish fiction. For example, in taking the case of Beckett into particular consideration, Brown suggests that Beckett turns from the Modern to the Postmodern in his Trilogy of *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, which is due to the linguistic influences of Beckett’s shift from English to French⁴⁹. Beckett’s Postmodernism is nothing new, and Brown makes a strong case for the manner in which Beckett assumes an understanding of postmodern failure. However, it is likewise interesting to note the way in which language and translation become key issues in providing textual experience outside of the by now irrelevant expression of

⁴⁹ “(I)n the condition of translation as it were, the prose of the Trilogy manages to suggest a language discovering its own contingency. The Trilogy seems inexorably driven to reinstate itself in the face of a recurrent failure, even adequately to explore failure. A result of this is to make it a perverse triumph of the deconstructive impulse which so characterised the postmodern turn in late twentieth-century culture” (211).

‘meaning.’ Later, Brown continues to provide evidence for the Trilogy’s Postmodernism through *Molloy*’s emphasis upon pastiche, the arbitrary narrative of *Malone Dies*, and the “deconstructive discourse” of *The Unnamable* (214).

Finally, Eve Patten provides an overview of early Celtic Tiger literary production. While she claims that contemporary Irish fiction is post-national, rather than post-colonial, due to the claim that “the new Irish novelist is concerned to narrate the nation as it has been and is, rather than how it should be or might have been” (259), what she does see as recurring in both the traditional and the contemporary novel is the nature of Irish fiction to always retain an element of the retrospective; this retrospection can either be through conscious or unconscious memory or through nostalgia. While much of the chapter focuses on Patten’s extreme push to prove the centrality of the continuation of historical memory within contemporary fiction⁵⁰, she does reaffirm the redefinition of a universal understanding of Irishness. Patten especially finds this to be the case through novels of “elsewhere,” such as *This Side of Brightness* by Colum McCann, which helps to narrate the emerging “multiple personalities of the present-day nation” (274).

Historical Texts and the Contemporary Irish Literary Experience

Other critical texts which focus on historical lines of inquiry are also particularly helpful in understanding postmodern and contemporary Irish literary discourse. One of these in particular, John Ardagh’s *Ireland and the Irish: Portrait of a Changing Society*, discusses the changes which occur in Ireland before the turn of the millennium. Similar to many Irish critical authors,

⁵⁰ See “Sex and Society,” in which Patten focuses on the dismembering of the body of the family as equivalent to the abstraction of the Republic of Ireland Constitution (269).

Ardagh uses a historical line of discourse in analyzing the continuities and changes which affected Ireland in the last century. His analysis, which is based upon personal interviews and is peppered with political ideology, centers on the ways in which Ireland has successfully adapted to the changes within global society by also changing the parts of their culture to be exported. Ardagh correctly reasons that cultural exportation today focuses upon that which is populist, instead of highbrow, something which the author readily admits he wishes would be a little less so (235-6). Ardagh further discusses some lesser considered dynamics regarding Irish literary tradition and current (mid 1990s) cultural production, such as the expansion of Ireland's literary tradition due to the easing up of a 1929 censorship ban on literary content which represented "anything judged to be indecent or obscene" (238). While authors such as Sean O'Faolain, George Orwell, and Brendan Behan were all subjected to strict censorship laws, Joyce received a dispensation⁵¹. It is important to consider contemporary Irish literature with this prior ban in mind, for current language, theme and content is directly associated with the stigmas formerly associated with an Irish literary tradition silenced by censorship; it might be, for example, in McCabe's violent descriptions of the grotesque, in graphic language which frequents much of current Irish fiction, or in the embracing of lesbian sexuality as exemplified by the writing of Emma Donoghue.

Another important factor indirectly influencing Irish contemporary literature which Ardagh analyzes at length is the secularization of Irish society by both national television and radio. While Ardagh isn't the first or only critic to write about the influence of television on changes within Irish society, he effectively bridges the popularity of secular T.V. programs, specifically that of Gay Byrne's *The Late, Late Show*, with the loosening of traditional Irish

⁵¹ Ardagh states that Joyce curiously never was put under this ban, "perhaps because he was known to be an Irish genius" (238).

morals and beliefs. The program was revolutionary in its confessional style of discourse; instead of sharing moments of weakness and indecency with the parish priest, Irish men and women were now discussing “taboo” topics such as “marital breakup, homosexuality, atheism, or whether the Irish language had any real value” (269). Furthermore, the confession- like atmosphere of the show, whose equivalents in the United States include Oprah, David Letterman, and Jerry Springer, precede the enormous popularity of the contemporary reality television shows which, in all of their raw content and dialogue, display a no-holds-barred perception of contemporary ‘reality’. This ‘misconception’ of reality is often the subject matter of contemporary and postmodern literature; the majority of McCabe’s novels, for instance, from *Breakfast on Pluto* to *Winterwood* to *The Holy City*, concern the narrator’s obsession with him/herself and feel the pressure to ‘confess’ to an omniscient reader.

Lastly, Ardagh examines the direction in which Ireland’s cultural tradition continues to develop and disseminate. In the former, Ardagh focuses on the resurgence of the Irish language, on the popularity of Gaelic games like hurling and Gaelic football both within the country and in the diasporas, and especially the influence of U2 and Christy Moore as global phenomenons who contribute to perceptions of contemporary Irish identity. While my dissertation sadly does not cover the breadth and span of Irish language literature, it is a fact that both writing and speaking in Ireland’s official national language continues to be influential; RTÉ continues to maintain the Irish radio station RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, and TG4, which became an independent channel in 2007⁵², continues to provide regular Irish language television programming.

Likewise, Ardagh sees the continual relevance of Irish music especially as it is considered in a global context. The rock group U2, which is arguably Ireland’s most famous

⁵² <http://www.tg4.ie/>

cultural export, follows in the tradition of Irish musicians who moved from traditional folk and céilí music to rock. Ardagh ties the global success of U2 with a new “self-confidence” on the part of the Irish people: He states that “(a)s compared with even ten years ago, they now feel less threatened by Anglo-American popular culture, and more able to contribute to it creatively as equals” (286). Much of the emphasis upon the global within the span of U2’s musical and goodwill work is connected to the general embracing of global tendencies in all aspects of Irish cultural production, including the literary. Similar to U2, Irish authors and playwrights now seek to speak to not only a global readership, but especially to a paying, economically viable international readership.

However, it is not only through monetary means by which the globalization of Ireland has occurred, for Ardagh shows how contemporary Irish fiction has been positively impacted by Ireland’s increasing influence on a global scale. He specifically takes the Irish writers John Banville and Colm Toibín into consideration, stating that these two authors “are untypical as writers with a European dimension” (331). When *Ireland and the Irish* was published, many writers continued to exploit the Irish traditional literary mold, seeming “...as if Joyce and Beckett, indeed Synge and George Moore, also French-influenced, were flukes who left few successors” (331). However, we now see that there has been a consequential flourishing of Irish literature which embraces the contemporary situation within Ireland as literary fodder in itself, either in order to praise or, more frequently, to criticize the rapid transformations which Ireland has been experiencing and continues to confront.

Unlike John Ardagh’s text, which focuses specifically upon the historical changes of Ireland from the turn of the century through the early 1990’s, David J. Lynch’s *When the Luck of the Irish Ran Out: The World’s Most Resilient Country and Its Struggle to Rise Again*, focuses

on the most recent period in Ireland's economic history. Lynch's text is the most complete, focused account of the rise and fall of Ireland's "Celtic Tiger" economy and conveys hard facts and statistics through the various frames of personal stories and accounts.

Lynch begins a discussion of the marked difference in Ireland's roller coaster economy by pinpointing 2006, and specifically the annual Galway Races, as the best example of new Irish prosperity. In addition, a particularly important marker of the Celtic Tiger economy was the advent of Ireland's prosperity as richer per capita than that of Britain, and that Ireland's third largest bank, Anglo-Irish, would rise to become "synonymous with Celtic Tiger prosperity" (3-4). These facts are particularly useful in providing a historically based context for Irish fiction being written and published at the highpoint of the Celtic Tiger. This is evident when Lynch successfully ties the economic changes occurring at the time to the personal story of Roddy (Roderick) Doyle, author of *The Commitments* and *The Deportees: and Other Stories*. He places Doyle's rise to prosperity in tandem with that of the Irish economy, when Doyle, as a young teacher in a working class, secular secondary school,⁵³ finally achieves literary greatness and economic prosperity by publishing *The Commitments* (King Farouk, 1987), which is based in Dublin and tells the tale of a group of young musicians interested in American soul music and led by the iconic band manager, Jimmy Rabbitte. Because of his ensuing economic success, Doyle was, at the same time, successful in charting new literary paths; in support, Lynch shows that Doyle's thematic concern was primarily focused on the publication of new voices while avoiding traditional Irish literary themes such as the smallness of provincial town life, Church and priest brutality, and absence of love in the home, usually the fault of the father (50).

⁵³ One of the first and the few secular secondary schools at the time, since the Catholic Church was primarily responsible for education and was still suspicious of any school that went beyond basic literacy (47).

Doyle, unlike the Pogues, is not interested in recycling or ‘innovating’ a traditional Irish discourse for a postmodern and contemporary literary audience; instead *The Commitments*, as his most famous and economically lucrative novel,⁵⁴ uses the reality of late eighties urban Dublin, as well as the context of American soul music, in order to create “a direct counterpoint to the traditional focus of much of traditional Irish literature” (49). Finally, Lynch, in the chapter entitled “Liftoff,” demonstrates how Doyle, by receiving the noted British Man Booker literature prize for *Paddy Clarke, Ha, Ha, Ha* (Secker and Warburg, 1993), began a trend of cultural flourishing in the Irish arts which was congruent with the rise in the economy. Similar to the increase in widespread global investment in Ireland, great writers, poets, and playwrights; notably Seamus Heaney, Neil Jordan, and Brian Friel, could now successfully attract a global audience and were afforded the economic opportunity to remain in Ireland, a choice which previous generations of Irish artists could not enjoy.

While Lynch does not incorporate any further expanded references to literature beyond the case of Doyle, in subsequent chapters he does continue to reference important Irish cultural moments which were indicative of the high point of the Celtic Tiger. This includes the continual rise of U2’s popularity, as well as the enormous global renown of Ireland’s own production *Riverdance*. Like the Pogues, *Riverdance* sought to transform a traditional Irish ‘Culchie style’ art form into one which was cosmopolitan and globally recognizable, first through a brief appearance on the 1994 Eurovision contest and then in theaters around the world. Of this particular cultural moment, Lynch writes the following:

⁵⁴ In 1991, Doyle’s novel was then adapted and turned into a bestselling film, directed by Alan Parker.

The object of this adoration was an innovative fusion of traditional Irish dance and choral songs with up-tempo music. Before Riverdance, Irish dance was a stodgy pastime for freckled Catholic girls decked out in white socks and lace-fringed wool costumes. This was different. With its rows of lithe young women scissoring their legs, short black skirts flying, arms held straight at their sides, Riverdance was the blend of a genuine Irish art form and the sex appeal of a Vegas chorus line... The Irish have traditionally been stereotyped as feckless, violent, often inebriated, and rough to the point of primitive. Now, suddenly, the Irish had another identity: they were cool. In Ireland, there was enormous pride in the accomplishment and professionalism of the exuberant performance. (95)

Riverdance, which turns up in much cultural print material and media from the period of the Celtic Tiger and beyond, points out the economic prestige and prosperity which it was able to generate at a particular moment in Irish history. Moreover, the tradition which it brought along, specifically in its ability to revolutionize Irish dance as an art form and to create a viable, prosperous new form of capital through competition, performance, costume, and music, continues to have economic and cultural implications for the traditional dance form. As recently as 2011 *Jig*, a documentary based upon an international array of young dancers and their trip to the 40th annual Irish Dance Championships, or *Oireachtas Rince Na Cruinne* in Glasgow, generated more than \$100,000 of global income⁵⁵ and received widespread recognition, even

⁵⁵ <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jig/>

from the venerable *New York Times*, for its honest portrayal of the contemporary world of Irish dance.⁵⁶

Probably Lynch's most significant chapter focuses on the fall of the Celtic Tiger, which is an issue which has rarely been examined in detail due to its relative historical newness. While general consensus places Ireland's economic crash on the issues of supply and demand based upon the housing market including massive immigration related to the housing boom, Lynch examines the finer aspects which contributed to the economic decline. On one hand, easy credit and widespread spending made it particularly easy to accumulate anything which was desired,⁵⁷ from designer boots to boats to home loans. Secondly, Irish attitudes toward money, which were moderate due to a combination of traditional Catholic guilt mentality and the ambivalence of showing wealth, began to drastically change with a ready access to money⁵⁸ (153-4). However, times and attitudes changed by 2007 due to such rapid economic prosperity. He states, for instance, that "(a)mid the Celtic Tiger boom, a rural condition of delayed gratification, born of necessity, was replaced by a culture of consuming" and that "(c)onsumption was moving from fad to frenzy" (154).

Lynch's findings are important to a clearer understanding of the attitudes of contemporary Irish fictional characters. In Éilís Ni Dhuibhne's *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007), many of the characters including the main character of Anna are obsessed with urban power and prestige through economic wealth and prosperity. Even Jimmy Rabbitte, Doyle's "bad boy" of *The Commitments*, is comfortable in his middle-class married lifestyle by the time of "The

⁵⁶ <http://movies.nytimes.com/2011/06/17/movies/jig-review.html?scp=1&sq=Jig+the+movie&st=nyt>

⁵⁷ Lynch (153)

⁵⁸ As understood in the historical portrayal of the privileged yet suspicious "begrudgerly" of lace curtain Irish.

"Lace curtain Irish": A person of Irish descent who, because of family money, is accepted into WASP society; tends to act, speak, and dress like the member of the upper-class WASP establishment.

Deportees.” Written at this high point in the Celtic Tiger economy, these novels effectively portray the excesses and interests associated with quotidian social thought of Irishmen and Irishwomen of the time, thereby also effectively portraying a very specific moment in Ireland’s history through the mode of contemporary fiction.

Lynch leaves readers with the ultimate downfall of the Celtic Tiger and a hope for recovery within the future. This downfall is directly associated with the housing crisis of property devoid of funding, as well as with the spectacular scandal and failure associated with Anglo-Irish Bank after its nationalization in 2009⁵⁹; these two issues continue to demonstrate repercussions affecting both national and international interests. What has arisen since the writing of *When the Luck of the Irish Ran Out...*, and which Lynch correctly predicts within his work, reflects the embracing of a new era of literary and cultural production in response to the ‘Taming of the Celtic Tiger.’

Rather than focus on the social and economic issues which historically led to the great changes resulting from the Celtic Tiger economy, Seamus Deane, in *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790* examines the connection between history and literature in the formation of Ireland’s contemporary literary movement. Specifically, Deane’s text analyzes thematic traits which have traditionally been associated with Irish literature; these elements include a fantastical or Utopian vision of Ireland, definitions/stereotypes relating to national character, boredom and the apocalypse, and the Gothic and/or Occult.

While none of Deane’s analysis focuses on contemporary literature, the categories which he establishes as indicative of Irish literature continue to remain relevant in contemporary fiction.

⁵⁹ Anglo Irish bank reports loss". RTE News. 2011-03-31. <http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0331/anglo-business.html>.

These include the connection between territory and community which is specifically manifested in the Irish novel (Deane 19); the connection between alcohol and Irish tradition in which writers like Maria Edgeworth attempted to write national novels regarding the recovery of tradition, all the while playing into the same stereotypes of Irish national character which continue to this day (48); also, the tradition of boredom, where the history of Ireland from famine to exile and through constant British oppression, led to the inescapability of failure as a defining Irish trait. These particular traditions existed in the literature of both Joyce and Beckett⁶⁰ and continue in the writing of contemporary Irish writers such as Éilís Ni Dhuibhne, for example, in which the character Anna of *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* cannot escape the boredom of her post new-millennium Dublin existence in a high stakes publishing world. In all, while *Strange Country* focuses primarily on national literary trends from 1790 up until Joyce, Yeats, and Beckett, it is an important text for better understanding where specific trends, references, images, and themes endemic to Irish literature come from and how they are transformed, mutated, fragmented, or reconsidered within a contemporary literary context.

Similar to Seamus Deane, David Lloyd examines the relationship between culture and history in *Ireland After History*. Lloyd's essays, which were published as a collection immediately before the turn of the millennium, reflect the author's desire for a reconsideration of Irish historicism, in which the essays "...offer a critique of current historicism, which continues to adhere to the notion of progress or development and of civility at the expense of the alternative histories and cultures of which the stories might be told" (Lloyd 1). Taking Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" as a model, in which the critic criticizes outmoded beliefs concerning cultural formations, the collection of essays in *Ireland After*

⁶⁰ Ibid (169-170).

History seeks to offer alternative ways in which to conceive “the common sense of historicism,” or, as Lloyd puts it, “the sedimented layer of concepts and assumptions on which its self-certainty rests” (1).

Like Joe Cleary, Lloyd is interested in questioning and hypothesizing Ireland’s status as a postcolonial nation. However, he is particularly interested in examining the ties between nationalism and revisionism, instead of the historical ties between capitalism, colonialism, and nationalism, in order to propose an alternative understanding of the past and future of Ireland as a postcolonial nation. Lloyd’s discussion of kitsch is especially important for a more complete understanding of the relationship between Postmodernity and Irish cultural / national conception. Each culture, Lloyd argues, has symbols or objects associated with it; in the case of Ireland, of course, these symbols are often in the shape of shamrocks, harps, and leprechauns. However, along with the continuation of these symbols, a conundrum, in Lloyd’s words, begins to take shape; that is, the difference between ‘authentic’ cultural identification and kitsch.

Of course, from Postmodernists like Jameson, one knows that kitsch embraces symbols or objects which lack depth and intellectual or ‘highbrow’ aesthetic value; one can even go so far as to say kitsch is associated with ‘bad taste,’ as it had been considered in the past. According to Lloyd’s definition, kitsch represents “a version of mannerism, sentiment congealed into attitude” (90). Above all, kitsch has come to be identified as a characteristic trait of Postmodernity. However, in comparison with cultural and national identity, kitsch becomes dangerous in its ability to define or to mock a nation. To begin, Lloyd identifies the two goals of cultural nationalism; that is, on one hand, to offer “an archeological and genealogical project aimed at purification and refinement, at originality and at authenticity”; on the other hand, it seeks to “cultivate the sentiment of a difference that unifies the people against the colonizing power, for

in that sentiment of difference survives the spirit of the nation” (89). In contemporary, postmodern society, the two objectives of *difference* and authenticity are impossibilities, for in both a Jamesonian and a Lyotardian sense, one can only revisit, reproduce, and rework what has already been done, rendering the concept of originality null and void.

Contemporary cultural nationalism understands the lack of authenticity in the contemporary quotidian very well; in order to confront it, however, cultural nationalism employs similar postmodern tactics in order to maintain the two objectives of supposed difference and authenticity above; the way in which this is accomplished is through the use of reproduction and dissemination. (89). Since kitsch works so well in tandem with cultural consumerism through its emphasis upon reproduction and dissemination, it is often an effective mode for the propagation of cultural identification through ironical or paradoxical symbol and object.

However, the problem in this reasoning, according to Lloyd, is that these objects which were once historical and have now fallen into the realm of kitsch naturally fail to transmit the trauma associated with a national past, such as that of Ireland. In support, he states that:

Nowhere are the deracinating and alienating effects of capitalism felt more powerfully than in communities whose histories are determined by domination, displacement, and immigration, for whom ruins are the entirely just and not merely figurative indices of living dislocation. And nowhere is kitsch, from the family snapshot to the religious or national icon, more crucial to the articulation of the simultaneous desire for, and impossibility of restoring and maintaining, connection. (92)

In the above, it is evident that deeply traumatic cultural memory is associated with kitsch-like culture. An example of the way in which kitsch functions in contemporary literature can be seen, for example, in McCabe's *Winterwood*, where trauma and kitsch connect through popular consumer products of the 1980s and 1990s such as My Little Ponies and the teen book series *Sweet Valley High*. In Lloyd's case of Irish kitsch, however, this false example of an 'authentic' piece of national history then becomes disseminated on a global scale, contributing even further to cultural cycles of so-called Irish 'inauthenticity.'

Lloyd does not advocate eliminating all signs of kitsch and cultural object; instead, he believes that they can be both examples of tensions between the local and the state, as well as possible forms of resistance against global homogenization. However, these forms of kitsch need to be recognized as such, and contemporary Irish authors, such as Roddy Doyle and Patrick McCabe, understand this fact. Through postmodern connections between kitsch and nostalgia and irony and parody, these authors transform Irish cultural symbols from mere commodities to important literary fragments, thereby discovering alive "in their wasted particulars" (100) the elements of another, more authentic Irish national cultural emblem.

From the above texts, it is proven that one cannot underestimate the importance of history in coming to terms with Irish contemporary literary trends. Perhaps this emphasis upon history is particularly attributed to Ireland's postcolonial tradition, 'controversial' as it may be. What is indisputable, however, is the active way in which Irish literature has traditionally responded to global change and how it continues to react and to redefine itself according to these influences, just as the nation itself does. As the social-political and economic pressure of the European Union weighs more heavily upon Ireland; especially now, when Ireland is in deep economic strife, it will be interesting to see the ways in which contemporary authors continue to provide

perspective on this current historical moment through novel writing. As Virginia Woolf states, “(f)iction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly, but still attached to life at all four corners”⁶¹; this is especially true for contemporary Irish authors, as their literary production continually contains elements of truth which provide glimpses into the Irish social, political, and cultural quotidian in ‘real time.’

⁶¹ Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1929. Pg. 41.

Chapter Two: Hyper-use and Control of Technology: Andrea De Carlo, Barry McCrea, and Emma Donoghue

One of the primary ways in which contemporary Irish and Italian literature questions Yeats's understanding of the dancer and the dance is through a consistent reliance upon technology's ability to propel individual narratives forward. What results from an examination of technology and media within these two national literatures is the way in which technological discourse questions connections and establishes new relationships among narratives, their characteristics, and their voices. At the same time, however, technology in literature reflects and upholds the social equation which Lyotard has theorized between wealth, efficiency, and, ultimately, truth⁶²; as such, subjects are required to continually follow along and struggle to 'keep up' with these technological trends in order to survive.

Technological considerations are nothing new in literature. The ancient Greeks, for example, wrote extensively of the use of weaponry when engaging in battle. It is believed that in 236 BC, according to the Roman architect Vitruvius, Archimedes built his first elevator⁶³. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, written in the sixth century BC, is considered to be the oldest military treatise in the world and outlines the effects of weapons on troop morale⁶⁴. Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, continued in this tradition by discussing the unreliability and defects associated with

⁶² "The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right. An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established" (Lyotard 45).

⁶³ <http://www.pba.org/programming/programs/atlasounds/2454/>.

⁶⁴ "When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then men's weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped. If you lay siege to a town, you will exhaust your strength... Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor damped, your strength exhausted and your treasure spent, other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue" (<http://www.chinapage.com/sunzi-e.html>).

mercenary arms and the ruin of Italy because of them (72-3). In considering more modern forms of communication, the emotional pull of the telephone makes an early, central appearance in American literary history. The 1939 short story “A Telephone Call,” by Dorothy Parker, recounts the narrator’s anticipation and reliance upon the power of technology in the following:

If I didn't think about it, maybe the telephone might ring. Sometimes it does that. If I could think of something else. If I could think of something else. Knobby if I counted five hundred by fives, it might ring by that time. I'll count slowly. I won't cheat. And if it rings when I get to three hundred, I won't stop; I won't answer it until I get to five hundred. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five, fifty.... Oh, please ring. Please. (1)

Already in this early example, Parker elucidates the by now established importance of the telephone to human communication, as well as the lack of connection which is felt when this same communication is anticipated or unfulfilled. However, human connection to, and use of, technology is no longer in a primitive state, as a form of defense or as a basic form of communication. Instead, contemporary literature now demonstrates how far daily reliance upon advanced technology has progressed within a relatively short span of time. As such, new narrative forms arise which act in concert with these new forms of technology, rewriting and revising what had formerly contributed to narrative wholes.

It is fitting to begin an analysis of postmodern Italian fiction and technology with two contemporary novels, *Woobinda e altre storie senza lieto fine* (Castelvecchi, 1996) and

*Superwoobinda*⁶⁵ (Einaudi, 1998) by Aldo Nove. Even though these two collections of short stories were written prior to the turn of the millennium, they set an early standard for the ways in which technology begins to permeate contemporary Italian literature.

Probably the most striking early example of the power of technology occurs in “Vibravoll” of *Woobinda*. In this story, Stefania, the main character and first person narrator, explains in great detail the place which her cellphone holds within her marital relationship to Gianni, her husband. Not only is she proud of the model, a “Sharp TQ-G400,” and its availability of options which interest her, but she also eventually receives what she considers to be the most exciting present of all: The gift of “Vibravoll,” or “l’avvisatore silenzioso dei telefoni cellulari che mio marito mi ha messo nel culo il giorno dell’anniversario del nostro matrimonio” (Nove 22).

From the outset of her discourse, it is clear that Stefania is already well-versed in the language of cellular technology. As will be examined through the character of Iaio in Giuseppe Culicchia’s *Brucia la città*⁶⁶, Stefania has an exaggerated ability to memorize and convey the minute details of her cellphone: “Misura 130 per 49 per 24 millimetri e pesa 225 grammi con la batteria standard” (21). Here, she conveys an obsession with technology which is historically associated with men; her no-nonsense, masculine tone is juxtaposed with that of her day job: “Io sono poetessa e redattrice di un giornale femminile, dove mi occupo della rubrica della corrispondenza. Per la maggior parte si tratta di questioni sentimentali insopportabili. Trite e ritrite” (21). In the above, Stefania’s clear disdain for her work, which centers around stereotypically “feminine” concerns such as poetry and copy editing for a “trite” and

⁶⁵ *Superwoobinda* is a continuation of *Woobinda*. It includes the first eight groups of stories from *Woobinda* and continues with a collection of stories entitled “Il fantasma della f*** azzurra e altre storie moderne” and “Il mondo bello come le Spice che ballano e altre storie mitomoderniste,” respectively.

⁶⁶ See Chapter Four, “Shopping Malls and Simulacra, Prada as Power: Consumption Culture and Global Competition.”

“sentimental” women’s magazine, can be escaped through both her cellphone and her car, again two typically masculine examples of technology. In support, she states that “(a)llora, quando esco dall’ufficio faccio delle lunghe corse in macchina, che mi rilassano ancora di più da quando ho comperato il mio telefono cellulare” (21). From this early stage, therefore, the cellphone acts as a false emancipator for Stefania which is ‘real’ for her and which allows her to escape the mundane, typically female aspects of her daily existence.

The true sense of Stefania’s position as irrevocably powerless to the force of technology comes to full fruition when she chooses to have her cellphone surgically implanted in her body. At the risk of sounding trite, she is the ultimate example of “attachment” to her technological instrument, for she has made the machinery a part of her body. In order to exemplify the joy which she experiences from her new ‘body part,’ she exclaims the following:

Subito Vibravoll ha incominciato a fare ‘zzzzz’, segnalando la chiamata in avviso e quella stimolazione così intensa che non avevo mai provato non avevo mai vissuto mi ha fatto impazzire ho scoperto come la tecnica di questi nostri giorni felici possa cambiare e migliorare un rapporto sessuale mugolavo pazzescamente con quell’apparecchio nel culo... (23)

From the scene above, it is evident that Nove seeks to exaggerate the lengths to which humans will go in order to remain attached to their various forms of technology. It is interesting that Stefania only finds pleasure through her cellphone, and not through other erotic tools of pleasure such as a vibrator; in fact, the mechanical erotic toys which she purchases and attempts to use

fail to provide the same pleasure as her cellphone, even though they are specifically made for the type of sexual activity which Stefania and her husband engage in.

While the above scenario could be understood as pure shock value, pulp-style fiction, on a deeper level Nove suggests more complex realities of contemporary culture. On one hand, Nove supports Lyotard's understanding of technology's emphasis on "efficiency" and "maximum output" (Lyotard 44). It is clear that Stefania is a sexually demanding and driven woman, where great pleasure results from the intense orgasms which she is able to achieve with her cellular implement (23). On the other hand, however, the author demonstrates that contemporary machines, such as the cellphone, impede established forms of social bonding⁶⁷. While one could argue that the cellphone, in Stefania's case, is a cyborg-style addition to her body which is meant only to provide greater pleasure and efficiency⁶⁸, it is clearly impeding on more human and/or 'natural' forms of sexual intercourse. Throughout the entire dialogue, there is no mention of penetration; moreover, in the final scene, Stefania causes her husband to have an orgasm while holding his penis in her hand; she successfully does this with his own cellphone, an Ericsson EH237, thereby excluding any chance of procreation (23). Through these examples, Nove encourages the reader to consider how technology has completely broken traditional social bonds by reinventing the way in which humans engage in sexual behavior. Furthermore, he calls into question the larger concerns of human existence by posing the possibility that technology could replace all forms of 'natural' human connection and procreation.

⁶⁷ For more on the sociological effects of the relationship between power, efficiency, and technology, see "Research and Its Legitimation through Performativity." From Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁶⁸ For a more in-depth discussion of "A Cyborg Manifesto" by Donna Haraway, please see "Introduction."

Following in Nove's footsteps, Andrea De Carlo has traditionally incorporated technology and media from his earliest fictional works and weaves individual narratives around these aspects of the contemporary quotidian; these works are *Macno* (Bompiani, 1984), *Pura vita* (Mondadori, 2001) and *Giro di vento* (Bompiani, 2004), respectively. De Carlo is distinctive for the variety of ways in which he plays with narrative form; at times he structures a novel by incorporating the language of technology and communication, while at others, he engages in a postmodern rewriting of more classical styles of narration. What is consistent within these works, however, is the pervasive presence of technology and the multiple ways in which it is fundamental to the creation of new narrative themes, styles, and genres.

In his works, De Carlo demonstrates that the power of technology is not only manifested within the sphere of the purely social; instead, he demonstrates that technology effectively contributes to narration when embedded within the novel form. In his introduction to the 2005 edition of *Macno*, which was originally written in 1984 and which conveys the life of a contemporary politician, De Carlo states that it is both a story about the power of television and how it affects individuals on a personal basis. He writes:

È una storia sul potere della televisione: sul modo in cui entra nelle case delle persone e nelle loro teste e produce affezioni, opinioni, convinzioni, riflessi.

Come quasi tutte le storie, non ha una sola origine, ma nasce da elementi diversi, mescolati fino a diventare quasi indistinguibili. (5)

In the above quotation, both Lyotard's emphasis on technology as truth and Frederic Jameson's patchwork quilt of social implications resulting from technological influences are clearly

conveyed; as a result, De Carlo places himself squarely in the realm of postmodern literary thought. In reference to commercial television and video in *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson writes that "...most traditional and modern aesthetic concepts- largely, but not exclusively, designed for literary texts- do not require... simultaneous attention to the multiple dimensions of the material, the social, and the aesthetic" (Jameson 67). However, postmodern novels such as *Macno* do put these multi-dimensional forms into dialogue with one another by bridging the gap between technological and human elements. As such, Yeats's dancer and dance form new modes of relationship, now through the assistance of an artificial, non-human form of expression.

One of the key elements which fosters new dialogues among the narrator, narration, and narrative genre in *Macno* is the concept of the "telecamera"⁶⁹. As is often the case with technology's presence in literature, a manipulated, often fragmented perspective of narration is nothing new to Italian literature: Calvino was a master at manipulating perspective (one need only to consider *Le città invisibili*), as was Pirandello, whose narrative elements of "Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore" represent a constantly confusing, shifting telescopic lens of perspectives, stories, and events. In *Macno*, the telecamera is responsible for acting as a reflection of all the disparate elements of postmodern life within the contained space of Macno's villa.

In the novel, the lives of those filming and those being filmed collide. When Liza⁷⁰, a driven German news reporter, and Ted, her American cameraman, decide to attempt to illegally gain access to Macno's villa, they are discovered by the politician's security guards. Instead of arrest or removal, however, they are welcomed into Macno's villa in order to observe, film, and

⁶⁹ Television camera.

⁷⁰ In the Italian original, the main female character is named Liza; in the English version, her name is translated as Lise.

interview the people who keep his world functioning properly. What ultimately results is the way in which Macno's constant reliance upon the telecamera successfully hides his fragile and carefully constructed persona.

De Carlo's narrative development in *Macno* encourages the reader to remain constantly engaged and aware, as a discrepancy between appearance and reality is immediately noticeable from the outset of the novel. In order to better understand the relationship between key plot moments and stylistic elements in *Macno*, it is useful to point out Ulla Sweedler's critical understanding of the novel:

Macno, former rock star and current dictator of an imaginary Latin American country, is preparing his third anniversary speech when German television journalist Lise and her cameraman invade the palace grounds. They are rescued by Macno, who promises an interview and invites them to join his glamorous pseudo-Renaissance court. As if hypnotized, Lise falls in love with the irresistible Macno, but their affair ends with a bang. More interesting than the plot is De Carlo's literary technique. Confined to the present tense, the novel emphasizes style and elegance; people, clothes, and surroundings are described in sensuous detail. The sentences are short and the dialogue is sparse, yet the book succeeds as a literary treatment of the role of television in politics and in the creation of an eerily superficial modern society⁷¹.

⁷¹ *Library Journal*. Ulla Sweedler, Univ. of California Lib., San Diego.

From the beginning of *Macno*, the importance of television and technology is noted. In this scene, Macno is first portrayed as irritated and depressed as he watches videotapes of himself within the confines of his limousine. In this sense, he is already established as a person who both internalizes and reflects the pressures which television and the media place upon him. This is reinforced when Macno's primary assistant, Ottavio, and Liza review old videocassettes of Macno's history. On this occasion, which presents both Ottavio as the insider and Liza as the outsider to Macno's world, several scenes of importance arise which assist the reader in understanding how technology, through the form of the telecamera, functions in manipulating narrative and creating narrative fragments. The telecamera is described as revealing the following:

Lo schermo si illumina di luce bianca, gialla, rossa. Appare una gabbia di ferro, in cui un giaguaro cammina avanti e indietro con cadenza nevrotica. Scorrono i titoli di testa, sullo sfondo di una musica percussiva mescolata a suoni di traffico e richiami di animali. Liza guarda attenta, con un filo leggero di nausea e gli occhi che le fanno male. I titoli finiscono, la telecamera si sposta dalla gabbia su uno spazio semi-giardinato dove madri trascinano bambini per mano; su Macno che guarda in macchina appoggiato a un lampioncino, pronto a parlare. (116-117)

Here, many of the crucial aspects of Postmodernism come into play, where the telecamera is the filter through which the various fragments create the patchwork of narration. Key postmodern characteristics which the camera illuminates are presented through the general style of listing, through the music of traffic and animal calls, and in the neurotic fragmentation of colors, sounds,

images, and emotions. However, in typical postmodern style, the telecamera is also responsible for breaking modes of concrete narrative; as such, the reader is never allowed to see the ‘big picture,’ or the reality behind the illusion. In Jamesonian terms, therefore, De Carlo’s telecamera in *Macno* leads the reader into the otherwise seductive⁷² yet, at the same time, depthless world of the Postmodern.

What truly drives this point home in De Carlo’s description above is the illusion of the scene itself; amid the fragments presented, the portrayal of a garden-like space, cages, and the calls of animals suggests some type of zoo; in creating a patchwork of these images, De Carlo’s language suggests two distinct meanings. On one hand, the telecamera is responsible for the illusion of our reality, for better or for worse. As human subjects under the powerful hand of technology, we are unable to control what is seen of us and how we are portrayed. Conversely, we are always being watched and can never have an understanding of what the larger reality of our existence is actually like, for only the telecamera can pick and choose how to convey this information. In returning to the dancer and the dance, the telecamera acts as the technological censor which prevents the concrete narrative from being perceived; for this reason, we are only allowed to perceive the fragments and will naturally try to form our own connections from these pieces of narration.

In De Carlo’s fiction, technology can stand on its own. This is most evident in the novel *Pura vita*, in which technology provides a strong statement on the status of the contemporary quotidian. First published by Mondadori in 2001, *Pura vita* recounts the tale of a father and daughter on a car trip to the south of France. Giovanni, the male protagonist, is a famous historian separated from his wife for many years. He conducts a passionate yet troubled love

⁷²“(t)hese books show postmodernity to be a world of mesmerizing surfaces, seductively addictive but depthless” (McPherson, William. <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/jameson/>).

affair with a woman who, in the story, is indicated with the single initial of “M.” His seventeen year old daughter, whose name is never revealed and who is known simply as “Lei,” loves to read, wants a dog above all else, and lives by her CDs and cell phone. Traveling in their Jeep, the two speak randomly; it is Giovanni, however, who primarily attempts to force superficial conversation with his daughter out of a sense of parental guilt. In intensive, almost obsessive dialogue constantly interrupted by text message, e-mail, and cell phone rings, the family of two attempts to connect over discussions of male/female relationships, family dichotomy, and other relevant problems of the contemporary quotidian.

The novel, which has been praised as indicative of De Carlo’s mastery in taking on the role of a psychoanalyst of our present⁷³, is almost exclusively composed of the language of technology; SMS (text messaging), e-mail, and the cellular phone are used interchangeably on a consistent basis throughout the novel. While technology is often blamed for alienating individuals, De Carlo instead incorporates a wide variety of technological description in order to put traditional depictions of human contact and conversation into question. However, *Pura vita* is just that: an unabashedly postmodern, formulaic statement on the possible connections or fragments which the language of technology brings to the surface.

From the moment that the text begins, *Pura vita* proves itself to be an exercise in postmodern writing with a strong emphasis upon technological aspects of contemporary society. Both the title of the first chapter and the text which follows in the first sentence⁷⁴ already reflect the fundamental nature of a postmodern technological discourse to the narratives being recounted. For example, the title of the first chapter is, “Domenica alle nove e mezza di sera il

⁷³ "Un De Carlo quasi perfetto nel suo ruolo di psicanalista del nostro presente... Un romanzo compiuto, quasi necessariamente "filosofico", in cui ognuno può confrontarsi, nei dilemmi quotidiani della propria insoddisfatta normalità." (Sergio Pent, *La Stampa* 13-10-2001)

⁷⁴ In *Pura vita*, De Carlo frequently begins the first sentence of each chapter with the chapter’s title.

telefono suona” (1). This statement, albeit brief, reveals a significant amount of information. The title stands by itself; it is a complete sentence and successfully draws the reader into the narrative even before actual narration begins. Even though the action present within De Carlo’s chapter titles primarily begin *in medias res*, posing the possibility of the reader’s loss of narrative orientation, it is instead easy to situate oneself within the narration from the brief amount of information provided. Furthermore, the terse sentence of the title highlights the centrality of technology, as one learns that the telephone will be the direct object of focus, as well as the fact that it rings precisely at nine-thirty on Sunday evening. There is, furthermore, no mention of a human subject; technology takes center stage, and any reference to a human narrative character is subordinate to the centrality of the telephone.

Furthermore, the fundamental nature of technology with respect to contemporary life will be connected to postmodern discourse when the actual sentence is expanded from the title. In reading the first sentence, the following is then learned: “Domenica alle nove e mezza di sera il telefono suona mentre lui è in cucina con un toast al formaggio in mano e un libro sulla tecnica di costruzione delle piramidi egizie aperto davanti e un disco strumentale di Bo Diddley e Chuck Berry sullo stereo” (1). Here, the reader finally does learn that there is a human subject; however, this vague, unnamed “lui” is buried in the chaotic mix of a fragmented, postmodern pastiche; of nostalgic fifties music, of the stereo, and of the list of quotidian items such as toast and a book on the construction of the Egyptian pyramids. In this passage, it is clear that the subject is now buried in the mire of postmodern life, halfway between the technological boundaries of telephone and stereo. In short, ‘lui’ is just another fragment of an entity in the pastiche of contemporary daily life.

Furthermore, the centrality of technology to De Carlo's discourse is not presented in a title and then omitted from the narration of the novel. Instead, it is the driving force of the various narratives which are recounted. One need only to peruse the chapter index, for example, in order to verify this statement. Out of sixty-two chapters, approximately twenty-five refer directly to various forms of technology in both title and chapter content. Examples of chapter titles include "Due SMS"; "Una telefonata"; "Cinque SMS"; "Una e-mail (non inviata)," or "Il telefono cellulare gli vibra nella tasca come un animale da tana" (325-6). From a glance at these titles, it is not only evident that technology acts as a driving force in the narratives, but also that typical narrative points of emphasis which, for example, would have been standard in Modernity have now mutated in new ways. The subject, for instance, again assumes a secondary position to the objects of Postmodernity and must find ways in which to engage with these new, by now fundamental, technological forms.

But where, for example, does the pastiche of Postmodernity lie in a narrative like De Carlo's? Or how does a postmodern text like *Pura vita* refute a modern understanding of narrative wholes and individual subjects, such as that of Yeats's fluid dancer and dance? One merely has to look at the nature of the chapter entitled "Due SMS":

DA: GIOVANNI

ORE: 1.15

SE CI PENSO, NESSUNO MI HA MAI DATO CONSIGLI MIGLIORI DEI
TUOI. DAVVERO. VOLEVO DIRTELO.

DA: GIOVANNI

ORE: 1.29

ANCORA NON RAGGIUNGIBILE. PAZIENZA. BUONANOTTE. (157)

In this SMS message, many of the issues associated with Postmodernity begin to surface. On one hand, the brevity of the dialogue demonstrates the way in which speed is privileged in daily discourse. Because of the nature of SMS, which emphasizes the ability to communicate ‘on the run,’ messages need to convey the most amount of information in the shortest time possible. Furthermore, the fragmented nature of the text which emphasizes disparate ideas, emotions, and sentiments, again forces the reader to value every word. As such, this lack of excessive detail and cohesiveness de-emphasizes continuities and modes of narration which were valued in Modernity.

On the other hand, the brevity of the message still provides the reader with a great deal of information. This proves that in Postmodernity, one no longer *needs* to favor narrative continuities. Even without a complete understanding of the various narrative layers of the novel, the reader is still privy to important narrative details in the span of few words. It is clear, for example, that Giovanni and both unnamed characters of ‘Lei’ and ‘M.’ (two characters who further indicate a postmodern trope which favors technology over the ‘individuality’ of the character) have difficulties in communication. From an analysis of *Pura vita*’s SMS messages, it is clear that new forms of technology, e-mail included, not only act as further enablers in the control of human contact and communication, but they also become the more frequently chosen forms of communication for this same reason.

In the language of SMS and e-mail, Giovanni and M. utilize the brevity of technological language in order to convey their feelings. This further emphasizes how technology functions in

postmodern daily life by providing a strong connection between human emotion and technology's emphasis upon convenience and brevity. The necessity for brevity when expressing desire and emotion becomes clear in the following chapter, entitled "Una telefonata," when Giovanni and M. are finally able to speak to each other:

M. Pronto? Stavi dormendo?

G. Sì, ma non importa.

M. Ti ho chiamato solo perché ho trovato i tuoi messaggi.

G. Altrimenti non mi avresti chiamato?

M. Non avevamo detto che non ci saremmo più sentiti?

G. Quando?

M. Cancelli sempre tutto quello che diciamo... (159)

In the above passage, one notices how the telephone, which is a technological aspect of early Modernity, shows a different level of control as text messaging and e-mail are able to provide. While the telephone can control communication in part through the ability to hang up or to put aside face to face contact, it still provides a space for flexible dialogue and an immediate answer. A lack of direct dialogue or response from the listener in a telephone conversation arouses immediate suspicion on the part of the interlocutor. M. and Giovanni express this tension in their inability to communicate effectively over the telephone, as their dialogue exposes their discrepancies in thinking and their contradictory tone toward one another. This is especially obvious in M.'s accusation that Giovanni always "cancels," or eliminates, everything he says to

her. This action of negation can be literal, such as in the erasure of a text message, or psychological, in the sense that Giovanni ignores or discounts the value of M's words.

The inability to communicate via the cell phone is also proven through Giovanni and his daughter's ironic incapacity for communication with one another, exactly at the same moment that they lament the loss of universal communication between people in contemporary life. Upon approaching the border between France and Italy, the two begin a discussion about the lost "filo," or thread, that two humans can feel for one another. "Perché filo?" asks his daughter. He replies, "Perché è una cosa molto sottile e molto resistente, no? Che puoi anche non vedere, ed è estensibile quasi senza limiti attraverso la distanza e il tempo e l'affollamento delle altre persone che occupano lo spazio e lo attraversano in ogni direzione" (18). Here, Giovanni expresses a nostalgic longing for some kind of thread which ties humanity together. It is, in a sense, the 'whole' which Yeats had envisioned for his dancers and dance. However, Giovanni instead proves to be a hypocrite, as he is just as guilty as his daughter in succumbing to pressure to answer the cell phone. Moreover, it is ironic that Giovanni fruitlessly searches for the human "filo" of communication, all the while fully embracing the cordless cell phone which is both a tool of communication and which lacks any physical "filo." After expressing his strong belief in a human connection which he still believes to exist without the influence of technology, the following occurs:

Lei fa per dire qualcosa, ma il suo cellulare suona, con la buffa musicchetta
sincopata che ha scelto tra le tante suonerie possibili. Subito dopo suona quello di
lui. Si mettono a parlare tutti e due, ognuno inclinato verso il proprio finestrino
per schemarsi dalla voce dell'altro. (19)

From the above, it is clear that Giovanni is guilty of breaking the idealized bond of face-to-face communication, as he interrupts his own discussion in order to give priority to the call outside of his discussion with his daughter. What is particularly disturbing is that in the midst of their conversation, when Giovanni and Lei begin to have an intelligent, respectful discussion with one another, the connection is broken by the kitschy ringtone of the cell phone. Furthermore, the dialogue takes place within the confines of the automobile, which, due to space constriction, should bring the two together. Even within the limited amount of space, however, the cell phone is the dominating mode of communication which distracts Giovanni and Lei from a lack of quality communication and connection. As a result, technology, which on the surface aims to connect the two characters to one another, proves instead to keep them further apart.

In considering these aspects of Postmodernity, one also notes that De Carlo's fiction consistently proves that technology is not a slave to narrative; instead, it functions in creating multiple narratives, or narrative fragments, which help to create a patchwork quilt of literary ideas. *Giro di vento* (2007), which is the first of De Carlo's novels to be translated into English, relies heavily upon technology in order to drive the narration forward. While *Giro di vento* is one of the more classically structured of De Carlo's novels, the constant use of technological tools and terminology demonstrates how technology is appropriated and becomes a consequential manipulator and controller in contemporary society. The critical postmodern work of Jean-Francois Lyotard becomes crucial here in demonstrating how myths of emancipation and the crisis of legitimation⁷⁵ connect to technology and continue to be represented in contemporary fiction.

⁷⁵ Legitimation: The act of providing legitimacy. For Lyotard's extended definition, see "The Problem: Legitimation." From *The Postmodern Condition*. University of Minnesota Press, 1979. Pp. 6-9.

The premise of *Giro di vento* centers around two pairs of economically successful men and women who venture together into the ‘wilderness’ of central Italy in order to buy and renovate an Umbrian country house⁷⁶. However, nature and technology work against them, as they find themselves without any outside assistance through cell phone coverage and are thoroughly lost in the wilderness. In order to counter their misfortune, the Milanese come upon an “aggressive agri-naturist community,”⁷⁷ where a series of powerful events cause worlds, beliefs, and cultures to collide. The following analysis from *Publisher’s Weekly*⁷⁸ helps to further understand the dichotomy of the plot:

...(F)our high-powered old friends-sensitive and conflicted editor Luisa; her uptight architect husband Enrico; Arturo, a hearty and practical designer; and Margherita, a mercurial talk-show host-embark from Milan on a weekend trip to rural Umbria. With their comically preening real estate agent Alessio, they are looking for a retreat from their frenetic urban lives (as well as an investment opportunity). But when their car breaks down, their cell phones get no signal, and a storm hits, they find themselves seeking shelter with a singularly uninviting group of people: a commune of squatters in the very houses they sought to buy, the settlement known as Windshift. Led by the charismatic Lauro, the settlers have rejected contemporary society and live a pre-modern, off-the-grid existence. As hours stretch into days, the five urbanites respond to their hosts in radically different ways, and suppressed rage and hidden desires explode in a series of confrontations. It's a schematic set-up, but De Carlo's finely tuned

⁷⁶ De Carlo, Andrea. *Windshift*. New York; Rizzoli, 2009. Book jacket.

⁷⁷ Ibid (8).

⁷⁸ <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-8478-2881-4>.

characterizations bring his heinously egocentric characters into vivid focus. De Carlo creates real drama in taking imperfect but self-aware people out of their element. Cell phones take a bashing, too.

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What runs concurrently throughout the novel, therefore, is the battle to see which world will prevail; that of the natural, self-sufficient, and environmentally conscious, or that of the technocentric, urban, and self-serving. De Carlo proclaims a vested interest in eco-mindedness and the negative effect which contemporary life places on nature⁷⁹; for this reason, *Giro di vento* becomes a literary manifesto which questions technology's mythological ability to benefit man and nature.

Andrea De Carlo's *Giro di vento* portrays a multitude of characters who either embody or refute the Lyotardian myth of emancipation. In his theoretical point of view, Lyotard demonstrates how technology is a part of the myth of emancipation, which is the belief that science and technology can set us free. Instead of searching for that which is true, for instance, we are now concerned with a search for what is useful. In delineating the Modern from the Postmodern, Lyotard specifies that the term *Modern* is used "...to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse...making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (Lyotard xxiii). However, these discourses are inverted with respect to the Postmodern. Since postmodern literature reflects an incredulity to meta-narratives and the impossibility of so-called 'grand narratives,' the subject is

⁷⁹ See *Mare della verità* (Bompiani, 2006), as well as "Andrea De Carlo: Sito ufficiale": www.andreadecarlo.com. It is here that the author explains his concern for the environment, his activity with Greenpeace, and his work in preserving the forests.

also then subjected to an inversion; in the case of the Modern versus the Postmodern, this change centers around the disbelief in the grand narrative of emancipation of the subject. As a highly functional postmodern entity, technology is equated with freedom; subjects with the greatest amount of technological power, optimum performance, wealth, and efficiency will be emancipated. On the other hand, those who unsuccessfully engage in the postmodern equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth will be subordinated or negatively forced by technology's superior power play.

Technology's connection to the emancipation myth in *Giro di vento* is most strongly identified in the characters' understanding (or misunderstanding) of their surroundings. For instance, all of the characters rely upon the GPS system of the automobile in order to guide them to the remote area. However, they are at the mercy of technology when "Il navigatore satellitare si ostina a fare *bip bip bip* e a segnare una svolta che non c'è... la strada continua a salire tra i boschi come se potesse andare avanti per sempre" (42). In this sense, technology has led them into isolation, and they are powerless against it. As a result, the characters have also lost their own sense of reality by losing their technological bearings. Lyotard explains this effect when he writes that:

Since 'reality' is what provides the evidence used as proof in scientific argumentation, and also provides prescriptions and promises of a juridical, ethical, and political nature with results, one can master all of these games by mastering 'reality.' That is precisely what technology can do. By reinforcing

technology, one ‘reinforces’ reality, and one’s chances of being just and right increase accordingly. (47)

From his explanation of technology and its power, a reader of De Carlo’s narrative is able to understand the extent to which the characters are chained to their respective forms of technology instead of being emancipated by it. Therefore, by losing their connection to technology, they have also lost their connection to any tangible reality.

The myth of emancipation via technology is further perceived through the incessant cell phone use of the characters. While technology frees them from first person obligations in their daily lives, the characters are still rendered more or less powerless when technology ceases to function in their lives. At one point, for instance, the three ‘viaggiatori,’ named Luisa, Enrico, and Margherita, as opposed to Alessio, the driver, speak within the shared monovolume⁸⁰ at the same time. After pages of cell phone interaction with different individuals, the narrator recounts the following occurrence, which becomes heightened in its unfamiliarity within the van: “Poi tutti e tre chiudono le loro comunicazioni quasi simultaneamente: restano fermi nel riverbero delle voci che si perde nel rombo attenuato del motore turbodiesel, senza muoversi né cambiare espressione” (23). In a certain sense, technology has rendered them verbally impotent, for once the conversation ends with the non-physically present others, those left in the automobile are rendered speechless; there is a palpable absence of communication, even when the individuals are sitting right next to one another.

The extent to which the myth of emancipation is embodied by the characters of *Giro di vento* becomes especially apparent when technology ultimately fails them. Not only do the

⁸⁰ Multi-purpose vehicle.

characters lose their connection to exterior reality by losing cell phone connection, but they also lose the sense of freedom which they originally sought in traveling out of the confined social context of the big city. This sense of terror, loss of connection, and loss of freedom is noted clearly in the words of Margherita, when it is explained to her that they had broken down in a wide-spanning “zona d’ombra”:

‘Ditemi che non è vero!... Ditemi che è uno scherzo!... Io devo fare delle telefonate fondamentali entro un’ora al massimo! È questione di vita o di morte, porca puttana! Non ho tempo per stare bloccata nella zona d’ombra!’ (51)

Further along, the narrator recounts her actions accordingly:

Muove ancora il suo cellulare in varie direzioni, va su e giù; il senso di intrappolamento le accorcia il fiato, le fa battere il cuore alla base del collo. (51)

In this sense, Margherita is physically trapped by her inability to experience the instant gratification and “freedom” to which she is so accustomed. Not only does technology fail her by causing undue strife and a complete sense of powerlessness, but it has such a hold over her as to render her physically unwell.

Similarly to the myth of emancipation, *Giro di vento* is a most fitting example of crises of legitimacy which regard value through technology. As previously discussed, all of the Milanese travelers within the van attach themselves to technology through the use of cell phones, the GPS

system of the automobile, etc. However, technology functions in a way beyond that of pure emancipation; instead, it also becomes a means for the individuals to legitimize themselves. Once again, this crisis returns the application of scientific knowledge with that of truth and power. In providing a historical context for this postmodern crisis which is also useful for an analysis of De Carlo's novel, Lyotard creates a new equation which ties money, truth, science, and power together:

By the end of the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes is already asking for laboratory funds. A new problem appears: devices that optimize the performance of the human body for the purpose of producing proof require additional expenditures. No money, no proof- and that means no verification of statements and no truth. The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right. An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established. (45)

In this particular context, Lyotard begins with a fixed point and shows how this tradition has developed through the Modern and into the Postmodern. Furthermore, while science appears to have first formulated this relationship between truth, efficiency, and wealth, it has moved from a purely scientific realm into that of the individual, human, and quotidian.

A strong example of legitimation through technology is revealed in two particular characters in *Giro di vento*. As the driver of the travelers, for instance, Alessio is associated with technology from the outset of the novel. Even in the introductory chapter, he is depicted as

having "...la faccia a trenta centimetri dallo schermo irradiante di una lampada a raggi UVA di ultima generazione, garantita a furia di sigle e acronimi secondo le più recenti norme europee" (5). From the introduction of the first character, De Carlo establishes a relationship between a desire for the newest and most technologically advanced products with that of the Lyotardian relationship between wealth and efficiency. Again, it must be reiterated that the reader must be aware of De Carlo's narrative tone, which often suggests an ironic approach to the characters and their contemporary worldviews. In any case, these same characters reflect well the 'postmodern' society in which we live and work, no matter if that world is inherently realistic or ironically flawed.

Another crucial moment in which Alessio reflects the relationship between wealth, truth, and efficiency is his own reliance upon the cell phone. While an examination of false emancipation through cell phones has already been examined, here the inanimate cell phone takes on the role of value for its human owner. After a young country child steals the cell phone in his desire to play with the fancy "toy," the following is recounted:

Alessio grida 'Nooo!', fa un balzo disperato verso il rumore agghiacciante del suo gioiello tecnologico sul duro del vecchio pavimento: raccoglie i due pezzi in cui si è scomposto, senza neanche volerli guardare bene... Alessio con amarezza meticolosa rimette a posto la batteria, fa scattare la levetta di blocco. Poi schiaccia il tasto di accensione, trattiene il fiato in attesa del peggio: invece parte la musicchetta di avvio e il display si illumina, appaiono i girasoli di Van Gogh...

(75-76)

In this display of desperation, De Carlo demonstrates the ways in which contemporary subjects are subordinated by the power of technology. Alessio's absolute reliance upon the cell phone is demonstrated in the meticulous care which he takes in putting the object back together. In order to justify his desperate behavior, Alessio legitimizes his actions by stating:

‘Scusate, ma questo è uno strumento di lavoro...Non lo si trova neanche, in Italia. Me lo sono fatto prendere da mio cugino a Singapore. Seicento dollari, con tutto che lì in pratica non ci sono tasse.’ (76)

In order to validate his puerile treatment of the little boy, as Alessio originally shouts at the child to “drop it” (meaning the telephone, which the child literally does), as well as to denounce his parents for raising a “scimmia” (75), he engages in many of the traits which Lyotard recognizes in his formulation of the efficiency, science, and truth relationship. First, he explains that the cell phone is an invaluable instrument of his work, suggesting that productivity could not be accomplished without it. Second, he justifies his poor treatment of the child by explaining how rare, expensive, and valuable the product is; not widely available in Italy, especially bought for him by a relative and costing 700 dollars in Singapore, a place known to be one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. With this rationalization, Alessio legitimizes his valuing of the inanimate object more than the emotional well-being of the child, further emphasizing how technology is more widely prized than even, in this case, a human's feelings.

Legitimation is further supported in *Giro di vento* through narrative descriptions of the relationship between so-called ‘progress’ and the dissemination of knowledge. This relationship

is identified in De Carlo's juxtaposition of Country versus City. Within the novel, key plot elements clearly demonstrate how the well-being of society, in the character's view, relies upon cosmopolitanism and the technological efficiency of the city. For instance, when Arturo and Enrico, the architect, discuss the merits and drawbacks of life in the city, where Arturo cites the "disumanità crescente della città, (92) Enrico disputes him with the following:

'Detto da uno che vive nel cuore di Milano... Non potresti mai farne a meno, della città! E io nemmeno! Ne ho bisogno! Ho bisogno delle luci, dei cinema, del movimento, della folla lungo i marciapiedi, del rumore del traffico, perfino dello smog! Ho bisogno della comunicazione estesa! E voi ne avete bisogno quanto me, qualunque cosa diciate! Ci siete nati e cresciuti! (92)

In the above, Enrico demonstrates how, for both good and bad, the city is responsible for legitimizing life as they know it. His incessant need for "comunicazione estesa," for example, demonstrates the power which urban technological connection holds over him; when present, this form of communication provides him with power and connectivity; when absent, however, it is the powerful force which causes him emotional turmoil and the sense of lacking control. For these reasons, Enrico supports the myth that technology within the context of the fast-paced, technologically blessed city of Milan, is able to emancipate him. Later, Enrico continues with the following argument concerning their current living situation in the central Italian wilderness:

'Si, vorrei vederti... a vivere in un posto come questo, senza nessuna delle comodità a cui sei abituata. Senza il tuo lavoro, senza i tuoi libri né i tuoi autori né

i tuoi redattori. Vorrei vederti, dopo una settimana. A stare qui con Laura e Gaia e Mirta e Aria e le altre creature assortite della terra.’ (92)

In response to his friends’ ‘wayward’ belief that they might actually be able to survive outside the city, Enrico employs many of the tactics illustrated by Lyotard; these tactics further represent the postmodern emphasis of self-legitimation through what is considered to be useful, true, and efficient. For Enrico, the city acts as this place of legitimation. In Milan, the characters are privy to the information which connects them to the world and provides them with social value. Outside of this realm, however, the characters are threatened with becoming “creature assortite della terra” (92) which lack the necessary technological and communicative connections to the rest of society. In this way, the books, lights, cinemas, and even smog of the city become the norm, while the natural surroundings of the countryside come to represent the deviant Other outside of a normal social order. In trying to defend the city, Enrico legitimizes the city as both socially superior and more progressive than the so-called ‘backward’ rural domain of Laura, Gaia, Mirta and Aria. This is achieved through Enrico’s emphasis upon science, education, and technology.

Secondly, technology’s role with respect to the postmodern human subject is found not only in Italian contemporary fiction, but is also a forceful presence in Irish contemporary literature as well. A particularly relevant example of current technology’s influence upon contemporary Irish fiction is represented through Barry McCrea’s *The First Verse* (2005). While McCrea is not nearly as prolific as other notable fiction writers, his novel is an example of how technology functions as a pervasive literary element providing insight into the contemporary

quotidian. Like De Carlo, McCrea's use of technology aids in the questioning of narrative connections, supports a postmodern pastiche of ideas and textual events, and provides evidence for the way in which technology is again responsible for providing a false sense of personal freedom.

The First Verse recounts the psychologically disturbing experiences of Niall Lenihan, a freshman at Trinity College, as he is swept up in a cult which engages in *Sortes Virgiliane*, otherwise known as divination by bibliomancy. This comes to mean, as the novel develops, that all of Niall's actions must be based upon the symbols which accompany a chosen literary marker, whether it be a dictionary entry, an e-mail message, or a word randomly pointed to in a book. In following Niall around his Joycean voyage through contemporary Ireland, McCrea draws attention to the various psychological ways in which people can be drawn to cults and deviant groups, as well as the way in which modern technology affirms this powerful desire to belong. This is especially true for the way in which the novel juxtaposes the antiquity associated with the Latin *Sortes* with that of a contemporary emphasis upon technological tools such as e-mail and text messaging. In crafting the novel in this manner, McCrea creates a sense of aura and mystery which connects symbolic scriptural symbolism derived from antiquity with that of contemporary tools of written and spoken communication. As readers, we are also taken on Niall's voyage as he is first drawn into the cult; as he strives to become an active member, becomes increasingly obsessed with the cult's standards, and finally becomes withdrawn from his friends and relatives. Later, we see his own struggle to extract himself from the seemingly inescapable pull of the cult, as well as the constant pressure which is exerted upon him to return once he is able to break free.

From the opening page of *The First Verse*, the presence of technology and the unsettling effect which it has on the narrator is evidenced:

My return to the cult arrived on a warm evening, halfway through the summer of 2004, as I sat alone waiting for a text message from my new lover. I was distracted and nervous; the flat oppressed me with its spoons and cushions. I stared at the unlit phone, willing the message to arrive while there was still time. But when it did buzz, beep, and glow, instead of picking it up and reading the message, I walked, as though instructed, into Patrick's room and stood in front of his bookshelf. (3-4)

Here, McCrea establishes an unstable plane of narration early on by structuring the novel with both specific and unspecific narrative characteristics. While we are provided with a precise date of return to the cult, a clear description of an apartment, and the mention of a specific name, these bits of narration do not assist in establishing a clear context. Instead, the reader is left disoriented by the lack of information regarding the narrative 'I,' the current time and place, and the sense of foreboding brought on by the power of the cell phone. Immediate further reading of the prologue does not provide further insight into the connections as to how these people, places, and objects actually relate to one another. As such, the reader is forced to grasp pieces of the narrative and form his or her own understanding of a given textual moment.

As the story unfolds in a non-linear fashion, the reader learns that this text message actually feeds Niall's addiction to the cult, which engages in *Sortes Virgilianae*. What also becomes clear as the narration continues is that this is the first reference to Niall's addiction to

the cell phone and, ultimately to the cult. The “new lover,” though unspecified here, will later relate either to one of Niall’s new boyfriends or to the more pervasive idea of his love for the cult. As a result of this initial passage, the reader is able to note how McCrea simultaneously creates new relations of technology to narrative and shows how the presence of technology is constantly in flux within individual textual narratives.

But where did the hyper-need for technology in Irish literature originate? The incorporation of Jamesonian and Lyotardian theory only goes so far on a universally macro-social level; what, on the other hand, is indicated with a micro-understanding of technology and Irish literature? In order to best answer the question, Joe Cleary’s *Outrageous Fortune* is useful in its examination of the postmodern paradox between a consistent, hyper-need for ‘progress’ and a calling out for nostalgia. Incorporating Jamesonian terms, Cleary⁸¹ writes the following:

... (T)here is much greater reason to assume that capitalist modernity, committed as it is to unceasing revolution in the forces of production and to the constant social upheaval that this requires, generates, as its automatic reflex, an ongoing demand for some sort of ontological security and stability that economic prosperity as such (even in the very small number of societies where it exists) cannot completely satisfy. As many commentators have pointed out, capitalist modernity generates, not simply the constant agitations and excitements of the ‘shock of the new’, but also a concomitant nostalgic longing for some putatively

⁸¹ It is important to note that Cleary does often refer to the Postmodern by name and appears to follow the theoretical position of the Postmodern as a continuation of that which came before in the Modern. In his chapter on “The Pogues and the Spirit of Capitalism,” for example, he refers to contemporary Irish rock albums as tracking “... a peculiar mini-history of modern subaltern carnival and consumerist excess that stretches from pre-modern to postmodern times” (266).

non-alienated pre-modern world. Nostalgic longings are constitutive to the modern capitalist order itself, not simply the traces of some pre-modern residue captured within the meshes of the modern but stubbornly recalcitrant to its logic.

(201)

As the narrator of *The First Verse*, Niall, along with his cult partners, is a primary example of this tension between capitalist Modernity and nostalgia for the pre-modern world, and technology is the mediator through which these tensions manifest themselves. When Niall hears the "...buzz, beep and glow" of the cell phone, he is immediately drawn to the bookshelf, which contains the source of his addiction; that is, engaging in *sortes* by choosing random passages from different books and then predicting his future based upon the connections between these passages. Throughout McCrea's novel, the tensions and/or connections which occur randomly between varying forms of technology and the printed word demonstrate the social tensions between contemporary Irish capitalist society and the continuation of nostalgia for a pre-modern world which Cleary sees as endemic to contemporary Irish society.

However, it is not only the cell phone which creates tensions in the narrative and exemplifies the postmodern condition. Like *Giro di vento*, *The First Verse* reflects the Lyotardian myth of emancipation. As is the case with De Carlo, McCrea uses a variety of technological tools in order to demonstrate how technology is illusory in its apparent aim to set society free (emancipation) and to validate a place in the mythological scheme of the larger universe (legitimation). Instead, technological tools complicate these two aspects of

Postmodernity and demonstrate how narrative voices become lost in the patchwork quilt of technological possibilities, connections, and/or fragments.

Technology's false sense of emancipation is one of the great paradoxes of *The First Verse*. Aside from the opening of the novel, where the cell phone calls Niall back to the cult⁸² and where the reader has yet to comprehend the many facets of the narrative, technology is consistently linked with the paradox of emancipation. The sound of the cell phone and the refrigerator, as well as the ticking of an alarm clock, link Niall to the addiction which he erroneously believes will set him free:

By the time I had pulled the first forbidden volume down, the traffic, the hum of the fridge, the homeless couple fighting outside, the tick of Patrick's alarm clock-even, perhaps, the ring of my phone- had already woven themselves into a fine fabric of sound, the inevitable and dangerous Latin singing that had seduced me first and would now lead me away again:

ecce enim veritatem dilexisti

incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi

Asperges me hyssopo et mundabor

Lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.

For behold you loved the truth

And you revealed to me the hidden secrets of your wisdom.

You will purge me with hyssop and I will be cleansed:

You will wash me and I will shine whiter than snow. (4)

⁸² At the beginning, the reader does not know to which cult Niall refers, as the time frame of the novel is not consistently linear. When reading on, however, the details pertaining to the cult's literary basis are slowly revealed.

In this carefully crafted paragraph, McCrea creates a variety of connections between disparate forms of technology which mirror the sound of the Latin poetry. Text and technology coalesce in both the alliteration of the scene ("fist forbidden... fridge... fighting... fine fabric of sound") and in the sounds which are transmitted, such as in the tick of the alarm clock, for example. This fabric of sound, of which technology forms a fundamental part, provides Niall with a further impetus to engage in the fabric of language to which he attributes his addiction.

Niall's reliance upon technology in feeding his addiction to the synchronicities associated with Latin texts supports Lyotard's myth of emancipation. This is clear because even though Niall reasons that he can master reality through devotion to the *sortes*, it is instead the force of technology which constantly drives him back to the cult. Niall expresses his reliance upon technology in order to foster further connection to strangers in the following:

Our phones buzzed and glowed all day with incoming text messages, words flying back and forth across Trinity to make sure our paths would all intersect in some pub, at some party, outside some club at the same point in the evening, *buttery at 9, u free for coffee at 2? crowd going to cafe en seine, party in Thrall.* (27)

Even in this initial scene, Niall has already connected the language of technology with that of the events of his life. On a narrative level, Niall relies upon the messages which the cell phone delivers to him in order to understand the way in which his world is structured. It is almost as though Niall does not believe that a possibility for connection would now be possible without the

use of technology, proving the extent to which technology supports the myth of emancipation.

Furthermore, on a technical level, the length of the sentences reflects the disparate, fragmented language of technology. Niall's sentence in the above, which seamlessly blends a stream of consciousness thought process and the linguistic structure of SMS based upon brevity, is at once fragmented through the use of multiple commas and unregulated in the thoughts which are expressed without linearity. This new language of postmodern technology reworks the ways in which language had been expressed before in more modern literature; while an author such as Virginia Woolf would temper a work stylistically indicative of the stream of consciousness with deliberate sentence structure and a concrete use of punctuation, the new language of SMS allows for the stream of consciousness to be reworked through a random use or lack of punctuation, as well as the incorporation of new numbers and symbols which are easily identifiable on a universal level. What ultimately results, then, from these developing forms of technology is the creation of new modes of connection.

However, this hyper-reliance upon technology also supports the way in which the myth of emancipation is truly a myth. In the following passage, which describes Niall's full immersion in the cult, the way in which technology acts as a further chain to the abstract idea of human freedom is depicted:

My room was old and forgotten, a hoard of relics, like my granny's house. There were clothes on the floor from days ago and an upturned volume of Stendhal on the bed reminded me I had forgotten, or in any case had been absent from, my tutorial with Professor Dunne. I switched on my neglected phone and faced the

voicemails. Two where-are-you messages from Fionnuala, barely audible against the background noise of the pub and then the party, repeating directions in case I had got lost. There was also a text message from Patrick, "*I'll be in town tonight, meet up?*" I flopped down on the bed and turned over to try and sleep, but my mind was restless. I stuck a hand out to the radio and listened to the farming news" (118).

From the passage, it is clear that technology has formed such a burden that Niall can find no sufficient form of relief. Even though Niall does have the means to control technology's ability to convey communication through the cell phone's on/off switch, at the same time he is still under the spell of technology, due to the backup of cell phone messages and SMS. As a result, Niall is unable to find an effective way in which to confront the problems regarding human connection which he faces. Even the radio, with its bland, monotonous recounting of a boring subject such as farming news, is not able to provide comfort to Niall's troubled mind. In summary, these forms of technology were initially created in order to render human existence more facile; however, the problems which arise from these same technologies instead create more complications and problems in fostering connection between human subjects.

At the darkest point of Niall's obsession with the synchronicities⁸³, technology is, paradoxically, both the tool through which Niall is able to fall more deeply out of touch with reality and the means through which he is able to falsely confirm his connection to reality. In this

⁸³ Synchronicity is the experience of two or more events that are apparently causally unrelated occurring together in a meaningful manner. To count as synchronicity, the events should be unlikely to occur together by chance. The phenomenon of synchronicity was first described by Carl Gustav Jung in the 1920s. Tarnas, Richard. *Cosmos and Psyche*. New York: Penguin Group, 2006. Pg. 50.

way, he is again reaffirming Lyotard's understanding that the illusory power of technology to provide some sense of freedom is, in reality, a myth. The true power of technology in burying Niall deeper into the abnormal unreality of the *sortes* while at the same time assisting Niall in keeping up the facade of normalcy is expressed in the following:

I lost count of everything. I kept pulling money out of the machines in the wall, hoping that overdraft facilities and automatic Beckett stipend deposits would between them contrive to keep it flowing, but I had no idea if my account contained four hundred euro or four, or- who knew?- four thousand. (167)

In this passage, Niall confirms another way in which technology provides a disconnection from reality and further acts as the powerful entity which controls an important part of his life. Even though Niall validates his existence by relying on the ATM's ability to provide the means necessary for subsistence through money, he displays his complete misunderstanding of the situation by expressing his inability to perceive exactly how much money he actually has in his account. At this point, even his language demonstrates his disconnect from reality through the repetition of the words "or four"; this is because the reader is not able to tell if the "or four" will refer to the hundred euro or to the thousand which follows afterward. In either case, there is some sort of loss of clarity in speech. As a result, the disconnection which Niall feels when withdrawing money from the ATM begins to reflect itself in the ways in which the events of his life lack understanding, clarity, and/or meaning to him. McCrea's argument here reflects a very Beckettian outlook, not only for the ironic mention of the "Beckett stipend deposits," but also for the way in which Niall is representative of humankind's condition to be "non-knowers" and

“non-carers.”⁸⁴ Like Beckett’s Belacqua, Niall’s emotional impotence and inability to productively move forward borders on the darkly comedic; with the advent of ATM statements and receipts, there is no way that Niall couldn’t be aware of the amount in his account unless he chooses not to face the reality of his dire situation. What is taken from the Modern to the Postmodern in this Beckettian influence, however, is the way in which the ATM, as a technological machine, drives Niall’s lack of personal understanding and social disconnection.

Later, the telephone is responsible for creating a false sense of reality for Niall, as it succeeds in covering up the truth of his mental instability to his friends and loved ones. Technology’s role in creating a false sense of reality is clear in the following passage:

The days of the week too dissolved into pale nights in John’s flat or in Sarah’s rooms, punctuated with private daylight meanderings around the city. A couple of times a week- no more than this, but nevertheless without fail- things would subside, and I would have two quiet hours, a weird silence at the eye of a storm, a cold spell of clarity. It was during these strange tranquil hours, empty of all feeling, that I used to phone or text my parents, to keep suspicion at bay. (167)

Here again, the reader is able to notice Niall’s clear lack of an understanding of reality. However, in the moments when he is able to experience some lucidity, he is reliant upon the telephone in

⁸⁴ Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove Press, 1997. Pp. 352-353.

order to confirm his connection to reality. Even though this connection is only an apparition, the phone call is enough to prevent suspicion from the people who really do know Niall's true character. In establishing contact through the use of the phone, Niall is able to manipulate the power of technology in order to keep the truth of his identity under wraps. The unfortunate truth of the situation, however, is that technology simultaneously feeds Niall's addiction and continues to chain him to the false world which he has built for himself. As a result, Niall is further alienated from the people who truly care about him.

Furthermore, technology is responsible for legitimizing the existence of those who, either willingly or unwillingly, participate in its power. As Lyotard proves, it is almost impossible to successfully act against the influence of science and technology in contemporary life; as such, the stakes become much higher when technology is in the position of controller. An example of the crisis of legitimation through technology is noticeable when Niall speaks with John about Sarah's abrupt and mysterious absence from the cult one day. In attempting to formulate a reason, Niall asks the following:

(Niall) "Luis?" I asked. The names of this lost world, *sortes, synchronicities, Luis*, were sunk deep down, to find them I had to drag the lightless depths, net them and haul them up with a creaking winch. But then when they fell off my tongue, they were light and quick, with a silvery sheen, like stars, a seductive twinkle. 'Email him.' *laninahillen@eurosur.org*, I remembered to myself.

(John) "No answer."

(Niall) "Well, ring him, or whatever."

(John) "I have no way of getting in touch with him. I've never met him either," he

added defensively.

(*Niall*) Neither do I," I said. 'So maybe this is your cue to leave, like I did. No more books. Get a job. Get some friends.'

... (*John*) "No. It's too late for me. I have to know more. I have to go on. They just can't leave me like this. *This is death.*" His eyes were wild with panic. (242)

In this brief passage, the way in which John equates technology with life and death becomes clear. The character of Luis, who is both an unfamiliar member of the cult and the person with whom, according to Niall and John, Sarah supposedly ran away to be with, controls technology by not allowing any contact through phone or e-mail. Sarah herself does likewise. In this way, John's validity as a member of the cult is threatened through the inactivity of common technological outlets. Moreover, the facility which Niall demonstrates in remembering and recounting the e-mail address of the abstract 'Luis' proves the importance which technology takes in maintaining the flow of the *sortes* and synchronicities which the cult relies upon for functionality. Hence, John and Niall both prove that communication in contemporary society relies upon the presence and / or lack of technological resources; without the use of these artificial machines, lack of communication is, in the words of John, "death."

Within the span of postmodern Irish and Italian literature, the recurring issue of connection; or, more precisely, the desire for new, alternative forms of connection, is one of the primary issues concerning authors, narrators, and characters. Because of technology, these

'subjects'⁸⁵ must rely upon technology in order to foster or control connections with other entities. We have already seen this in both the works of De Carlo and McCrea; however, in Emma Donoghue's 2007 novel *Landing*, the various dichotomies which arise between technology and human connection demonstrate technology's effect on personal relationships in the postmodern quotidian.

In *Landing*, Irish and Canadian worlds collide when Jude, a twenty-five year old female archivist living in a remote area of Ontario seemingly untouched by modern technology, and Síle, a flight attendant for an Irish airline, meet in the "black void" (8) of an airborne London bound flight. The two build a long distance relationship which develops first from e-mail (which is difficult, considering that Jude initially states, "I don't do e-mail" and Síle states, "I don't do snail mail" (25-26)) and then upon infrequent visits, e-mail, and text messages.

As Síle and Jude struggle to fuse their two diverse worlds, in which the former is cosmopolitan and technologically savvy, and the latter introverted and deliberately ignorant of more modern forms of technological communication, the issues and problems pertaining to relationships in a global world begin to surface.⁸⁶ What is most interesting, I would argue, is the way in which relationships and connections are maintained, controlled, or broken through the use of contemporary modes of technology. It is notable that the two protagonists, Síle and Jude, represent different spectrums of technological finesse; while Síle is lost without her PDA, Jude has an e-mail address which she purposely refuses to use. Through their respective relationships

⁸⁵ I will not argue one way or another with what Jameson calls either the 'death of the subject' or the 'philosophical and cultural mystification which sought to persuade people that they 'had' individual subjects and possessed some unique personality (Jameson 6). Instead, I seek to use an encompassing term which approaches the idea of the, in Postmodernism, 'imaginary' individual. I have chosen to use 'subject' in order to convey this concept.

⁸⁶ In support, the novel is described as a "sparkling story... with a uniquely twenty-first century twist". While the *Seattle Times* attributes this description to the novel's depiction of "a trans-Atlantic lesbian love affair in a post 9/11 world," this is a reductive understanding of the novel.

with technology and with each other, Síle and Jude exemplify the ways that technological legitimation and false emancipation can be examined on the macro-level of a human relationship.

In reviewing the novel in its entirety, one notices that both the beginning and the end of *Landing* incorporate descriptions of the characters on the telephone; Jude, at the beginning, is just learning of her mother's rapid descent into senility and Síle, at the end, is seen by Jude from the window with her "gizmo," the kitschy word used to describe the cell phone within the novel, pressed to her ear. In using the telephone as a primary frame of the narration, Donoghue simultaneously establishes the importance of technology in the connection of the two women. What one later learns is that Síle's and Jude's relationship would not be able to exist without the presence of airplanes (Síle is a flight attendant), cell phones, PDAs, telephones, and e-mail. The micro-relationship of Síle and Jude is indicative of larger contemporary issues pertaining to connection and technology; these issues represent contemporary social standards, as the pervasive need for, and use of, technology increasingly becomes a societal norm which spans both local and global boundaries.

Landing is relevant for its portrayal of the ways in which technology can have tangible physical effects on participants. This is an arguably unique way in which to consider the relationship between the 'subject' and the machine. Síle, for one, is an ideal example of the way in which the overuse of technology can have physical effects on the body and mind. For instance, when Síle responds to a message after her current girlfriend, Kathleen, abruptly leaves her, the negative emotional effects of the meeting appear to be mirrored in her PDA; while responding to the message from the friends who Síle awaits, "her thumb twinged- too much texting- but she ignored it" (36). Even though she is noticeably aware of the physical discomfort of texting, Síle

continues to engage in SMS without a second thought⁸⁷. Later, Síle voices the profound psycho-emotional result of a crash of her PDA. In support, it is narrated that the "...time Síle's last PDA crashed and she'd lost her whole address book...it made her neck go rigid to remember. She'd felt like a diver whose air hose had got tangled" (36). In this scenario, Síle's sudden, unexpected lack of technology renders her incapable of forming the contacts and connections which she desires; as such, she is physically impacted by the loss of power. In this sense, it is clear that technology has the simultaneous ability to de-legitimize Síle's existence and to render her communicatively impotent. As such, the texting discomfort and PDA crash both act as narrative elements which propel the narrative forward, thereby proving Lyotard's understanding of the Postmodern as the period in which technology is the great equalizer between that which is being narrated, the narrative voice, and the narration itself.

One of the interesting characteristics of *Landing* is that in order to achieve a form of human connection, the characters must pit technology against technology. As a flight attendant, Síle must constantly thrive in the 'non-place' of the airplane. Pico Iyer writes extensively in *The Global Soul* of the airport as a non-place which is standardized, sanitized, and universally identifiable to all. The airplane is also a primary example of the power of speed, which is intricately linked to technology and the Postmodern. In support of the connection of technology and speed, the following is narrated:

Síle couldn't remember when, at three or four, she'd first become aware of the magic trick of hopping between countries, continents even. But what she'd loved

⁸⁷ This is even indicative of contemporary culture, where texting has indeed proven to have physical effects on the body. See Hafner, Katie. "Texting May Be Taking a Toll." *The New York Times*, May 25, 2009.

from the start was the way that houses became boxes, cars insects, human specks of dust, in a miniature play world. And the abstract patterns: plough tracks looped across rectangular fields, rivers like gigantic lazy worms, mountains mere folds and wrinkles in a quilt. That sense of strangeness, of possibility. You felt you were gliding slowly when in fact you were going faster than anything. (147)

Not only is the pastiche of postmodern images, similes and metaphors present (we even have a physical manifestation of the 'quilt' which is so indicative of postmodern pastiche), but the airplane further indicates technology's ability to generalize, miniaturize, and speed up human existence. Because Síle is constantly in the non-place of the airplane, she must rely on the cell phone in order to establish any form of communication with Jude. In any case, Síle's and Jude's relationship is, at any given moment, connected to the power of technology through cell phone contact, e-mail, or the mobility of international flight.

Another issue which Síle and Jude, as contemporary literary subjects, seem to have difficulties in coming to terms with is the connection of life with technology. Síle, for one, equates emotional impact and technology as a singular entity. When Síle is feeling the stress of her lack of physical connection to Jude, the following is expressed:

Síle had to have her Jude reservoir filled up, that was all that was the matter; she was feeling hollow and shaky. No matter how often they went over their schedules, they couldn't seem to find an opening for a visit... *Fuel exhaustion*, that was the term; she remembered reading about a plane that, because of delay and

communication problems at JFK, had simply run out of petrol and dropped out of the sky. (247)

Here, Síle equates human emotion with mechanical failure in a very precise way. The use of technological terminology proves to be the means through which she can best express the physical and emotional 'turbulence' which Jude's absence causes. Hence, the association between physical exhaustion and mechanical failure demonstrates how technology legitimizes Síle's emotional feelings and shows how she is reliant upon its terminology for full expression.

A final element in the nature of technology to emancipate or legitimize human connection can be noticed in the use of e-mail and voicemail. While McCrea's and De Carlo's novels emphasize the control of communication through technology primarily in direct cell phone contact, in *Landing*, e-mail and voicemail become the greater filters of communication. On one level, narrative voices remain unsure as to the rules and regulations associated with technology. When thinking about the girlfriend that she is about to break up with in favor of Jude, Síle questions, "Had she been cheating for more than a month already, did e-mails count?" (101). In this case, Síle is not absolutely sure of technology's place in the deliberate breakdown of human connection. On a different level, however, the flexibility associated with technology legitimizes certain types of social behavior which would not be possible or would be contentious in real life. E-mail, for example, provides multiple opportunities for non-simultaneous revision. Jude learns this fact earlier on in her appropriation of what is and is not acceptable to write via e-mail. She types:

In the market I saw a woman in a cafe' and thought, why can't I love someone like her instead of you?

On second thought- Jude highlighted that sentence and hit *Delete*. There were things you could chance face to face, but e-mail was a blunt medium. (242)

In the above, it is evident that Jude, even as an e-mail neophyte, has come to an understanding of e-mail as a confrontational ground. Since words can be misinterpreted or, in her fear, most likely understood to have a negative consequence, she engages in self-censorship in order to come up with an expression of communication which is mutually pleasing to herself and to Síle. Therefore, in order to be certain that she will not be taken the wrong way, Jude revises her words in order to keep the lines of communication open with Síle. A technological medium which relies upon immediate dialogue such as the telephone, for example, would not afford her the same opportunity to use time in order to carefully construct her words and thoughts.

Finally, technology both falsely emancipates and provides illusory power to the narrative voice through voicemail. At the climax of the novel, Síle frantically attempts to reach Jude via the telephone; however, she has little success. Síle begins her series of voicemail pleas in a controlled, patient way:

Me again. I can wait, while you're thinking about this, Jude; I just need to know roughly how long I'm going to need to wait. Ring me back, leave a message; that's all I'm asking. (262)

Because of the distance which voicemail provides, Síle has clearly been able to legitimize what she believes by carefully constructing the wording of her message. Had she and Jude met face-

to-face, the nature of human contact would not have allowed for such certainty of language. Furthermore, this same distance which the machine provides emancipates Síle from the burdens of what she would have had to confront in a formal meeting with Jude.

Later, the answering machine is again important in affirming Síle's discontent, as it allows her to express the personal turmoil which results from Jude's lack of communication:

... I'm in a bad way here. Come on, Jude, pick up the phone; you owe me that much. (263)

Jude has evidently learned well how to use technology to her advantage, and the machine, while still allowing Síle the possibility of tailoring her words to fit the situation, begins to now show signs of the false emancipation. This climaxes when Síle forcefully leaves her final messages:

*Fucking hell, Jude, how can you cut me off and pronounce the case closed?...
Jude, I'm telling you for the last time, pick up the damn phone!... I don't
understand, and I don't forgive you either. People think you're so strong: What a
joke! You hadn't the stamina to hold onto me for even a year. You hadn't the balls.*

(265)

By this point, Síle has lost all desire to censor her words, even if she is afforded the opportunity to do so through technology. The machine, however, has now proven to be even more detrimental in the search for emancipation; Síle not only loses control of her emotions, but in addition, she must do so without contact with the other subject present. In this sense, technology

not only determines the myth of emancipation to be false, but it also proves to alienate the subject even further than purely person-to-person communication.

From the descriptions which Nove, De Carlo, McCrea, and Donoghue provide, the centrality of technology and media to the 'narrative,' narrative voices, and narrative characteristics are indicative of the ideologies which Lyotard and Jameson delineated in their work on Postmodernism. While *Macno*, *Pura vita*, *Giro di vento*, *The First Verse*, and *Landing* represent a more selective portion of contemporary Irish and Italian novels, the frequency with which they incorporate technology and technological language, as well as the ways in which they prove that technology is manipulated, discussed, and appropriated, provide an apt lens reflecting upon the larger trends in current society. Jameson's understandings of pastiche, as well as Lyotard's formulation of both legitimation and the myth of emancipation, are primary indicators in contemporary narrative of the ways in which technology and the Postmodern rely upon one another for expression.

Contemporary Irish and Italian fiction is successful in revealing how technology and narratives encompassing technology act as primary elements in the patchwork quilt of the Postmodern. Through these postmodern discourses, the way in which technology acts a fragment in the pastiche of dancer and dance comes into focus, for the narrative wholes associated with traditional narrative form are by now rendered obsolete. As a result, the literary presence of technology strongly factors into the simultaneous breakdown, reconfiguration, or reimagining of traditional forms of more classically modern literary connections, thereby creating modes of narrative expression appropriate to both the new millennium and to the challenges of the contemporary quotidian.

Chapter Three: Music as the Soundtrack of Contemporary Life

When Pico Iyer ends *The Global Soul* by acknowledging two of his “great companions” as “the ceremonious rhapsodies of Handel, the craggy transports of Van Morrison... (I)n a world where the sense of “home” can prove so elusive, they root us firmly in the lasting,” (Iyer 303) the author equates the diversity of global music on a universal level with an idealistic sense of local ‘place’; this expression works in tandem with the larger meanings of *The Global Soul*, in which Iyer delineates the ways that the global plays out in changing spaces on both the local and the international levels. In fact, it is music, he argues, which remains fixed and rooted when that which surrounds us in postmodern global society is fleeting and transient. However, the decision to incorporate music as a fundamental, grounding element is not particular only to Iyer’s case. Instead, it runs almost consistently as a fixed element within the majority of contemporary Italian and Irish narratives. In this chapter, therefore, I intend to analyze on several levels the various ways in which music functions in the context of postmodern Irish and Italian narrative fiction. In doing so, I seek to use a variety of musical texts in order to demonstrate how the global entity of music diverges from a traditional reading of Yeats’s dancer and dance as a fluid whole by standing separately from the other performative entities, such as movement, action, setting, and public reaction. In the literary sense, then, music acts as a fragment that both functions within, and contributes to, the ever changing pastiche of contemporary literature.

Music has always been well adapted to literature; as a soundtrack of varying resonances, tones, and instruments, it provides color and clarity to a text. A classic example in which music contributes to the narrative is Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*. Within the framework of action, the

Chorus of Theban elders is responsible for speaking directly to the audience and serves the purpose of providing further understanding as to the choices and future consequences of Oedipus's actions. While the actual musical sounds associated with the Chorus remain abstract, it is still likely that both the tonal monotony and diction provide a musicality of assonance and rhythm which effectively supports the theatrical action. Throughout history, from the age of the troubadours to today, music and literature have proven to support one another, thereby continually enhancing the fundamental relationship between humanity and music.

Of course, as the relationship between music and fiction has become more frequently acknowledged and manipulated within twenty-first century literature, it is important to note how this connection is both built upon yet differs from earlier modern and postmodern works. One of the consistent modern/postmodern relationships between music and literature, for example, centers upon music's ability to magnify generational differences in which older generations focus upon nostalgia and the younger ones upon either transgression⁸⁸ or the embodiment of that which is "new." One of the most prominent postmodern Italian writers to critique the relationship between music and youth culture was Pier Vittorio Tondelli, whose *Un weekend postmoderno* incorporates contemporary music in order to explain the "concerns, actions, sexuality, behavior, and linguistic "tics" of a restless generation of young people always moving, traveling, searching, partying, engaged in idle discussions, and, yet, usually bored with their lives" (Capozzi 220). Music in the Postmodern is further manifested through the re-appropriation and / or manipulation of music by these same younger generations. For example, while it does not yet specifically appear in current fiction, as far as I am aware, the chart- topping

⁸⁸ In the case of the "Giovani Cannibali," for example.

dance song, “We No Speak Americano”⁸⁹ by the Australian rock group Yolanda Be Cool and producer DCUP is an excellent example. The group’s headlining song, with its club beat and music video based upon a pastiche of images from the fifties, is a wildly popular sampler mix of Renato Carosone’s 1956 memorable Neopolitan hit, “Tu vuò fà l’americano.”⁹⁰ This similar rediscovery of music from the past consistently appears in both Irish and Italian current fiction and often provides significant insight into moments of greater narrative clarity.

Like Tondelli, Joyce himself, often considered to be caught between a modern and a postmodern literary aesthetic, was forward-thinking in his ability to use music as a reflection of the text and in order to make these same works more accessible to the reader. Some of the texts which incorporate music, for example, are *Chamber Music*, *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*⁹¹, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Finnegan’s Wake*. But with changing times comes changing forms of dissemination, as well as a variation in the ways in which music and literature appear to relate within contemporary fiction. How, for example, does Mazzucco use music in ways and forms different from that of earlier writers such as Tondelli, who had neither the media resources, nor the technology, that has developed after the millennium? Likewise, how does McCabe appropriate and reconfigure that which was already presented in *Ulysses* in order to create new narratives and textual relationships?

These questions can be answered with a focus upon the function of music within narrative and how it has developed to reach new levels of meaning and importance in Postmodernity. Melania Mazzucco, for example, has explained that “In una giornata e’ sempre presente anche una colonna sonora...Ed e’ vero che alcune canzoni sanno esprimere

⁸⁹ Yolanda Be Cool and DCUP, Producer. “We No Speak Americano.” *Sweat It Out*. Australia, 2010.

⁹⁰ Carosone, Renato and Nicola Salerno. “Tu vuò fà l’americano.” 1956.

⁹¹ The importance of music in *Ulysses* will be outlined in a discussion of McCabe’s *The Holy City*.

perfettamente i nostri sentimenti, perché nel linguaggio di oggi spesso il pensiero rimane inarticolato. Ma le canzoni dividono, oltre a unire, perché ognuno ha le sue" (Marietti *Donna* 17/12/05). Songs, Mazzucco argues, are extremely personal preferences which divide people, rather than unite them, based upon a number of factors. For instance, different generations typically embrace different musical genres and preferences; a teenager living in 2011 would likely demonstrate a range of musical styles and preferences diverse from that of his or her great-grandparents due to changes in musical taste and style over time. If, however, song choices by generations and individuals happen to be the same, then these individuals will still have a varied, absolutely personal relationship with the music. Moreover, this personal relationship can signify a variety of meaning; it can be Proustian by evoking specific memories in the past, can generate entirely new meaning, or can be a combination of the two.

One could further argue that the incorporation of music and soundtrack within contemporary fictional narrative is a cry for some sort of order or structure in a seemingly chaotic, unstructured Postmodernity. However, it is more appropriate to consider this 'colonna sonora' to be *the* soundtrack of contemporary life. Even though the presence of music is not a fundamental trait of current fiction, the perception of music as a key indicator of the contemporary quotidian within literature often reflects very postmodern traits. Music, as understood in Irish and Italian contemporary fiction, both conveys fragments of ideas and yet, at the same time, remains distinct to each subject with which it comes into contact. On a general level, music in postmodern literature may engender a greater understanding of the pieces of narrative which comprise the novel; in *Un giorno perfetto*, for example, the songs which are included are carefully chosen by the author and provide a number of insights into the text; these songs often point to sentiments of the primary characters, act as moments of irony, or support the

action of events as they occur. Furthermore, the soundtrack of Postmodernity is not comprised of a delineated set of songs or albums, musical styles or genres; it may also be, for instance, an indicator of nostalgia and pastiche. Patrick McCabe's *The Holy City* is a primary indicator of music's ability to reflect these postmodern characteristics. Finally, music reflects the Postmodern in its ability to connect the local and the global. Roddy Doyle's *The Deportees* is a fitting example of music's function in a postmodern, global society. Since music, in these literary contexts, takes on a clearly individual literary identity which refuses to represent a unified narrative whole, Yeats's unity of dancers and dance is consequently undermined. Yeats likely envisioned the unity of dancers and the dance with, and perhaps even propelled by, music; however, in a postmodern context, music has the ability to stand on its own without having the support of the dancers which, in the past, would bring it to life.

What is it about music that is so indicative of contemporary life? For Melania Mazzucco, as well as for many of the more widely read contemporary Irish and Italian novelists, the answer revolves around music's ability to reflect characteristics of Postmodernity which occur on the level of the quotidian. Mazzucco's novel, which was first published in 2005, recounts twenty-four hours in the life of the troubled Buonocore family. It is important to mention that the title, which is the direct Italian translation of "A Perfect Day" by Lou Reed, demonstrates the way in which a musical title can provide deep meaning for the content of a contemporary novel in its entirety. Unlike the "Perfect Day" of the title, however, the day reflected within the novel is strikingly imperfect. While Emma, wife of Antonio and mother to Kevin and Valentina, is actively trying to pull together the fragments of her life, her estranged husband, Antonio, is unable to cope with the dissolution of his marriage and the loss of his unified family. The children remain caught in the middle of the family's disunity; both attempt to confront the

upheaval in their lives through different means; while Kevin naively dreams of a world far away from his reality, Valentina remains troubled and antagonistic toward her mother and sympathetic toward her father. All of the events of the novel revolve around specific descriptions evoking the realities of Rome, from an acute knowledge of the peripheries to the specificities of the city's center. These realities also compare and contrast different socio-economic milieus, from the struggling, working-class environment of Emma and Antonio to the upper-class, politically motivated circle of Elio Fioravanti.

While *Un giorno perfetto* follows a more traditional novel form, the inclusion of lyrics and musical references creates new levels of non-linear narrative. The use of music in this context reflects Ihab Hassan's and Frederic Jameson's understanding of both pastiche and the erosion of the distinction between high culture and mass or popular culture; Mazzucco's novel could be indicative of what Jameson defines as "paraliterature," where writers "no longer 'quote'...'texts' as a Joyce might have done, or a Mahler; they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw" (Jameson *Cultural* 2). It is interesting to note that in his discussion of para-literature, Jameson chooses to incorporate both Joyce and Mahler as examples of high culture. In contemporary novels such as Mazzucco's, the level of high culture is no longer relevant, as postmodern para-literature is no longer required to rely on high culture for any necessary form of legitimization.

But exactly what does this form of non-linear musical incorporation look like, and how does it function? In Mazzucco's novel, for instance, the musical choices are deliberate and support very specific textual moments. Firstly, Mazzucco opens the novel⁹² by incorporating

⁹² This opening of the novel directly follows a quotation by former President George Bush regarding the centrality of the family. It will contribute to the fabric of narratives being played out within the novel.

musical lyrics taken directly from Lou Reed's song "Perfect Day"; the original English version is placed in the top right corner, while the Italian translation is placed in the bottom left corner. In between, there is an empty center devoid of any text. This placement of dual language and space is interesting for several reasons; on one hand, the void of space suggests the incomprehensibility of one language to another, even if the lyrics supposedly contain the same meaning. Moreover, the placement of the English on the top is both deliberate and unusual, especially considering that the novel is written for a primarily Italian literary audience. Hence, the author establishes the importance of both music and the original English version from the outset before the reader even enters into the various levels of actual narrative.

The postmodern incorporation of Reed's fragmented lyrics and repeated listing of sentiments acts as a unique indicator of narrative. In modern works, such as those of Chekhov, Joyce, or most importantly for this text, Tolstoy,⁹³ a specific ambiance, symbol, or figure acts as the point of reference in foreshadowing textual moments; consider Chekhov's gun, the dark, dreary setting of Joyce's "Araby," or the "bad omen" of the train accident in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, for example. Contemporary postmodern fiction takes the element of foreshadowing further by proving that music, such as that of Reed's "Perfect Day," takes the place of traditional symbols of foreshadowing and provides additional layers of meaning leading to novelistic denouements.

This reconsideration of classical symbolism through music is especially notable when juxtaposed with Emma herself. In *Un giorno perfetto*, for instance, we no longer have a

⁹³ Emma has lent *Anna Karenina* to Valentina who refuses to read it. Mazzucco draws parallels of character between Tolstoy's heroine and Emma in their natures based upon bourgeois turmoil, marriage estrangement, and female, specifically maternal, strife. *Anna Karenina* is also quoted in the epigraph which opens the first hour and refers to time, happiness, and the presence and/or or absence of guilt (15).

traditional example of Bovaryism; where Emma, or by extension, the main characters as a whole, exemplify conceit and an exaggerated, overly glamorous and self-assured vision of themselves. Emma Buonocore is not Emma Bovary, even though they share the same name and several of the same characteristics. Instead, the characters which compose the Buonocore family represent generally relatable, good-hearted people whose neuroses and fragmentation manifest themselves through musical text. In formulating the text in this manner, Mazzucco suggests how both individuals or, as in the case of Kevin and his displacement from elite society, greater social and class concerns, can be understood through fragmented references to music.

In considering the deliberate authorial choice of entitling an Italian novel based upon a classic American rock song, the reader is left to immediately question both why the song is there in the first place and how the words, either in the original English or in the translated Italian, will be relevant to the actions of the text. This is an example of one of Gerard Genette's "paratexts,"⁹⁴ where the song acts as an epigraph which encourages the reader to engage with the text; it both comments upon text, in either a specific or puzzling way, and encourages the reader to delve more deeply into the text in order to come to some further understanding of the subject matter consequently to be read. A clear example of one of these thresholds is the way in which Mazzucco gives preference to the English version,⁹⁵ again placing it not only in the top right corner of the second page, but also in the way that the text of the Italian translation is

⁹⁴ "... (T)he paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or... a vestibule that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (Genette 1-2).

⁹⁵ Similar preferences to English words and song will be found in Giuseppe Culicchia's *Brucia la città*. For more on the way in which English functions within this work, consult "Chapter Four: Shopping Malls and Simulacra, Prada as Power: Consumption Culture and Global Competition."

significantly smaller than that of the English; as such, the focus of either a native English speaker or a targeted Italian language reader is purposely drawn to the English original.

What will become most important to a critical reader, however, is how Mazzucco uses the song in order to stage the grotesque irony intrinsic to the climax of the novel. The lyrics are directly repeated before the final, gruesome discovery of the suicide of Antonio, the murder of Kevin and the attempted murder of Valentina at the hand of their father; as such, like the twenty-four hour span of time of the novel, Mazzucco brings the text full circle and juxtaposes the hopefulness of the song with that of the tragedy which has befallen the family.

In the 'prima ora' (all chapters are deliberately organized by hours, instead of chapters, beginning with the first and ending with the twenty-fourth) an exemplary postmodern pastiche of musical texts is referenced, in which Mazzucco juxtaposes the association of the various singers or songwriters with the primary characters and their actions. Playing with the power of time, one can argue, is a very postmodern concept; one must only think about current television drama, for example, where programs such as "Law and Order" and "24" often draw upon the naming of specific hours and minutes in order to build suspense. Furthermore, in Italy, schools days are broken up by reference to 'ore,' rather than to 'periods' or 'bands' as in American high school schedules; by employing school jargon in this way, Mazzucco ties the names of the chapters to larger lessons to be learned within the narrative.

The first example of the *mélange* of song and text is indicated in the following passage, when the reader is introduced to the first troubled psychological emotions associated with Antonio, who is the primary male protagonist of the novel:

Pesco' la cassetta di Celentano nel mucchio che languiva sul cruscotto, voleva sentire *Io non so parlar d'amore, l'emozione non ha voce*, quel capolavoro gli smuoveva qualcosa dentro. Ma quando accese lo stereo, una roca voce di donna inizio' a recitare: *Che strano uomo avevo io / con gli occhi dolci quanto basta / per farmi dire sempre / sono ancora tua*. Una cassetta nella custodia sbagliata. *E mi mancava il terreno quando si addormentava sul mio seno*, disse la donna, con rabbia, provocandogli una trafiggente contrazione cardiaca. Quella canzone resuscito' brutalmente in Antonio il ricordo del viaggio in Calabria. A un tratto, mentre lui guidava verso le loro ultime vacanze, Emma aveva intonato- polemicamente- proprio quella canzone, insegnando ai bambini che *lo scaldavo al fuoco umano / della gelosia / e poi a letto mi diceva sempre / non vali che un po' piu' di niente...*

Mazzucco 18-19

In this first example, the way in which music functions, both in a postmodern sense and in support of the various levels of the narration, is indicated. With respect to the Postmodern, a clear sense of the pastiche, or the patchwork quilt of lyric and text, is indicated. For example, the narrator smoothly combines text and lyric when it is stated, "...insegnando ai bambini che *lo scaldavo al fuoco umano...*".

In addition to pastiche of word and text, the postmodern understanding of nostalgia comes into play, as it forces Antonio to directly remember that which occurred in his past exactly as it correlated with each specific moment of the song. From this remembrance of the past, he is able to justify a future with Emma in any way that he is able to attain it, even if it be bordering

on the obsessive. Antonio's desire to listen to Adriano Celentano's "Io non so parlar d'amore"⁹⁶ is not a random decision; the song is clearly connected to the longings and difficulties connected to his relationship with Emma. Celentano's song reflects a pastiche of emotions directly associated with Antonio; the difficulty of expressing his love to Emma, jealousy, obsession, chance, and the sentiment that all is lost if the two "companions" cannot be together as one. The tense of the song is almost solely in the future, which further suggests hope and / or desire for change; while Antonio's present is already too established, the uncertainty of Celentano's future tense in the lyrics of the song acts beneficially in sustaining and justifying Antonio's hope for reconciliation with Emma.

Even though the lyrics pertaining to "Non so parlar d'amore" are omitted from the text, the reader is encouraged to remember and evoke these lyrics in order to generate textual meaning; therefore, in encouraging such an effort on the part of the reader, a very postmodern desire to create meaning from fragments is also emphasized. Furthermore, even though not all readers will be familiar with this particular song by Celentano, the fact that "Non so parlar d'amore" is so widely familiar to an Italian audience renders this musical connection between

⁹⁶“Io non so parlar d'amore / l'emozione non ha voce / e mi manca un pò il respiro / se ci sei c'è troppa luce / la mia anima si spande / come musica d'estate / poi la voglia sai mi prende / e si accende con i baci tuoi / Io con te sarò sincero / resterò/quel che sono / Disonesto mai lo giuro / ma se tradisci non perdono / Ti sarò per sempre amico / pur geloso come sai / io lo so mi contraddico/ ma preziosa sei tu per me / Fra le mie braccia dormirai / serenamente / ed è importante questo sai/ per sentirci pienamente noi / Un'altra vita mi darai / che io non conosco / la mia compagna tu sarai/ fino a quando so che lo vorrai / Due caratteri diversi / prendono fuoco facilmente / ma divisi siamo persi / ci sentiamo quasi niente / Siamo due legati dentro / da un amore che ci dà / la profonda convinzione / che nessuno ci dividerà / Fra le mie braccia dormirai/ serenamente / ed è importante questo sai / per sentirci pienamente noi / Un' altra vita mi darai / che io non conosco / la mia compagna tu sarai / fino a quando lo vorrai / Noi vivremo come sai / solo di sincerità / di amore e di fiducia...” Celentano, Adriano. "Io non so parlar d'amore." From *Io non so parlar d'amore*; Clan Celentano, 1999. Text from <http://www.redkaraoke.com/songs/Io-non-so-parlar-d'amore/19406>

main character and reader more feasible; in formulating this particular point of seemingly mutual identification, Mazzucco exemplifies the ways in which a postmodern inclusion of song succeeds in producing levels of meaning from disparate musical fragments.

While “Non so parlar d’amore” mirrors Antonio’s own difficulties in enjoying a successful marital relationship with his wife and gives voice to his own difficulties in communication with her, when he turns on the radio, he instead hears Loredana Bertè’s 1975 hit song, “Sei bellissima.” As with Celentano’s song, Bertè’s voice again causes Antonio to reminisce about his relationship with Emma, this time with a particular moment from the past in mind. While Celentano’s song is composed of a warm tone, Bertè’s song is instead all grit and raspiness; in this way, the songs further reflect the sentiments of man and woman within the narration. While Antonio aches to hear a warm song about the future of mutual love, Emma’s connection to Bertè’s song instead shows how she better relates with the strange, jealous, and reflective aspects of a troubled romantic relationship.

Nostalgia relating to Bertè’s song would also be very relevant to the audience, for the above lyrics directly refer to “Sei bellissima” and are again easily identifiable to an Italian audience; Bertè was, and arguably still is, a memorable, iconic pop figure. As such, these lyrics help the reader to recollect or evoke a particular moment in time and help to create a parallel between the main character and the reader. A similar correspondence is created between the reader and the main character of Emma, for both Bertè and Emma Buonocore embody similar characteristics; both are considered to be “beautiful”⁹⁷; both have assertive, throaty voices, and are not afraid to share the troubles which befall them through the context of musical lyric.

⁹⁷Antonio asserts this of Emma. As for Bertè, one needs only to view her 1975 Mediaset 4 music video to see the way in which she attempts to juxtapose her beauty with that of a natural landscape.

Furthermore, both have marital relationships fraught with such negative characteristics as jealousy and severely troubled marriages; Emma with Antonio and Bertè with ex-husband Björn Borg,⁹⁸ the famous Swedish tennis player of the late seventies through the early nineties.

On occasion, the fragmented nature of music when attempting to coalesce with text follows the postmodern tradition of fragmentation accordingly and, in a certain sense, exhibits textual schizophrenia. Mazzucco often includes names of songs and the singers of each song, but goes no further in providing any form of relevance to the text or association for the reader; three examples in which this pastiche of contemporary naming and lack of explanation are “Play” by Jennifer Lopez, “Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad?” by Moby and “Hot Shot” by Shaggy. It is notable that the songs mentioned here are all written in English, with no Italian translation offered; as such, Mazzucco adds an additional layer of meaning left to be translated, encouraging the reader to engage more fully with the text. What one does know, however, is that all of these songs, along with the music of Bertè, indicate a very working class, popular type of musical reference. These musical references mirror the lives of Antonio and Emma, who are both clearly members of the Roman working class. Likewise, the combination of Bertè, Moby, Jennifer Lopez, and Shaggy all tie to Emma in their status as singers from the proverbial ‘wrong side of the tracks’; all of these songs take the listener into the troubled world of the singers, just as Mazzucco takes the reader into the troubled world of Emma and her family within the narration of *Un giorno perfetto*.

So much of the marriage between prose and musical lyric reflects the varying levels of emotion, narrative, and meaning which, at any given textual moment, engage and / or disengage

⁹⁸ “Borg’s Wife Apparently Tries Suicide.” *Los Angeles Times*, 4/25/1991.
<http://articles.latimes.com/keyword/loredana-berte>

with one another. If the text of “Sei bellissima,” for example, is dissected carefully, the reader is again able to retrospectively detect clear indications of textual moments; the obsessive jealousy of Antonio, for instance, which leads to his death and the death of his son Kevin; Emma’s inability to express her love, or the “strange husband with the sweet eyes,” which is clearly a reference to Emma as wife and Antonio as husband. In this respect, the multitude of narrative layers, even at this early juncture in the novel, takes shape and form in the abstract, varied connections between music and text. “Sei bellissima” is particularly indicative of the larger narrative of *Un giorno perfetto*. The personal biography of Bertè includes problems such as the suicide of her sister by overdose and a troubled, very public marriage which ends in divorce. As such, small pieces of her familial and marital biography create connections to the troubled family dynamics present within Mazzucco’s novel.

At the conclusion of *Un giorno perfetto*, Lou Reed’s “Perfect Day” is again responsible for acting as a musical reference to the postmodern elements of the novel and for providing additional narratives which connect in non-standard ways to the more concrete narratives of the actual text. To begin, Reed’s song is a primary indicator of music’s relevance to the text in that the name of both the novel and song are the same; for this reason, one can infer that Reed’s song in particular will provide some sort of textual meaning, which it does indeed. For example, the song is deliberately placed both at the outset of the novel, as was previously stated, and then is placed at a very specific moment before the last major event of the text. In reading “Oh, it’s such a perfect day / I’m glad I spent it with you / You just keep me hanging on / You made me forget myself / I thought I was / someone else / someone good / You’re going to reap / just what you sow” (9) at the beginning of the novel, the reader is likely to expect a happy, positive association of lyric to text. However, it is soon revealed that the opposite will be the case. The song is

directly repeated after the troubling events in the text and mirrors the first page through the exact placement of English and Italian lyrics. In choosing to structure the text in this way, Mazzucco is simultaneously able to build suspense and to construct a creative narrative indicator of the climactic tragedies about to occur. This time, however, the last lyric which the reader will encounter is the Italian translation which appears on the bottom left of the page. For a primarily Italian literary audience, then, the tragic irony of the positive lyrics cannot be misinterpreted.

Hence, in noting where the song repeats at the end of *Un giorno perfetto*, the tragic postmodern irony of the police's discovery of the killed/maimed children and of the suicide of their father benefits from music's ability to create new levels of narrative and to put narratives together in multifaceted ways; as such, the ultimate irony of Mazzucco's work culminates in entitling the novel *A Perfect Day*, as well as the use of Lou Reed's song as the frame of the novel. Irony, always great indicator of the postmodern condition, therefore comes full circle in a most striking way.

Two further examples from *Un giorno perfetto* which powerfully affect the reader and which strongly call for a postmodern reading of the text are Disney's "Hakuna Matata" and Marilyn Manson's "Valentine's Day." Unlike Reed's "Perfect Day," "Hakuna Matata" and "Valentine's Day" are repeatedly referenced throughout the text. More importantly, the Disney song is exclusively associated with the sweet, naïve character of Kevin Buonocore, while Manson's heavy metal song, from the album *Holy Wood (In the Valley of the Shadow of Death-2000)* is exclusively associated with the conflicted and rebellious character of his sister Valentina.

Kevin himself is a social and emotional outsider. Aside from his naiveté and physical abnormality of a lazy eye, both of which place him as an outsider amongst his peers, Kevin's name further alerts the reader to the sense of his representation as the outsider. While Emma herself does not necessarily embody specific examples of Bovaryism, Antonio and Emma do embrace this mentality in their naming of their son. Kevin is a purely Anglo-American name which harkens back to the *Dallas* years; in naming their child in such a strange, non-Italian way, one notes both the cultural imperialism and class marking which Emma and Antonio are subject to. Even though the Buonocore's are clearly of the working class, they still strive to portray a more ambitious and culturally significant social level, as indicated by the choice of such an Anglicized name as Kevin.

The first important song to be considered in applying lyric to text is through Mazzucco's incorporation of Disney's "Hakuna Matata." The first time the song is mentioned, Kevin is afraid that his mother is going to die. In order to reassure him, Emma sings him this song, which does not make much sense to her but which reassures the frightened child. Ironically, the twist in foreshadowing will reveal that Kevin, not Emma, will be the first to die. This tragic irony is solidified when the song is repeated immediately before the murder of Kevin by his father when Kevin asks, "Papà... lo sai che vuol dire Hakuna Matata? (367)," as well as in the moments after the police discover the gruesome crime scene with *The Lion King* still running in the videocassette player.

Even before examining the language of "Hakuna Matata" and its relevance to the various forms of narration, some interesting facts about the song's provenance already credit it as a strong example of the Postmodern. The song comes from Disney, which is one of the world leaders in entrepreneurship and the commodification of happiness. *The Lion King*, the film from

which “Hakuna Matata” derives, is one of the highest grossing traditionally animated films in history,⁹⁹ and is therefore easily identifiable on a global scale. Moreover, the words of the song support Mazzucco’s text in its ability to reflect both kitsch and the grotesque. These two characteristics are often associated with the Postmodern, and within the prose the lyrics of the poetry come to signify these two opposite modes of thinking. On one hand, the lyrics of ‘Hakuna Matata’ reflect a trite, optimistic view of life: In Italian, “*Hakuna Matata / ma che dolce poesia / Hakuna Matata / tutta frenesia / senza pensieri la tua vita sarà/ chi vorrà vivrà / in libertà*”¹⁰⁰ (50-51). The above philosophy, which basically espouses “no worries for the rest of your days” and “whatever will be will be,” ironically runs counter to the serious issues and problems of the contemporary global quotidian, and by extension, the grotesque events to ensue within the novel. This is especially relevant to Antonio, where the finality of the words “chi vorrà vivrà / in libertà” leads to dramatic repercussions. There is, after all, the question of who will and will not live at the novel’s conclusion, as well as the irony that liberty is non-existent on a multitude of levels within the novel. Emma is imprisoned by her obsessive marriage to Antonio. Antonio is held captive by his obsession with Emma. Valentina is constricted by her parents and her status as not quite an adult, and Kevin is forever confined by his physical incapacity.

The second example, Marilyn Manson’s “Valentine’s Day,” also reflects a postmodern mentality in the group’s lyrics, which emphasize both kitsch and the grotesque. The first time that Manson’s song is referenced is when Valentina expresses her views concerning her parents, her relationship to them as individuals, and their relationship to one another. The rebelliousness of Manson’s music mirrors the rebelliousness of Valentina’s teenage nature; in addition, the

⁹⁹ Digital Media FX. “Top Ten Movies of All Time.” <http://digitalmediafx.com/specialreports/animatedfilms.html>.
<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=animation.htm>. Retrieved 2008-07-29.

¹⁰⁰ Italics by the author.

concept of love, which is naturally evoked when the song is mentioned, helps the reader to understand the misplaced love which Valentina feels for her father, as well as the anger which she feels toward her mother, the one who understands neither Valentina nor her music. As in “Hakuna Matata,” references to “Valentine’s Day” repeat, and the words act as foreshadows of the final tragedy which mixes both extreme familial love and perversion.

With regard to the Postmodern, Marilyn Manson’s shock value, which is based upon the abnormally white skin tone in contrast to the Goth persona, could be considered the epitome of kitsch; that is, the appeal to a tawdry, uncultivated, and indiscriminating population which embraces mass culture. On the other hand, the dark, monstrous words and actions of the group, such as the telltale over-exaggeration in the movement of Marilyn Manson’s lips and the torrid images of the lyrics, such as “*Flies are waiting / in the shadow / of the valley of Death* (71), contribute to the novel’s embracing of the fundamental postmodern characteristic of the grotesque in its emphasis on the ludicrously odd, distorted, and / or unnatural. In embracing kitsch and the grotesque through the incorporation of songs such as “Valentine’s Day,” Mazzucco continues to re-emphasize how a pastiche of text and music can mutate in order to form an infinitesimal number of narratives and levels of meaning.

As is evidenced in the above, the postmodern musical choices which Mazzucco incorporates into *Un giorno perfetto*- from the nostalgic to kitschy, to the most commodified, and finally to the grotesque- together support Jameson’s emphasis on pastiche¹⁰¹ while at the same time create pieces of narrative through difference. Since it is already evident that meaning can be

¹⁰¹ “One of the most significant features or practices in postmodernism today is pastiche” (Jameson *Cultural* 4).

determined from the song in and of itself, it is again interesting to note how “Hakuna Matata” and “Valentine’s Day” create meaning for the larger textual narratives being conveyed.

“Hakuna Matata” is rich in its association with the events, emotions, and actions which form particular connections to the novel’s various narratives. Cultural studies, for instance, have pointed to the ways that Simba, as the main character, embodies the idealistic hero as he faces trials and tribulations while on his journey to greatness¹⁰². Kevin himself mirrors Simba, as he is born into a devoted family which he must ‘rise above’; unlike Simba, however, there is no happy ending at the end of the journey. Instead, through Kevin’s murder at end of the novel, the naïve boy becomes a martyr at the hand of his evil father.

On a postmodern level, the song is most applicable to the text in its ability to reflect the irony of the Buonocore family. According to Mary Ann Gillies, for example, Postmodernism uses irony as a primary mode of expression, but it also abuses, installs, and subverts conventions and usually negotiates contradictions through this same mode of irony.¹⁰³ This is particularly true of the relationship between music, as exemplified by “Hakuna Matata,” and the text. The first instance in which the song becomes central is in an early description of Kevin Buonocore. Kevin is described as having a stutter, as being simple-minded, and as being capable of doing little for himself without assistance. Before the song is referenced, Kevin says to his mother Emma, “Perche’ stai nel bagno... s-stai male? Stai m-morendo?” (50). Already here, in retrospect, the reader is able to understand the irony of the thought process, as in the end, Kevin, not his mother, will be one of Antonio’s murder victims. In continuing the fragmented quilt of ideas which reveal deeper meanings of the narrative, the following is recounted when the song is mentioned:

¹⁰² Hinson, Hal. “The Lion King.” *The Washington Post*, June 24, 1994.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/review96/lionkinghin.htm>

¹⁰³ <http://www.sfu.ca/english/Gillies/engl207/pomo.htm>

Emma affondo' la bocca nei suoi capelli. Kevin sapeva di traffico e di biscotti.
'*Hakuna Matata / ma che dolce poesia*' gli canticchiò nell'orecchio '*Hakuna
Matata / tutta frenesia / senza pensieri la tua vita sarà/ chi vorrà vivrà, / in
libertà*. La filosofia di vita degli animali della savana del *Re Leone*, il cartone
preferito di Kevin, non le era mai sembrata tanto sensata. *Hakuna Matata*. Senza
pensieri, Kevin. (50-51)

In the above, Emma wishes the realistically unachievable for her son; that is, a free life without concerns or thoughts. While the reader is aware that Emma herself does not believe the sentiment, as she completes her thought by musing “Senza pensieri, Kevin,” she still holds onto the naive belief that she can imagine a better world for her son. The great irony of the situation, however, which results from the incident being expressed, is that Kevin will be the one to be killed by his father in a bloody murder- suicide incident at the end of the novel. Emma, who is the mother figure whom Kevin insists will die, will instead ironically be the one to live as a result of an impulsive escape from Rome. Other ironic aspects of the lyrics are the following: there is an absolute lack of both harmony and sweetness throughout the novel; characters act without thinking, but tragically come to negative or violent ends instead of carefree “dolce far niente”; and finally, that no one in the Buonocore family is ever “free”- Antonio from his obsessive nature, Emma from the obsession of her husband, Kevin from his physical and mental handicaps, and Valentina from the angst of her age and her near death at the hand of her father. Moreover, the song once again makes a re-appearance before Antonio follows through with the shooting. In his final series of words, Kevin asks Antonio, who has prepared him for death by treating him to McDonald’s and to a Blockbuster rental of *The Lion King*, “Papà... lo sai che

vuol dire ‘Hakuna Matata?’” to which his father replies “No, non lo so” (367). This is in direct opposition to Emma, who does know what the saying means and who encourages Kevin to continue his naïve belief in the fantastical, artificially constructed world of the Disney film. In formulating the ending of Kevin’s life in this manner, Mazzucco encourages readers to consider various levels of narrative meaning; does his father reflect the irony of not knowing versus not thinking? Or does Antonio, in his troubled state of mind, not “worry” or “think” about the consequences of his actions? Alternatively, does he believe that the possibility of no worries is all in the mind of innocent children and their delusional cartoons? In all of these situations, textual words and lyrics coalesce in their ability to reflect the underlying irony of the various subjects’ narratives, thereby creating narrative through difference.

Marilyn Manson’s “Valentine’s Day” likewise foreshadows the events to come, in which the lyrics often act as a reflection of the grotesque characteristics of the text. Both Kevin and Valentina, who are the children of Antonio and Emma, have representative songs; Kevin’s song, of course, is “Hakuna Matata,” while Valentina’s is, ironically enough, Manson’s “Valentine’s Day.” The strange part about her preferred song, however, is that Valentina, as an Italian, does not completely understand the words in English, nor does this really matter to her: “Attaccava *Valentine’s Day*. La sua canzone preferita- forse per via del nome, che era anche il suo. Non capiva di cosa parlasse, anche se in inglese se la cavava bene: però di sicuro c’era una ragazza” (71). In some way, the words, which still maintain a level of linguistic lack of comprehension, speak to Valentina and provide a point of association for her. In this sense, Valentina’s incomprehension plays a dually symbolic role; on one hand, it helps to support her transgressive behavior, for even though she does not know the complete meaning of the words, she senses that the lyrics both work against the norm and represent something slightly dangerous, even in their

lack of full comprehensibility. On the other hand, Valentina uses the words to counteract reality; like Kevin, her reliance upon Manson's lyrics helps to distance herself from her family both literally, when ignoring her mother and restarting the song, for example, and metaphorically, when considering her nature as opposed to that of her fellow family members. Valentina's connection to the words specifically refers to the grotesque; she first sings, "*Flies are waiting / in the shadow / of the valley of Death*"; later, she will repeat this phrase, adding the additional line, "*Some of us, are really born to die.*" While at this point in the novel the repetition of Manson's lyrics appears to apply only to a troubled daughter in a state of teenage angst, the image of the flies and the reference to the valley of death foreshadow the horrific scenes at the end of the novel, in which she, along with her father and brother, are pronounced dead¹⁰⁴ at the scene of the crime. In this sense, the morbid words of Manson this early in the text suggest an ironic sense of predestination associated with the primary characters as a whole. Moreover, when these words are first stated, Valentina is prompted to nostalgically remember a concert by Manson which she had attended. Both the kitschy references to Valentine's Day and the tacky, grotesque persona of Manson are simultaneously juxtaposed in the following: "Al Palaghiaccio di Marino, al concerto di febbraio, Marilyn Manson l'aveva cantata vestito da papa, dietro un inginocchiatoio ornato ai lati da due teste mozzate. VALENTINE'S DAY. Il giorno di Valentina? Il mio giorno. Perché no?" (71). Through the image of the concert; which of course, in a move of consumer commodification and kitsch, takes place on Valentine's Day, the group juxtaposes the positive feelings of love associated with the day with the grotesque images of a Pope surrounded by severed heads. In emphasizing that events such as the concert are so important to Valentina, who clearly only subscribes to the tacky commodification associated with the band, the irony of her

¹⁰⁴ Valentina, although initially pronounced dead, is later found alive.

situation becomes even more profound as the larger narratives develop and climax; thus, what is initially illusory and fake for Valentina ends up being deadly true.

Finally, music in *Un giorno perfetto* does not only employ contemporary songs and singers in order to create new levels of narrative and textual meaning. Music can also be created and inserted in contemporary texts in order to express the mental state of characters or to add additional elements to the narrative. In this sense, since there is no familiarity with the actual sound of the lyrics or of the music, the reader is encouraged to imagine how the music would sound and would connect to the text in which the song is embedded.

Valentina's song, entitled "Canzone del masochista," is an excellent example of how a created song in a postmodern novel adds additional levels of narrative and meaning to the text. As a troubled teenager who attempts to confront the dysfunction of her family, Valentina decides to write a song to her father. In attempting to come to terms with her feelings regarding her unhappiness, she writes the following to her diary:¹⁰⁵

Stanotte papà è venuto di nuovo. Io l'ho visto, ha cercato di parlare con lei,¹⁰⁶ e lei lo ha cacciato via. Non è giusto ma non ci ho potuto fare niente.

Gli ho scritto una canzone. Vorrei tanto dargliela!

Canzone del masochista

La moglie se n'è andata

¹⁰⁵ I seek to maintain the on-page layout of all songs as they appear in various texts, as layout is another stylistic element which reflects the traits of the Postmodern within contemporary literature.

¹⁰⁶ "Lei," in this case, refers to Emma, who is Valentina's mother and Antonio's wife.

E non lo capisce più
la moglie altrove è andata
e un altro amore avrà.
Lui è da solo
sempre solo.
E non parla più.
Un voto a se stesso ha fatto
e amici non ha più
Esce solo.
Ma non sanno dove va.
Non lo dirà.
E lo faranno cattivo
ma non è che solo
solo da morire (124)

Directly following the recounting of her poem, she adds:

Noi Buonocore siamo come i numeri. 2 numeri relativi si chiamano concordi quando hanno lo stesso segno ke li precede. Io e papà siamo 2 numeri relativi concordi. 2 numeri relativi si dicono opposti quando hanno il segno diverso e il modulo uguale. Papà e mamma sono 2 numeri opposti.

Non so qual è il nostro valore assoluto. (124)

In noting the numerical details above, a reader familiar with contemporary Italian literature notes that similar elements return in Paolo Giordano's best seller and "Premio Strega" winner, *La solitudine dei numeri primi* (Mondadori, 2008).¹⁰⁷

In analyzing these two passages, one can see how the lyrics of her musical composition assist Valentina in analyzing the dynamics of her family. In her song, Valentina identifies solely with the sad situation of her father and sees her mother as the so-called "home wrecker." Valentina's postmodern thinking arises in her composition of the song into a listing, fragmented style; ideas are structured in a schizophrenic manner, and the word 'solo' is repeated seemingly without organization. Punctuation is also randomly placed and / or omitted. The poem, however, fits nicely into the fleshing out of her ideas in the next paragraph. Here, one notices that

¹⁰⁷ While Giordano has yet to produce additional contemporary Italian fiction of significance, *La solitudine dei numeri primi* remains particularly important for the ways in which numbers come to represent the lives of characters in contemporary society. With regard to Giordano's Mattia and Alice, both of these young adults remain outsiders to society, much like prime numbers remain outsiders to other numbers.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, they are close to each other, yet always with some kind of physical distance, like prime pairs that are together but never touch due to separation by a single number. While Mazzucco's novel predates Giordano's, it is interesting to see how both authors show the ways in which young adults on the verge of becoming adults use numbers in order to express themselves and in relation with others. This is, I would argue, an additional trend in recreating and rearranging the ways in which narrative expression come to be understood within a postmodern context. It will be interesting to discover if future contemporary texts place such a great emphasis on mathematics and numerology in producing alternative forms of expression.

Valentina creates personal boundaries between her two parents through a postmodern language. On one hand, she exhibits an understanding of mathematics through relative and oppositional numbers; on the other hand, she exhibits facility in using the language of SMS through the repetition of the letter “k” for that of “che”. In structuring her dialogue using these terms, Valentina allows the reader greater insight into the way in which her mind thinks, in ways which other characters, such as her brother and her mother, are incapable of comprehending. What ultimately results, then, is that the reader is asked to work a little bit harder in trying to confront the patchwork of elements which surfaces as a result of the deliberate construction or inclusion of music.

To reiterate, the incorporation of music within narrative is nothing new, and postmodern fiction has even gone so far as to rather consistently incorporate music as an element which propels narration forward. A few noteworthy examples of eighties’ and nineties’ authors who traditionally use music as an important narrative element are Pier Vittorio Tondelli in a series of essays entitled *Un weekend postmoderno. Cronache degli anni ottanta* (Bompiani, 1990); Paul Auster and *The Music of Chance* (Viking, 1990); Giuseppe Culicchia in *Tutti giù per terra* (Garzanti, 1994); and arguably the most celebrated, Roddy Doyle and *The Commitments* (King Farouk, 1987). However, the use of music in these early postmodern / contemporary works varies from that of more current Irish and Italian fiction. While earlier incorporation of musical elements directly reference narration and clearly drive the narrative forward, the use of these same musical elements takes on new roles in the fiction with which the reader is encouraged to engage. No longer must we rely on music to create a fluid, interrelated narrative style; instead, musical fragments add new levels of depth and personal meaning to millennial and post-

millennial fiction without relying upon the need to create a cohesive line of narrative. In this sense, Yeats's modern narrative whole is again refuted by musical elements which no longer suffer from a possible lack of complete narrative cohesion.

Furthermore, the soundtrack of Postmodernity does not necessarily rely on a fixed, delineated set of songs or albums which reflect the text. While Mazzucco emphasizes the songs which matter most to her text by citing them at the end of the novel, other contemporary Irish and Italian writers instead use a randomly selected group of songs and singers in order to enrich the levels of narration and textual meaning. In Patrick McCabe's *The Holy City* (2009), randomly cited songs and singers represent issues of Postmodernity through an emphasis on schizophrenia, pastiche, and nostalgia. In addition, the novel depicts the troubles associated with contemporary life and, in particular, depicts the main character's absolute inability to come to terms with the new millennium.

In *The Holy City*, Chris McCool, the "dandyish, debonair playboy of a small and insular community called the Happy Club"¹⁰⁸ is forced to come to terms with his duality of self: that of his exciting swingin' sixties present and that of his past as the illegitimate son of a Protestant landowner's wife and a poor, illegitimate Catholic farmer. As he struggles to come to terms with the duality of his inner nature, he must further struggle to confront his obsession with Marcus Otoy, who is a devout, young Nigerian boy.

McCabe's choice of the title *The Holy City* provides a variety of disparate yet significant points of reference. On one level, the title evokes nostalgia for sacred church music on the part of both characters and readers. Great irony is present here, for the most sacred classical lyric of

¹⁰⁸ McCabe, Patrick. *The Holy City*. New York; Bloomsbury, 2009. Back cover.

“The Holy City” is incongruous with the profane, often sacrilegious actions of Chris McCool with respect to both the Catholic Church and to the pure, religiously devout character of Marcus Otoyó.

Secondly, Doyle’s deliberate choice of the title *The Holy City* likely refers to James Joyce’s incorporation of the song of the same title within the “Circe” chapter of *Ulysses*. The song, which is performed often with solo tenor and piano, parodies the idea of a new Jerusalem; according to Professor Zack Bowen, it assumes major significance here when “...Bloom fantasizes about becoming the leader of a new celestial golden city, the “new Bloomusalem.” As Bella Cohen's gramophone blares out the song, Bloom's great edifice is erected and we get a comic parody look at what the new city of Dublin would be like under Bloom as an all-supreme ruler” (Bowen 1). Likewise, music as a whole in McCabe’s *The Holy City* alludes to a re-envisioning of society based upon nostalgia and schizophrenia, all manifested through the context of music.

Stylistically, *The Holy City* is purposefully evasive and obscure. This is due to the schizophrenic nature of the text, where songs and action randomly weave in and out of the narrative. Music and references to musicians play a key part in developing schizophrenia associated with both text and narration. One could hypothesize that this obscurity and / or textual difficulty is born from the two opposing worlds in which Chris McCool finds himself. In the secular world outside of the Church, schizophrenia and dysfunction are common indicators of the postmodern condition which are openly discussed and confronted. However, when subjects must confront these characteristics within a religious context, and a specifically Catholic and / or Protestant one, schizophrenia and dysfunction continue to be scorned, repressed, invalidated and covered up.

The first schizophrenic reference to music and musicians occurs in the second chapter of the novel, where the narrative “I,” otherwise known as Chris McCool¹⁰⁹, provides an elaborate list of items in his apartment, already delineating music’s central role in his life. He recounts:

In recent times, reinvigorated here in the modest quietude of the Happy Club, I have made it my business assiduously to proceed with the redecoration of our fine fourth-floor apartment. My latest purchases including a delightfully ornate Moroccan carpet, which I sourced on the web, and a Peter Blake print of the singer Alma Cogan- which, can you believe it, I actually found here in Cullymore East, in a little antique shop located along the Plaza. Also the loveliest low mahogany table, complete with polished inlaid chessboard. With which I like to amuse myself for protracted periods- whenever I’m not listening to Andy Williams or the Carpenters, one of their songs in particular seeming to provide the soundtrack to our new life.

McCabe 4

Already at this early point in the novel, McCabe crafts a textbook-perfect example of postmodern writing, albeit elucidated in a schizophrenic, fragmented, and speedy manner. There are, for example, the commodities of the chessboard and global carpet; there is the conversational, yet fragmented discourse; there is the consistent inclusion of sentence fragments; and finally, there is the sense of nostalgia in the examples of Andy Williams and the Carpenters. However, it is the reference to music which brings the subtly schizophrenic language to the

¹⁰⁹ In all of his texts, which universally reflect the literary traits of Postmodernism, McCabe creates levels of playful, ironic meaning for the reader. Here, in Chris McCool’s name, one notices the play on ‘McCool,’ which sounds like a pastiche of terms referring both to Charles Schultz’s Snoopy portrayal of ‘Joe Cool’ and to Finn McCool, which is the anglicized version of the great Irish mythological warrior Fionn mac Cumhaill.

surface. For example, in one moment we are being told of a chessboard as a favorite activity. In the next, textually dashed example, however, we are being told of the speaker's preferred singers, who almost always represent sixties and seventies musical stars nostalgically evoked to juxtapose with the (usually negative) realities of contemporary life. In the following, we are subsequently told that this is the soundtrack to an as yet unnamed couple's soundtrack of life.

Strangely enough, the fragmented language of music in *The Holy City* does help the reader to begin to uncover the multitude of narrative pieces. While one may think that schizophrenic language creates a level of instability for the reader, when associated with music it instead helps to provide the reader with random, continuous footholds into the various facets of narrative. Directly after the above-mentioned reference to the couple, the following is recounted¹¹⁰:

- *We've only just begun*, sings Karen in that warm, mesmerising, melted-caramel voice, as I ease my head on to the comforting slope of my beloved Vesna's bosom, drawing languidly on my Peter Stuyvesant, staring dreamily out into the stars.
- *Can't take my eyes off you*, croons Andy, as Vesna smiles and I run my fingers through her hair, kissing her frail shoulders, all along her pale freckled arm, as I whisper in her ear:
- In love's holy city for ever now we two entwine. (4-5)

¹¹⁰ Dashes throughout are McCabe's stylistic choice.

Again, the postmodern nature of the text emerges in the aspect of nostalgia which the songs by Karen Carpenter and Andy Williams¹¹¹ evoke in McCool's, and thus the reader's, memory. To begin, Carpenter's "We've Only Just Begun," from the album *Close to You* (A&M, 1970), is full of complex cultural meaning for a reader of a certain generation. McCool's identification of the "melted-caramel voice" filters out all of the other, more negative associations which a person of his age would consider when hearing the song; of being forced to sing when she preferred to be a drummer¹¹², her depression and loss of control in life, and finally her death by heart failure due to complications from anorexia nervosa. For these reasons, one could consider Karen Carpenter's hit song also an example of one of her most tragic. Conveniently, whether due to his soon-to-be-discovered schizophrenic nature or simply as a result of deliberate narrative omission, McCool fails to comment at all upon these negative references, almost to the extent that he is unaware that they ever occurred in the first place.

The song "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," covered by Andy Williams, is even richer with cultural meaning. Like Celentano's "Non so parlar d'amore," and Berté's "Sei Bellissima," the words of the song speak to McCool and help to propel the narration forward. Often, the lyrics seem to mimic plot action through their relationship with the intimate words and gestures of McCool and Vesna. McCool chooses to listen to Williams' 1968 version as opposed to Frankie Valli's original 1967 one, already showing how postmodern pastiche functions at an early point in the novel. The song, culturally-speaking, can also be further related to sentiments of kitsch and banality. However, "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," in all of its triteness, also strikes the cultural

¹¹¹It is interesting that McCabe chooses to incorporate a song which had already been recorded once by 1968, hinting at the postmodern nature of re-recording and revision of popular music. "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," was originally composed by Bob Crewe and Bob Gaudio and sung by Frankie Valli in 1967.

¹¹²Fogarty, Rod. "Karen Carpenter: A Drummer Who Sang".
<http://www.leadsgister.com/articles/drummermag2.html>.

consciousness because of the ways in which it has been incorporated into two very somber and gruesome films. Notable movies using “Can’t Take My Eyes Off You” in this respect are *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Conspiracy Theory* (1997). Particularly for the reader, the evocation of Williams’ song is a combination of these two sentiments; again, while McCool omits any blatant allusion to negative connotation associated to these two films, the reader cannot help but feel uneasy, not only because of the song itself, but also due to its schizophrenic placement between two other, completely diverse musical references.

In carefully focusing upon these musical fragments of narrative, one gains insight into the elements which will transform and mutate into narratives. This relationship between nostalgic memory, music, and the function of narration is, furthermore, what Jameson notes as indicative of the postmodern experience. He states:

...narrative offers multiple and proteiform meditations between the sounds in time and the body in place, coordinating a narrativized visual fragment- an image shared marked as narrative, which does not have to come from any story you ever heard of- with an event on the soundtrack. Jameson 300

Because music is no longer able to engage in ‘representationality’ (Jameson 299) as it had been in Modernity, it is able to function in new ways within the Postmodern. One of those ways is to provide visual fragments within literary narratives in order to assist the reader in finding a foothold within the text. This is the reason why the two songs are able to correlate or mediate the narrative fragments which are already present within the novel; even if we can never return to the

late sixties (Williams) / early seventies (Carpenter), we are still able to relate to the music, and thus to McCool as the main character, through the combinations of sound and lyric which he emphasizes in his conversational discourse.

Moreover, in the above passage from *The Holy City*, several questions arise, contributing to the obstacles of textual time, space, and character. Who, for instance, is the female introduced as Vesna, and how does she relate to McCool at this point in his life? Moreover, is he recounting the here and now, or is he merely recalling a memory from his past? Readers are then prompted to question the title of the book, which is specifically reiterated in this early textual moment. What is, therefore, “love’s holy city,” and how does it relate to the title of the book, even as it acts as a lyric from a song? In this respect, McCabe’s novel acts as a primary example of Umberto Eco’s viewpoint of a text as requiring reader curiosity, inquiry, and / or response: “Every text, after all,” he states, “is a lazy machine, asking the reader to do some of its work” (Eco *Six Walks* 3). Whether or not an individual reader will look further into these questions is a matter of personal choice, but a postmodern reading of the relationship between music and the schizophrenic nature of the narrative encourages the reader to engage more fully with the text and to create new ways in which to compose, decompose, or recompose narrative fragments.

In *The Holy City* in particular, the pastiche of random lyrics which is embedded within the text is useful in providing a patchwork quilt of narrative language elements, genres, and periods of reference; one could refer to how Lyotard describes these elements as “narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on...” (Lyotard xxiv). Two fundamental examples of the text’s complex narrative language elements occur when Protestant verses and the Robert Louis Stevenson collection of children’s poetry entitled *A Child’s Garden of*

*Verses*¹¹³ are mentioned. Moreover, these two musical examples always occur in random patterns of pastiche and nostalgia and often get caught up in what suggests a foggy, unrefined sense of a clearly mythical ‘primary,’ narrative; it is, after all, an example of postmodern writing for these reasons. As is the case with McCool’s split persona, caught between religious and secular worlds, music here mirrors that same duality; when McCool, as narrator, seemingly shifts randomly between popular verse, indicated by *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, and sacred verse, though religious songs such as the Protestant hymn “Abide with me,” he reaffirms his schizophrenic nature through the context of music.

Early in the novel, church verse takes a central stage in conveying the sense of inner turmoil which the narrator exhibits regarding the difference between being raised as a poor illegitimate Catholic in a family of Protestants prior to the so-called ‘Swingin’ Sixties.’ In the lyrics, illusion and reality meet in a pastiche of nostalgic images which are altogether self-comforting and uncomfortable. Dr. Thorston, who is a learned expert on “the cultural antagonisms of Catholics and Protestants...” also attested “that Catholics were by far the weaker species and Protestants were innately superior” (18). From this initial memory of the head of the household, which represents a space in which Chris McCool is present but never truly belongs, another layer of the quilt of memory is sewn with the text of a Protestant hymn:

¹¹³ The interplay between Catholic and Protestant in McCool’s background can be better understood through the repetition of *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, first published in 1885. McCool envisions being read the tale by the Protestant Landowner’s wife and envisions his Catholicism being reaffirmed (26-27).

I would think of them at evening gathered around the fire in the drawing room of Thornton Manor, arranged in a circle with their hymnals open, Little Tristram's voice soaring like a lark's above all the others, lovingly appreciated by all:

- *Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

As the soothing shadows of the evening fire flickered.

- The Protestant mind is indifferent, I would hear the good doctor say, self-controlled and sober. Judicious and equable, it tends towards abstinence. The Catholic temperament, however, is quite the opposite. It is vitiated, debauched, and quite degraded. Essentially of inferior status, I'm afraid... (18)

In his nostalgic composition of memory in the above, McCool focuses upon the song as the primary point of importance; both a discussion of the big house¹¹⁴ before and the pointed

¹¹⁴ "The term 'big house' - an ambivalently derisive expression in Ireland - refers to a country mansion, not always so very big, but typically owned by a Protestant Anglo-Irish family presiding over a substantial agricultural acreage leased out to Catholic tenants who worked the land. As rural centres of political power and wealth in Ireland, most big houses occupied property confiscated from native Catholic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their presence in the landscape, unlike that of England's 'great houses', long asserted the political and economic ascendancy of a remote colonial power structure. Whereas by the nineteenth century the English country mansion could be incorporated into a triumphal concept of national heritage, for most of Ireland's population, Ascendancy houses signalled division, not community. In a colonial country, such division reflected not just the typical disparities of class and wealth between landlords and tenants, but also difference of political allegiance, ethnicity, religion and language. Thus in a speech advocating the 1800 Act of Union, Lord Clare notoriously

discourse of Dr. Thornton after are juxtaposed with the church verses. This structure reveals much regarding the centrality of music to the discourse. In italicizing the verse, for instance, the reader's eye is naturally drawn to the song as the central point of the argument. Furthermore, as is characteristic of postmodern style, the text reflects composites of different forms of nostalgia; the flicker of light, for instance, comes at random after the song, but may be seen as a reflection of the force found in the words of the Protestant landowner who speaks "badly and confidently." On the other hand, the flicker of fire is also identified as being composed of soothing shadows; in reading the line alternatively, one might argue that it then refers to what has come before in the text, as in the Protestant family gathered together to sing as one happy familial unit. In this sense, the song's displacement of the line "As the soothing shadows of the evening fire flickered" serves to create new narrative patterns by either maintaining the linearity of the nostalgic thought (happy family with undertones of anti-Catholic sentiment by the father) or by breaking it into two different modes of thought (Anti-Catholic sentiment by the father to happy family and back to anti-Catholic sentiment by the father). As such, the composite nature of the narration, when interrupted by the retelling of the Protestant church verse, allows the reader greater flexibility in discovering new narrative possibilities.

The irony of the situation, however, is that there is no son named Little Tristram; "I had imagined Little Tristram" McCool says, "... of course there was no son in existence named Tristram Thornton, 'little' or otherwise" (16). What we as readers are left to conclude, therefore,

described Irish landlords as 'hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents in sullen indignation'." Kreilkamp, Vera. "The novel of the big house." *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Online): http://cco.cambridge.org/extract?id=ccol0521861918_CCOL0521861918A004.

is that on one hand, the narrator's memory has been simultaneously comforted and disturbed as a result of his past; paradoxically, thoughts of the song comfort him with the imagined memory of "Little Tristram." As such we, as readers, can further infer Tristram to be an imaginary placement of McCool into the Thornton family; this is another instance in which Eco's text as a lazy machine encourages the reader to engage more fully in considering narrative possibilities. Tristram must be a figment of McCool's imagination; in reality, he makes it very clear that he, as a bastard Catholic child, could never be a valid member of an aristocratically minded big house Protestant family. Following the song, reality and illusion come and go according to McCool's nostalgia for his past; while he does suggest that he is the one who wants to sing "Abide with me" in order to be a part of the family he will never have access to, the emotional scars of the memory remain. As an adult, McCool never comes to terms with this memory and cannot move on; although he now sings in a toneless repetition, he still insists upon relying on "Abide with me" for comfort. Here, one can argue, is Postmodernism on many varied levels, as the church verse forms a central point from which narrative can be expanded; there is nostalgia in the song, irony in the pleasure / pain of the memory of the song, fragmentation in McCool's memory of "Abide with Me," and schizophrenia in McCool's inability to separate the illusion of Little Tristram's pure, soaring voice with that of his own neglected childhood.

The three primary postmodern elements of pastiche, nostalgia, and schizophrenia with regard to music again arise in McCool's memories of Marcus Otoy, a Catholic Nigerian whom McCool idolizes. Because time and place in *The Holy City* are fragmented and schizophrenic entities, a linear narrative is impossible to detect. This is often a stylistic trait of McCabe, as his other works of fiction, such as *Breakfast on Pluto* and *Winterwood*, also follow similar non-linear forms of narration. In *The Holy City* in particular, McCabe's schizophrenic narratives

jump back and forth between the sixties and the present; between both the Protestant and Catholic Church, Happy Club, mental hospital, big house and outside world, a linear narrative is impossible to detect. However, in one of the most telling moments of McCool's nostalgia for Marcus, music again takes a central role in creating a schizophrenic pastiche of memories in which illusion and reality collide. When entering the cathedral where Marcus reads a religious narrative, McCool recounts the following:

... it was then that I heard them: those resonant, poignant lyrics of 'The Holy City', the hymn that he had sung, and which had taken the breath of the congregation away. As I remained there, right in the middle of the centre aisle facing the altar, I found myself in an ancient marbled city, through whose streets I could see him proudly move... As, like a seraph's wing, in its flaming beauty, the singing voice of Marcus Otoyó now filled the cathedral, the abject devout proudly striking their breasts and, like the soldiers of old, weeping before the sight of that shining city:

- *Last night I lay a-sleeping, there came a dream so fair,*

I stood in old Jerusalem beside the temple there.

I heard the children singing and ever as they sang

Methought the voice of angels -! (82-83)

In this passage, the clearly delusional McCool recounts the mixture of ancient and modern images and emotions which he experiences when listening to the angelic voice of Marcus Otoyó.

This passage is a primary example of Louis Althusseur's theory of interpellation¹¹⁵, in which ideology addresses the pre-ideological individual and produces him or her as a subject proper. In this specific case, the ideology is religious, specifically Catholic sacred music, which takes McCool as a subject and speaks directly to both his physical and emotional being. At the same point in this narrative fragment, however, McCool's account of the song is embedded in a series of other random narratives which refer to the actual events of Otoyó's church performance. This is the climax of the story, when the reader learns that McCool's latent emotions of jealousy, love, passion, and / or racism manifest themselves in his actions of scribbling racial obscenities on the church walls soon after the performance. The angelic solo voice of Otoyó in the church again reminds the reader of Joyce's incorporation of the "The Holy City" aria in "Circe." However, it is perverted and modernized based upon the schizophrenic themes intrinsic to McCabe's narration of the sequence of events. For example, directly after he shares the song with the reader, McCool states:

-Shut up! I found myself involuntarily crying aloud, inexplicably waving my arms and actually breaking into a run- before it dawned on me exactly what it was that I had just done. (83)

The above passage is yet again an example of Althusseur's interpellation,¹¹⁶ for the sacred music speaks directly to physical, emotional, and mental aspects of McCool. It is clear that Otoyó's singing generates this full-body reaction; negative triggers, such as that of the singing in

¹¹⁶ See Althusser, Louis. *On Ideology*. London; Verso, 2000.

McCool's case above, are general traits associated with schizophrenic behavior. Moreover, the text itself mirrors the unpredictability of the primary character's stream of consciousness in its composition of dashes, sentence fragments, and / or sections of text which represent thought patterns lacking distinct beginnings and endings. Ultimately, the clash between memory and action occurs directly after the last line of Otoyó's lyric, after which the physical destruction of the church at the hand of McCool is described in detail. In fact, the true depth of McCool's troubled nature is revealed:

Much of it remains vague even yet, although I can still remember the figure of an old lady retreating silently into the shadows. As I stood there, with the words I had written as blurred now before me as the rain upon the French windows of my imagination.

Fuck the holy city. Fuck all niggers. (83)

It is only the angelic voice of Otoyó that finally reveals the underlying problems of McCool's nature. In specifically pronouncing the above racial slur, which he had written in ashes taken from the altar,¹¹⁷ the reader is able to piece together the other events which affirm McCool's racism, including his treatment of the two Indian doctors who try to treat his mental illness.

Along with his bigotry in general, the passage also seeks to reveal McCool's jealousy of Otoyó's access to the 'holy city' of Catholicism. As a black Catholic, Marcus Otoyó is permitted entry into a world which McCool has always sought, but which his upbringing never afforded him the

¹¹⁷ Ashes are a fitting image here. Not only are ashes intimately associated with Church service, but they also suggest both absence and presence; since the physical body of the Church is now desecrated; due to the lack of hesitation on the part of McCool in desecrating the Church, one would think that the presence of the Church's influence on him would be lacking, or absent. Instead, McCool must still rely upon the Church through the ashes in order to convey his racial slur. In this way, his refutation of the Church paradoxically reaffirms not only the Church's presence, but also McCool's reliance upon this same religious body for expression.

opportunity to explore. As the bastard son of a poor Catholic farmer, however, McCool was forced to disavow his Catholic upbringing in favor of the familial and monetary support which Protestantism provided him. In short, the unfulfilled, latent desire to partake in Catholic ritual which McCool self-contains begins to fester and finally culminates in his jealous and bigoted nature toward Otoyó.

Furthermore, the aforementioned passage simultaneously reflects the characteristics of Postmodernism and the nature of McCool in the schizophrenic association of words and ideas, such as "...with the words I had written as blurred now before me as the rain upon the French windows of my imagination," as well as the consistent pastiche of memories, blurred as they may be. Throughout his novels, McCabe has proven himself to be a master at delving into the minds of psychopaths¹¹⁸, and the incorporation of a postmodern language composed of pastiche, nostalgia, and schizophrenia most effectively conveys the troubled nature of his primary characters. What is unique in McCool's case, however, is that music is the trigger point for when the disillusionment of the mind and the reality of physical action coalesce. What we as readers are left with, then, is the task of trying to put together the fragments of word and action in order to try, at least so much as we can do so, to understand a mind which only reflects the chaos of Postmodernity.

Finally, music in *The Holy City* serves to reflect how 'subjects' like McCool are unable to come to terms with Modernity and, through a reliance upon nostalgia, can assist in the formation of an alternative universe; these characters succeed in creating this nostalgic 'otherworld' while

¹¹⁸ See *Breakfast on Pluto*, *Winterwood*, and *The Emerald Germs of Ireland*, to name three strong examples of main character psychopaths created by Patrick McCabe.

still existing in the present day, specifically through the contexts and memories which music successfully evokes.

One of the songs which bridges the pastiche of images between past and present is “I am the Walrus” by the Beatles. When the song is first referenced, we are taken back to the Mood Indigo Club with McCool and Vesna, who has now been revealed to be his ‘chick’. Here, dialogue centers around what occurs that evening; whiskey and soda, McCool’s friend Mike at the microphone singing, with his cleft-palate, “I am the Eggman & I am the Walnut,” and McCool’s introduction to the reader as “Pops & C.J. Pops, International playboy, haha” (9). Already in this early example, it is evident that McCool’s brain clearly does not function normally. While the song brings back fond memories of the particular evening, the fragment of the final sentence is disconcerting; as such, the song leads the reader to begin to question the validity of what McCool is attempting to recount.

In a later reference to the Beatles’ “...Walrus,” McCool brings us halfway between the past and the future through a pastiche of words referencing the song’s Eggman. At this point in the novel, it is the contemporary ‘here and now,’ where McCool seeks to explain his place in the new millennium. He states, for example, “No, I’m a nouveau Eggman in this clean new century, this white world of wax- and which is exactly the way I desire it. In order that I might continue to remain anonymous, to abide in a world of weightless, floating orbs- pathologically incurious to the welfare of one’s fellows” (143). In confirming himself the “nouveau Eggman” of the millennium, McCool bridges the gap between his past and present, for he is able to construct some specific form of self-identification which is adaptable to the new century. This identity, born from nostalgia for the sixties’ song of the same name, assists in McCool’s coming to terms with the uncertainties of twenty-first century life.

However, even though McCool has found a way to identify with the unknown of the new millennium through a nostalgic appropriation of the sixties' Eggman, he continually demonstrates a sense of nostalgia for the past and expresses clearly negative perspectives concerning contemporary society. In the aforementioned passage, for example, McCool, as the Eggman, explains that he finds himself in a "white world of wax." This world of wax has a multitude of possible explanations. On one level, a classical reading of the wax reminds the reader of the religious elements which connect Marcus Otoyto to the pure and sacred world that surrounds him; however, one should not overlook the fact that candles are normally white or cream, thereby creating a contrast with Marcus' dark skin tone. On another level, the white world of wax could remind the reader of the wax museum, where composite figures of wax mimic famous individuals both living and deceased. Finally, like the sanitized psychiatric ward in which McCool can be found, the world of wax could refer to the antiseptic, homogenous, and artificial world of the post-millennium. What is most ironic is that in maintaining his identity through an emphasis on nostalgia and music of the sixties, McCool actually becomes anything but anonymous in the world of weightless, floating orbs of the contemporary quotidian. In this regard, McCool's musical persona evokes the ways in which music can be an adequate soundtrack of postmodern, contemporary life.

Finally, music in all of its infinite forms; from the written text to the sung word, to the performed act, can function in contemporary fiction as an indicator of "ideal" Postmodernism. This can be proven through the way in which contemporary society emphasizes music on a global scale. Roddy Doyle's *The Deportees And Other Stories* (2008) is exemplary in its ability to evoke the ways in which music acts within a postmodern, global society. Doyle is perhaps most famous for *The Commitments* (1987), in which a motley group of working-class Irishmen

seek to revolutionize the traditional and stodgy Irish music scene by forming a group in the style of a black soul band. However, Doyle's retelling of his original novel via an emphasis on music, multiculturalism, and the global within the local specifically through various descriptions of ethnically diverse subjects in Ireland is a telling indicator of a move from pre-millennium modern to post-millennium postmodern ethics. Since music, in this contemporary context, takes on a clearly individual literary identity, it helps postmodern writers to, once again, undermine Yeats's modern unity of dancers and dance; in a postmodern context, music has the ability to stand on its own without having the support of the dancers which, in the past, would bring it to life.

In Roddy Doyle's *The Deportees And Other Stories*, music acts as the filter through which the effects of globalization are perceived, thereby bringing the socio-cultural characteristics of twenty-first century Ireland to life¹¹⁹. From the opening of the short story, "The Deportees," the connection between the effects of globalization on Ireland through the medium of music is immediately delineated. For example, in the foreword to the collection of short stories, Doyle begins by stating the following:

Maybe it was *Riverdance*. A bootleg video did the rounds of the rooms and the shanties of Lagos and, moved to froth by the sight of the long, straight line of Irish and Irish-American legs- *tap-tap-tap, tappy-tap*- thousands of Nigerians packed the bags and came to Ireland. *Please. Teach us how to do that.*

Doyle xi

¹¹⁹ Wagner, Erica. "White Irish Need Not Apply." *The New York Times*, January 20, 2008.

In opening his collection with a preface pertaining to the music and percussive dance style of *Riverdance*, Doyle questions whether or not the musical spectacular had a fundamental influence on how Ireland enjoyed a newfound prominence in the global perspective of the mid-nineties. In the statement, Doyle hypothesizes the impact of an Irish and Irish-American “local” cultural product once it has reached a global audience. However, he still expresses a sense of ambiguity regarding the way in which *Riverdance* impacts the Nigerians who represent an alternative group of ethnic “locals.” If one were to visualize this interchange categorically, then one would notice a movement of local Irish → global recognition and appreciation → local Nigerian. In formulating this relationship, Doyle demonstrates the ways in which different, or “local” ethnic groups, are easily caught up in the global commodification of ethnicity, here specifically through the dissemination of Irish dance through technology and media.

While Doyle later attributes the Celtic Tiger mentality to a combination of socio-political and cultural elements: of music and dance, but also to infrastructure, education, accident, and energy, for example, he still specifically expresses how *Riverdance* is the first moment that encourages him to ponder the newfound economic prosperity of Ireland at the time. As a result of these considerations, Doyle proves that *Riverdance* effectively contributed to the sensation of his going “...to bed in one country and waking up in another” (xi).

The emphasis which Doyle places on the connection between music and globalization at the localized level of the contemporary Irish condition reflects greater trends in the place of music within a global context. From a standpoint which focuses purely on world music, of which *Riverdance* is a primary example, the condition of Ireland as a previous colonized body comes into play. However, this is, according to M. Stokes and V. Erlemann, a clear break from the

Modern to the Postmodern in the comparison between music and the global order. In support, Stokes explains the following:

Erlmann argues that the period between 1870 and 1920, the high point of European imperial expansion, was a moment of take-off for globalization, after which it took a “single inexorable form’ (Erlmann 1999, p. 15), a mode of representation constituting the dominant narrative of modernity. The late nineteenth century, for Erlmann, was characterized by the panorama (sic), the fetish, and the spectacle, a representational regime defining colonial selves in relation to colonized others... The late twentieth century was, by contrast, characterized by an increasing tendency towards the presentational and the mimetic. First world aesthetic production, as characterized by world music and world beat, came to seek the ‘real presence’ of the Other rather than a represented abstraction, an intimate entanglement of sounds and bodies in music and dance underpinned at the ideological level by an ‘all out relationism’ and ‘empathetic sociality’ (Erlmann, 1999, Pg. 177).

Stokes 49

In the above analysis, one can see how a musical force like *Riverdance* becomes functional in a contemporary literary discourse, such as that which Doyle provides. Aside from connecting the local and the universal through music (traditional Irish and Celtic compared with Russian and African-American) and dance (Irish percussive dance in comparison with American tap and Russian folkdance), *Riverdance* seeks to prove that in one moment, the Irish are both distinct and

yet not so different from global Others; all cultures are seemingly interrelated through the universal means of music and dance. However, as “Other,” the Irish do have something to offer that cannot be copied by those who are not fully present in this same distinct world of national difference. Moreover, the cultural capital which spectacles like *Riverdance* have successfully generated on a global scale cannot be ignored; by reaching out from the local to the world stage, *Riverdance* effectively added consumer caché to Irish culture. Even though traditional Irish music has not been widely supported in Ireland itself, except when artists cross over to mainstream pop,¹²⁰ *Riverdance* had a profound effect in putting Ireland on the global capital map by consistently garnering more money, more exposure, and more fans around the world.

But *Riverdance* is only one particular musical reference which recurs in Irish contemporary texts. The question then becomes, is it an anomaly, where Ireland ‘got lucky’ because of its appealing musical heritage? Or are there trends running concurrently which have nothing to do with the musical performance? I would argue for the latter, where the function of national folk dance and music has been re-appropriated in order to create a powerful, large-scale money-generating global product. In fact, the repercussions of *Riverdance* continue to be manifested through the international dissemination of Irish dance within various sectors of global commerce; from competition to costume, Irish dance has become a billion dollar money-making enterprise, which as a market commodity has grown beyond the standards set forth by its governing body, *An Coimisiún le Rince Gaelacha* (Hall 125).

¹²⁰ See Halter, Marilyn. *Shopping For Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity*. New York: Schocken Books, 2000. Pp. 104-137.

Like *Riverdance*, which relies upon a performance of an ethnically-inclusive, carefully constructed display of contemporary “Irishness,” Roddy Doyle’s “The Deportees”¹²¹ most fittingly mimics the desire to portray Ireland in a similarly global-minded construct. Both *Riverdance* and “The Deportees” are good examples of the inter-relationship of signifier and signified as formulated by Roland Barthes; while Barthes, in *Mythologies*, uses the example of the black soldier who gives the French salute in order to show the “constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth,” (Barthes 118) Doyle and *Riverdance* both rely upon constructed relationships between colonized Others in order to reassert contemporary views of national identity.

The premise of “The Deportees” surrounds an ethnically diverse group of musicians, whose only requirement is that ideally no members can be white Irish; along with his e-mail, Jimmy, the group’s founder, considers writing “White Irish need not apply,” until he reconsiders the political correctness of his request and the fact that “(a) couple of old-fashioned Irish rockers would look good onstage with the rest, especially when they were touring abroad” (36). In this statement, Jimmy, on one hand, shows his postmodern thinking by emphasizing his desire for a pastiche of new Irish immigrants, thereby creating a new, global ‘Irish’ community. On the other hand, for nostalgia and capital gains purposes, he reconsiders and chooses to include a few Irish band members for ethnic balance and inclusion, all the while paying lip-service to the mainstream music scene. Again, the band is a strong example of Stokes’ and Erlemann’s emphasis on the new place of the Other within a postmodern, global society.

¹²¹ *The Deportees And Other Stories* is composed of a Foreword and eight short stories. “The Deportees” is the central story of the collection.

The band members also indicate a sense of an ‘ideal’ Postmodernism in their composition as an international *mélange* of characters that are now considered to be “Irish.” Jimmy’s recruitment process of the band members in “The Deportees” immediately hearkens back to the same type of selection process of *The Commitments*; however, the key, contemporary difference is the necessity that the band members now be ethnically diverse. For a clear parallel, one need only compare the advertisement wording for the bands within the two novels. In *The Commitments*, Jimmy sends an ad to the “Hot Press Classifieds: -Have you got Soul? If yes, The World’s Hardest Working Band is looking for you. Contact J. Rabbitte, 118, Chestnut Ave., Dublin 21. Rednecks and southsiders need not apply” (Doyle *Commitments* 11). In this advertisement, working-class Jimmy delineates two specific groups which will be excluded; “Rednecks” and “southsiders,” which, in the mind of certain northsiders of Jimmy’s generation, would indicate a certain level of middle-class wealth and culture incongruent to the working-class reality of northsiders. In this threshold, then, Jimmy humorously excludes two polar opposites; those who ‘lack all culture’ and those who are guilty of ‘too much culture.’

After the turn of the millennium and in “The Deportees,” however, Jimmy’s advertisement, while composed in the same style, reveals a whole diverse set of requirements: “Brothers and Sisters, Welcome to Ireland. Do you want the Celtic Tiger to dance to your music? If yes, The World’s Hardest-Working Band is looking for you. Contact J. Rabbitte at 089-22524242 or rabbittej@banjo.ie. White Irish need not apply.” (Doyle 36). Again, an enormous amount of information is being revealed through this brief musical reference. On one hand, Jimmy directly copies his previous pre-millennium statement that “The Hardest-Working Band is looking for you”. This can indisputably be connected to the Postmodern, for even though Jimmy directly copies his previous text, he still does so with a different musical group and a new

musical vision in mind. On the other hand, however, Jimmy now reverses his socio-cultural concerns. While before, class identification was his primary concern, for he refused to allow members of two particular class associations into his group, Jimmy now turns these beliefs upside down by primarily concerning himself with ethnicity; class, for Jimmy in 2008 Dublin, is no longer the indisputable point of demarcation. Interestingly, Jimmy engages in a particular form of discrimination; particular because Jimmy, as a ‘White Irish’ man, discriminates against all of the other people of his ethnicity who have been historically discriminated against. Again, Barthes’ *Mythologies* becomes important, as Doyle plays with the relationships between signifier, signified, and the correlation of the two through global signification¹²².

Initially, it is stated that “Jimmy had his group” when he saw a Romanian kid, a “prick” Italian, and a “big African woman” on Parnell Street, which is in the heart of historic Dublin (35-6). While Jimmy’s obvious maintenance of stereotypes is depicted in the adjectives which he uses to describe the various immigrants, it is this same motley group of characters which forms the foundation for how he envisions his future group¹²³. In the end, Jimmy ends up with “King Robert,” whose imposing African voice and hyper-correct use of the English language create a formidable force within the band; Kerri Shephard, a New Yorker of indeterminate color but with dreadlocks; a Romanian father and son; a Russian drummer; a djembe drummer from Nigeria, a female singer from Spain, a traveler ironically named “Paddy,”¹²⁴ and a guitarist (assumed to be pure Irish) from County Roscommon. With this global melting pot of a musical group, Doyle

¹²² For further clarification, see Barthes, Roland. “Myth Today.” *Mythologies*. New York; Hill and Wang, 1972.

¹²³ Jimmy Rabbitte is the central character of Doyle’s arguably most famous novel, *The Commitments*. He again reprises his role in “The Deportees,” albeit with a grand family and a dream to reconstruct the fame of the Commitments in a unique way; that is, his nostalgia for the band is re-envisioned and reconstructed through the new form of the immigrant band members.

¹²⁴ Doyle is playing upon cultural stereotypes here. The word *Paddy* is, by definition, a slang term often used disparagingly toward Irishmen or Irishwomen, or toward people of Irish descent.

sets out to prove that the music, mostly classic American rock, is the combining force which bridges all gaps between diverse races and cultures. What is particularly interesting to note is the way in which colonized “Others” now help to shift previous perceptions of what a contemporary “Irish” band is ideally composed. Furthermore, there is a paradox in this shift of colonized voice; the traditional music of Ireland, which expresses such a rich balance between the lament of imperial subordination and cries for national freedom, is now passé. Instead, Ireland now appears to emphasize the voice of multi-cultural, often formerly colonized Others within the Irish Republic, forsaking their own history under imperial rule in the process.

While Doyle has received some criticism for the premise and the happy-go-lucky development of these characters, others praise the writer for successfully conveying the contemporary Irish quotidian through the postmodern narrative. Erica Wagner of *The New York Times*, for example, lauds the novelistic style of *The Deportees And Other Stories* as “...a form that suits Doyle’s aim of bringing 21st-century Ireland to life” (Wagner *The New York Times*, 1/20/08). Indeed, Doyle himself proves that his novel was formed out of the inspiration for the contemporary global issues which were born from his place as an observer in the socio-cultural changes which were occurring in the Celtic Tiger culture of 2006 and which continue to occur to this day. In support of his reasons for crafting a novel around contemporary issues of the “new” Irish quotidian, specifically with an eye toward ethnicity, he prefaces *The Deportees And Other Stories* with the following:

Three or four years into our new national prosperity, I was already reading and hearing elegies to the simpler times, before we became so materialistic- the happy days when more people left Ireland than were born here; when we were afraid to ask anyone what they did for a living, because the answer might be ‘Nothing’;

when we sent our pennies and our second-hand clothes to Africa but never saw a flesh-and-blood African... Today, one in every ten people living in Ireland wasn't born here. The story- someone new meets someone old- has become an unavoidable one. (xiii)

Here, Doyle explains the reasons why he chose to focus on the wide variety of characters which he has incorporated into *The Deportees*. He later continues to describe the daily events from 2000 and 2006 which primarily concern the changes between a dominantly white Irish social body in confrontation with Ireland's new immigrant groups. While he, in the above, does not specifically mention music as the defining factor which ties the cultures together, it is indeed the knowledge of American rock and soul music which allows the ethnically diverse musical group to coalesce. "We are all European now,"¹²⁵ Doyle specifies, and within *The Deportees*, it is, ironically, music such as Woodie Guthrie's "Vigilante Man," (Guthrie also had a song called "Deportee"), Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues, and The Eagles' "Hotel California," to name a selection of songs, over which the characters bond. Jameson would call it an example of the MTV effect in "the spacialization of music" (Jameson 299); others, like Brusila and Stokes, would see it as an effect of state, civic, and corporate sponsorship of media centers of production (Stokes 50). One way or another, the dominance of American music on the global scene is verbalized and emphasized within contemporary narrative which can be identified beyond the specificity of Doyle's novel and/or current Irish narrative.

Furthermore, Doyle's short story re-emphasizes the connection between music and the Postmodern through particular stylistic traits embedded within the text. Many of the fragmented chapter titles refer to recent music and / or musicians. The first chapter, for example, is entitled

¹²⁵ Brockes, Emma. "Interview: Emma Brockes meets Roddy Doyle." *The Guardian*, 9/6/04.

“The Real Slim Shady.” However, in typical postmodern style, there is no clarification as to how the mention of Eminem actually fits within the discourse. Instead, the narrative ‘I’ prefers to discuss Moby, Radiohead, The Corrs, and the *Titanic* soundtrack. It is only when embedded within these various musical discourses that the reader learns that Aiofe, who is Jimmy’s wife, refers to him as “the real Slim Shady” (Doyle 29).

However, narrative connections within the short story are identifiable through the disparity of the many musical fragments presented. Slim Shady, after all, is the alter-ego of American rapper and international music phenomenon Eminem (born Marshall Bruce Mathers III), who arguably best represents the global music scene spanning the time period right before and ten years after the turn of the millennium; in this time span, he has become, among other notable honors, “Artist of the Decade” by *Billboard* magazine¹²⁶, the “seventh biggest icon in pop music history”¹²⁷ and is now considered to be one of the best-selling musical artists in the world for having sold more than 86.5 million albums worldwide¹²⁸. How, then, does this mythical “bad boy,” commercially successful rapper relate to a former eighties soul band member / aging Irish family man?

This is again a good example of how postmodern musical fragmentation comes into play. As “Slim Shady” is Eminem’s (or ‘Marshall Bruce Mathers III’s’) alter-ego, so is Slim Shady both Jimmy Rabbitte’s pet name and alter-ego. Even though Jimmy is “...thirty-six, with three young kids and a wife who was six months pregnant and tone-deaf,” he still “... knew his music”

¹²⁶ “Eminem Top Artist in Decade-End Highlights...”

<http://www.billboard.com/#/news/eminem-top-artist-in-decade-end-highlights-1004055072.story>

¹²⁷ MTV Top 10 | Ep. 1 | Pop Icons #07 | Eminem | MTV Top 10 – episode 1deMTV Top 10 | Vídeo | MTV Portugal. Mtv.pt. Retrieved 2010-12-21.

¹²⁸ <http://www.directstar.fr/video/dndxw>

(Doyle 27).¹²⁹ From his frank statement which ties his prolific musical knowledge and status as an approaching middle-aged father, the ways in which narrative fragments referring to Rabbitte's nickname of Slim Shady begin to take shape. On one level, Slim Shady is a term of endearment used by his wife Aoife, which seemingly feeds his masculine ego; for example, in an intimate moment between the two of them and when the soon-to-be-born baby is kicking, she lovingly inquires, "How's the real Slim Shady?..."; in what appears to be a similarly loving manner he responds, "Not too bad, bitch...Grand" (Doyle 29). This playful exchange, based upon Aoife's pet name for her husband, reaffirms his masculinity by connecting him to a clear example of commodified violence and pure virility. This example of manly virility is naturally found in the form of "The Real Slim Shady."

On another level, Rabbitte's appropriation of the nickname Slim Shady serves as Jimmy's alter-ego. Aside from their connection as proud fathers, Eminem, as an angry Slim Shady, is everything middle class 'family man' Jimmy Rabbitte is not; while Slim Shady expresses violent words and emotions toward the mother of his child, Jimmy instead dotes on both his wife and his children. In order to come to terms with this discrepancy, perhaps one should view Jimmy as what he nostalgically used to be, as well as how he now views himself; that is, as a postmodern pastiche of a non-violent yet still socially transgressive embodiment of Slim Shady. Eminem is often considered to be loud, brash, and perhaps even the most fitting contemporary musical example of the post-millennium bad boy; Jimmy, as a key member of a former eighties alternative soul band, likely identifies with some of these insubordinate characteristics and hopes to live vicariously through the innocent appropriation of a name. What

¹²⁹ This is a direct line taken from Jimmy's previous discourse in *The Commitments*: "Jimmy knew what was new, what was new but what wouldn't be for long and what was going to be new... Jimmy knew his music" (Doyle *The Commitments* 2).

a reader can ultimately see, then, is the variety of ways in which a simple reference to a musical name can evoke such a wide range of textual and narrative possibilities.

Other chapter titles which require postmodern narrative ‘sleuthing’ or decoding include “The Tracks of My Tears” (46); again, “Vigilante Man,” (50); “Dust Bowl Refugees” (53); “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (56), and “I’m Checkin’ Out, Go’om Bye” (73). In crafting the title with these musical specifics, the reader has a choice; he or she can elect to research the lyrics further in an attempt to identify how they fit with textual fragments, or the reader can simply choose to bypass additional research and consider them only in the sense of their contribution to the postmodern pastiche of the various levels of narrative. This is similar to the narrative style which Valeria Viganò established in her 1995 work *L’ora preferita della sera* (Feltrinelli, 1995), in which the author explains that the book concerns musical lyrics covering the span of thirty years; “... gli ultimi di questo secolo” (7). In focusing upon pieces of lyric as a framing device, Viganò sought to connect past memory and to produce memories for the future.¹³⁰ Likewise, Doyle’s use of lyric in naming individual chapters provides collective reference for readers, both in the nostalgia which is evoked by the song title and in the future reference which will be formulated through the specific details of the chapter’s narration.

A similar way in which the patchwork quilt of the text begins to surface is through the specific names of Jimmy’s Rabbitte’s children. As is the case with the chapter titles, the names of the children can act either as pure fragments or as connections to other fragments within the various levels of narrative. In this way, the nature of the text assures that the chance for a

¹³⁰ Questo libro ha a che fare con alcune canzoni. Il tentativo insensato di dare un’altra parola, di restituire un’impressione personale a motivi che hanno già vita propria non viene dalla presunzione di narrare trame diverse per pezzi che già la possiedono, ma dalla voglia di dimostrare cosa possono, nel cervello di un individuo come di una collettività, brani che rievocano la memoria passata e producono memoria per il futuro” (Viganò 7).

narrative whole, such as Yeats would have envisioned, is never entirely possible. Some of the names of the children include “Jimmy Two,” “Marvin,” and “Brian.” While the general name ‘Jimmy’ could refer either to Jimmy as in ‘The Second,’ Jimmy Rabbitte’s deliberate choice in calling his second child “Jimmy Two” leaves the reader to speculate exactly which great musician is being honored; knowing Jimmy Rabbitte’s nostalgia for classic musical greats of the seventies through the nineties, guesses might include Jimmy Cliff, famous Jamaican reggae singer; Jimmy Buffett, best known for his escapist hit “Margaritaville, or Jimmy Page, famous guitarist for Led Zeppelin. The exact “Jimmy” for which Jimmy Rabbitte’s son was named is never fully clarified; even so, by providing this particular musical fragment, the text provides a greater capacity for the reader to engage more fully with narrative, and vice versa.

Likewise, Rabbitte’s other children are named for well-known contemporary singers such as Marvin (as in Marvin Gaye, the famous Motown / R&B singer- songwriter) and Mahalia (as in Mahalia Jackson, an early luminary in African-American gospel music). As for Brian, Jimmy recounts the following:

He was a da again, a father, and it was just fuckin’ wonderful, what he’d always wanted, what he was on earth for. Marvin, Jimmy Two, Mahalia and now this one, delivered by Jimmy himself, more or less, another boy, another star - Smokey.

- Brian.
- Wha’? said Jimmy
- Brian, said Aiofe...

...Fair enough, Brian was her father's name, and he was sound. But, Brian?
As the ambulance took a sharpish right onto the North Circular and sent
Jimmy flying and the baby squalling, he ran through his Stax, Chess, Hi and
Atlantic albums, mentally flicking through all of them, but, for the life of him,
he couldn't find a Brian, not a drummer or a sound engineer, not even a
fuckin' sleeve designer. (47)

The above passage demonstrates the centrality of music to the developments of a specific narrative moment. Not only does music assist in propelling the narration forward, but Jimmy's intense search for a musical Brian- *any* music Brian, provides an additional level of humor in a moment of narrative intensity. As a result, Doyle's characterization of music through the naming of his children helps to maintain a certain literary register. Because the events and subjects of the short story revolve around hot bed contemporary topics, such as immigration, national politics, assimilation, and racism, Doyle keeps the tone of the narrative light and often comedic through the incorporation of musical references. In doing so, he thereby avoids an authorial fall into the overly dramatic, pedantic, or trite.

Finally, a crucial way in which the micro level of music functions within *The Deportees* as a macro example of the soundtrack of contemporary life is through continual fragmented references to The Corrs, a group which Jimmy considers to be a kitschy popular Irish rock band. The reader is first privy to the knowledge of Jimmy's deep dislike of the band from the outset of the short story. When we are first introduced to Jimmy and his wife, Aiofe, *in medias res*, he notes that "(s)he was singing some shite by The Corrs, the one about forgiving but not forgetting" (27). From this small fragment, the reader is able to perceive several narrative characteristics. On one hand, the emphasis which Jimmy places on music in his life already

becomes crystallized, as calling the music of The Corrs “shite” already demonstrates what type of music is and / or is not acceptable to the main character. Also, the reiteration of The Corrs as an inferior musical group is consistent throughout the story; in fact, it is the way in which Jimmy is able to decide who will and who will not make the cut in his racially and ethnically eclectic musical group. “Do you like the Corrs?” is indeed the defining question during the interviewing process; those who do make the cut respond by stating, “(W)e are not acquainted” (King Robert the African); “No, I do not” (Kerri Shephard, the “non- white” American); “Fuckin’ hate them, boy” (Kenny the Irishman from Roscommon), etc. (39, 41, 42).

But what is it about a popular Irish band of three sisters and a brother which makes Jimmy cringe? It is here, I argue, that the micro- and macro- implications of globalization and capitalism begin to take shape within a very specific Irish musical context. This criticism of yet simultaneous embracing of globalization and capitalism resembles the Italian case of Andrea De Carlo, in which the author literarily criticizes contemporary bourgeois Italian culture yet wholly embraces it through his publishing and media enterprises. Doyle’s case, however, is different in its emphasis upon the sacred Irish connection between music and ‘tradition.’

On one level, Roddy Doyle playfully jests with the reader; Andrea Corr, who is the lead singer of The Corrs, had a short acting scene within the screen adaptation of *The Commitments*, which was based upon Doyle’s best-selling novel of the same name. Readers who are familiar with this information will find it ironic, and even a bit humorous, that Jimmy hates The Corrs, even when Andrea Corr had a role in the movie featuring his band. On a more general level, however, it is feasible that Jimmy’s hatred of the band refers to all of what The Corrs stand for; soulless, popular rock music whose intent is ideally for monetary gain and a global audience. *The Commitments* represented the creation of new, anti-establishment soul music in the context

of a gritty North Side Dublin; The Corrs, on the other hand, clearly aim to reach a wider, more globally focused audience for monetary aim and widespread recognition. Furthermore, The Corrs have been criticized for selling out their original Irish roots to the mainstream musical environment; in the process, they are accused of having renounced a primarily Irish-Celtic musical background for a purely pop sound. Much has been made, for example, of The Corrs' 2000 album *In Blue* and its generic, mainstream musical construction. One merely has to look at David Browne's *Entertainment Weekly* review in order to understand Jimmy's frustration with The Corrs and their musical development:

Assimilation has bedeviled ethnic cultures for centuries, but it's taken the Corrs only a few albums to succumb to it. The Irish siblings' 1995 *Forgiven, Not Forgotten* straddled the delicate balance between Celtic folk (fiddles and tin whistles) and mainstream pop (the sulky-glam looks and comely voice of singer Andrea Corr). They managed to pull it off, but with each subsequent release their national identity has receded further, as the band and its record company have sought first and foremost to make them as hugely popular in the U.S. as they are in Europe... The nothing-but-a-heartache songs are banal, each one reduced to adult-contemporary radio fodder that feels very 1991 ("All the Love in the World" is awaiting Celine Dion's return). The album also reflects a music-biz mind-set that emphasizes not merely Stateside sales but global success; *In Blue* is unlikely to offend anyone, anywhere... (T)hey're a disheartening example of musical ethnic cleansing.

Browne 9/15/2000

In the review, Browne focuses on the micro-level problems associated with *In Blue*; however, what he truly reveals is the more universal loss of character associated with contemporary popular music. In his review, it is interesting to note that Browne clearly attacks assimilation and kowtowing to global ‘taste,’ yet he still emphasizes a connection to globalization by comparing The Corrs to world-renowned artist Celine Dion and an emphasis upon “Stateside,” or specifically American, success.

Like the band which Jimmy is striving to establish, this millennium album of The Corrs reflects an emphasis on the pop music which appeals to a universal audience; though, in the process, they have renounced a previously tenable sense of national character. At this point, therefore, The Corrs find themselves in a difficult position; they are not economically viable as a purely Irish/Celtic brand and exhibit the need to branch out. When they do so, however, they are accused of “ethnic cleansing,” ironically by an American media outlet which is responsible for discovering and empowering music on a global scale. In the end, what Jimmy ultimately advocates through his emphasis on soul music and denouncement of The Corrs is indicative of a nostalgic return to one’s individuality and “roots”; one can imagine that he advocates the individuality of The Corrs’ Celtic / pop heritage, but which can also still fit within the changing contemporary global music scene.

Doyle’s incorporation of narrative fragments referring to The Corrs is not the first example of the discrepancy between literature, Irish popular music, and issues of contemporary life. Joe Cleary, in his critical work *Outrageous Fortune*, likewise demonstrates how issues of capitalism, globalization, and Postmodernism influence and are influenced by popular Irish rock

music. Cleary focuses primarily on the late eighties rock/punk group The Pogues,¹³¹ and how they incorporated traditional Irish music in order to create a thoroughly modern, anti-establishment musical genre. In short, he shows how the Pogues shook up tradition through their rough, sometimes blasphemous reconstruction of traditional Irish tunes, through their establishment of a lower class punk rebellion, and their playing into the stereotype of the hard drinking, bad talking Irish character for capitalist popularity and profit.

However, in drawing Doyle and the Corrs and Cleary and the Pogues together, one can again notice the move from a modern to a postmodern view of Ireland's rock music tradition. Cleary's argument supports the initial agenda of the Pogues, in which the group sought to counter both "Anglo-American cultural imperialism and commercial blandness," while still embodying rock music's "modernist and future-oriented aesthetic value-system that associated musical work and authenticity with avant-garde experiment and progress, with radical stylistic change and constant innovation, and with an extroverted cosmopolitanism" (Cleary 272). However, the fact remains that The Pogues exemplify a musical bridge between the Modern and the Postmodern; they still retain a sense of the folk in order to deliberately counter the characteristics associated with Anglo-Americanism and the bland global musical order. The Corrs, however, are different; they have already moved beyond acting as a bridge between modern and postmodern aesthetics and find themselves squarely in Postmodernity, even if they still incorporate remnants of traditional national elements into their music. For example, they are no longer concerned with pandering to Irish stereotypes made famous in Britain¹³² or in creating new genres of music which both embrace and refute historical Irish music traditions. Instead,

¹³¹ For a detailed analysis, see Cleary's "The Pogues and the Spirit of Capitalism." Cleary, Joe. *Outrageous Fortune*. Dublin: Field Day, 2007. Pp. 261-294.

¹³² Gerry Smyth. *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Popular Music*. Cork: Cork University Press, 2005.

The Corrs now pander only to the global mainstream, or musical trends which will be appreciated by the widest global audience and which will have the most abundant monetary advantage.

In analyzing the trends and characteristics associated with contemporary Irish and Italian literature, it is important to consider the ways in which music functions as a crucial narrative element. While music has always been in close quarters with literature, due to the relationship between text and sound, the soundtrack of contemporary life through musical reference begins to take shape in new, revised, or reformed ways. Music within contemporary narrative, for example, shows us that one does not need to rely on ideas of unity, such as that of Yeats's dancer and dance; Mazzucco's fragmented naming of songs, McCabe's schizophrenic musical references, and Doyle's pastiche of band members and albums all prove this to be true. Furthermore, the reader is encouraged to make choices as to how he or she will attempt to put narrative information together; since postmodern writing embodies incredulity of meta-narrative and proves that the illusory "grand narrative" will never be fully perceived or comprehended, then it is up to the reader to grasp at narrative fragments in order to create a very personal reading. Finally, these texts overwhelmingly represent the Postmodern and the global, such as in Mazzucco's portrayal of how trite and / or grotesque characteristics of Disney and Manson reflect the contemporary quotidian. Likewise, McCabe and Doyle demonstrate how Postmodernity and globalism, respectively, affect diverse human subjects. McCool is not able to come to terms with his contemporary quotidian, and therefore must rely upon characteristics of Postmodernity such as kitsch, nostalgia, schizophrenia, and pastiche, in order to confront his inability to cope with the new millennium. Jimmy Rabbitte, on the other hand, seeks to establish idealistic characteristics and revisit his past through a motley mix of new immigrants, with the

ultimate aim to simultaneously create a 'unique' musical sound while fighting both the blandness and global generality of contemporary consumer music. In these ways, therefore, music proves to be altogether indicative of fragmentation, globalism, pastiche, consumerism and nostalgia, thereby acting as *the* soundtrack of Postmodernity.

Chapter Four: Shopping Malls and Simulacra, Prada as Power: Consumption Culture and Global Competition

A third “patch” in the quilt of *difference*¹³³ which questions Yeats’s understanding of a unified, organic whole is found in Postmodernism’s emphasis upon globalization and consumer culture. Within the majority of Italian and Irish contemporary fiction, the incessant need for identification through status symbol and global labeling cannot be ignored.

Social stratification is not new in Postmodernity; rather, it is a timeless way in which people distinguish themselves and acquire what Kant called “taste” and what Bourdieu develops as “distinction”; in fact, he states that distinction “... functions as a sort of social orientation, a ‘sense of one’s place,’ guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position.”¹³⁴ Using Marxist terminology of “property” and “goods,” Bourdieu shows the natural inclination of social beings to orient, improve, and benefit themselves through these same markers of tangible distinction. One can further support the emphasis of social stratification in literature in a myriad of classic fiction, from the works of Jane Austen to those of Émile Zola. What does become distinctive in current literature, however, is how literature moves

¹³³ Much has been made of the “patchwork quilt” of textual reference within postmodern literature. Margaret Atwood, for example, incorporates this motif most apparently in her work *Alias Grace*, where the patchwork quilt, according to Magali Cornier Michael, acts as both “... metaphor and model for an alternative form with which to think about and reconstruct the past... (T)he novel participates both in current reconceptualizations of history and in a reevaluation of a form traditionally associated with women and dissociated from the serious and valued realms of official history and art.” Magali Cornier Michael. “Rethinking History as Patchwork: The Case of Atwood’s *Alias Grace*”. *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*, XLVII/2 (2001). Pg. 426.

¹³⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre and Richard Nice, tr. “Classes and Classifications.” *Distinctions. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1984. Pg. 486.

beyond a pure critique of society through social stratification in order to create new, varied levels of narrative meaning.

Current fiction frequently references consumer products or labels familiar to the majority of readers. What is important to note, however, is that these tangible images of the contemporary quotidian function in a multitude of ways. They can, for instance, act as status symbols in Modernity or be used to manipulate the appearance of status in Postmodernity. One of the first novels to truly exploit this particular use of cultural consumerism in order to project prestige is Bret Easton Ellis' novel, *American Psycho* (1991). In the chapter on "Consumerism and Loss of Identity" as exhibited in *American Psycho*, Anja Schiel explains how consumer culture has developed from past historical literary models in order to demonstrate new levels of obsession with image and prestige; in the literary critique, the author takes the classic American novel, *The Great Gatsby*, as a primary point of reference:

The main differences... lie in the way the characters deal with the consumer objects: While in *The Great Gatsby* consumer objects are mainly used as props, in the case of *American Psycho* the line between object and subject becomes blurred, in fact almost vanishes, making objects appear as characters and people as commodities. Furthermore... there are virtually no values left in the world of *American Psycho* but money and appearance. The impossibility to identify oneself with anything other than objects leads to a complete loss of identity in (a) life dominated by consumer culture, from which there is no hope of escape.

Schiel 3

In comparing F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'Great American Novel' with the gruesome work of Ellis, one sees how consumer culture has had growing historical precedence; it is impossible to forget Gatsby's fancy cars, celluloid women, and fantastic mansion on Long Island Sound. However, Schiel also demonstrates how *American Psycho* raised consumer culture within literature to a new level of prominence, thereby beginning a chapter, so to speak, in thematic elements consistently relevant to contemporary literature. These elements which now pervade contemporary Irish and Italian fiction and, by extent other national and global literatures, center around brand and money worship.

Narrative fragments concerning consumer culture may also function as indicative examples of globalization, or the process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a global network of communication, transportation, and trade, in the way that some particular brands perform better than others in garnering global consumer recognition. Furthermore, the culture of consumer consumption coincides with globalization in contemporary literature through the spaces which it occupies; in other words, it is important to note how both Italian and Irish contemporary fiction depict a strong desire to compete and create a space within the larger realm of globalized consumer culture. Finally, these fragments of consumerism and globalization can help to either organize or disorganize the structure of a narrative through means such as titles, book segments, and the placement of specific plot references. Yeats's narrative whole is therefore undermined, as literary fragments pertaining to consumer culture and an emphasis on the global can either stand on their own or work in ever changing patterns with other, diverse fragments which contribute to the narration.

One of the most noticeable traits of contemporary Irish and Italian fiction is a hyper-reliance upon labels and branding in society specifically at, and following, the turn of the millennium. It comes as no surprise that these labels permeate narrative text with such frequency, as western society is saturated with these same types of product images and names from television, radio, print media, and the internet. On one hand, technology and speed are responsible for the wide dissemination of global consumer production. As Pico Iyer states in *The Global Soul*, this is because “(t)he two great engines of our age- technology and travel (now the largest industry in the world) – give fuel to each other, our machines prompting us to prize speed as an end in itself, and the longing for speed quickening a hunger for new technologies” (Iyer 12). Jean-François Lyotard likewise foresaw the connection between Postmodernism and its reliance upon technology for a dominant social order.¹³⁵

On the other hand, globalization can also be attributed to the wide, wild dissemination of monetary capital across countries and continents; Like Lyotard and Iyer, Arjun Appadurai has illuminated the connection between consumerism and global culture; however, his analytical lens, which moves away from speed and technology in order to focus solely upon economics, is more critical. He writes,

Globalization is inextricably linked to the current workings of capital on a global basis; in this regard it extends the earlier logics of empire, trade, and political dominion in other parts of the world. Its most striking feature is the runaway quality of global finance, which appears remarkably independent of traditional

¹³⁵ See Lyotard, Jean-François. “Research and Its Legitimation Through Performativity.” *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Pp. 41-47.

constraints of information transfer, national regulation, industrial productivity, or ‘real’ wealth in any particular society, country, or region.¹³⁶

While Iyer focuses upon the technological aspects of culture which are born through a globally shared interest in speed and travel, Appadurai focuses upon the ways in which money and capitalism are the driving forces behind globalization. Moreover, these monetary forces, according to Appadurai, are almost unregulated in their capacity to be disseminated across the world. Whether through speed and technology or in the unrestrained distribution of global capital, it is evident that Postmodernism and globalization coalesce; however, what remains to be proven is the extent to which technology, capital, and globalization join together in order to dominate the postmodern condition.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated the ways in which speed and technology mirror themselves within Postmodernity. But what about the speed with which contemporary postmodern characters desire to appropriate these marvels of new technology? Current Italian and Irish narratives show us that it is not only the technology of media which social beings strive to appropriate in order to “get ahead”; rather, it is the day-to-day incorporation of new products and services which helps to define characters and to provide a sense of participation in a contemporary global social order.

A strong example of how consumer culture affects the average postmodern character can be found in the depiction of Daniele Sandroni, the protagonist and the speaking voice of Giuseppe Carlotti’s *Non sono un bamboccione* (2008). Daniele is altogether middle class and

¹³⁶ Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

approaching middle age; he drives a Cinquecento¹³⁷ and exhibits only an average level of initiative with regard to “Misteri tricolori,” the television program on which he works. Daniele, in all of his qualities, exemplifies the typical Italian “piccolo borghese.” Moreover, he represents the growing group of “bamboccioni,” or “big babies,” who choose to remain living with their parents either to be continually pampered or to avoid the further financial burdens which moving out of the house would incur.¹³⁸ He does indeed live with his mother and, like many thirtysomethings of today, is a child of divorce. His father worked for forty years in the same office in which Daniele now works, and since the divorce, has resided in a small studio. Daniele disdainfully describes his father’s studio space as “...di pochi metri quadrati, in pratica una stanza con lavandino” (Carlotti 17). At 141 pages written using a large, spread out text, the novel is short; in addition, the variety of characters is rather limited. Both of these characteristics provide insight for the reader into the small, compact world to which Daniele relegates himself. In general, the majority of the plot centers around four repetitive scenes: Daniele at home, Daniele on his way to and from the office, Daniele interacting with his parents, and Daniele interacting with his co-workers; again, by limiting plot action, Carlotti provides the reader with a clear point of access into Daniele’s self-centered, egotistical world.

¹³⁷ The Italian ‘Cinquecento,’ produced by Fiat in three series, is typically associated with Italian lower-middle class city driving. It was first produced in the 1960’s, then in the 1990’s, and newly since approximately 2006-2007.

¹³⁸ In a 2006 article published by *The Guardian*, the current social trends relating to Italian children remaining longer with their parents than in the past is analyzed. In the article, it is stated that “(e)ight out of 10 Italian men aged 18 to 30 live with their parents compared to one in five in the UK and one in four in the US.” Moreover, the article confirms the reasons for this social trend by identifying the following factors: “The high - and apparently increasing - propensity of young Italians, women as well as men, to live with their parents is associated with extremely high youth unemployment; low and declining fertility; and low and declining migration rates” (MacLeod *The Guardian* 2/3/2006).

Even though Daniele is ultimately a narcissistic, fragmented individual,¹³⁹ he still relies heavily upon contemporary brands and labels in order to define himself. Daniele repeatedly refers to himself as a rupophobe, or one who has a fear of dirt. This is arguably the most prevalent characteristic of Daniele's persona and one which he repeatedly stresses to the reader. Daniele's impulse in identifying himself so specifically provides relevant information to the reader regarding his persona; one can easily note that Daniele is psychologically tormented from early in the novel. This fact becomes heightened when the reader learns that Daniele's self-determined status as a rupophobe is always in accordance with the products that enable him to function to the best of his ability in society. In support of his hyper-reliance upon these labels, he recounts the following as an everyday occurrence:

Mi siedo alla mia scrivania, apro il cassetto, ne estraggo una confezione di Fresh and Clean Salviette Umide Antibatteriche e comincio a pulire la tastiere del computer... Quindi apro il mio zaino in nylon nero Eastpak... Mentre aspetto che il computer carichi Windows, pulisco bene le cuffiette con le salviettine Fresh and Clean. Poi mi sparo in cuffia *High Hopes* dei Pink Floyd

Carlotti 47

In the selection above, every sentence refers to some form of product or global export. For instance, the wipes for the computer are not just any brand, but are specifically stated to be "Fresh and Clean." It is interesting that Daniele again feels the need to reiterate the name of the

¹³⁹ See "Conclusion: Fragmented Language, Fragmented 'Self.'"

same brand when cleaning his headphones, providing the reader with the sense that anything less would not be up to his discriminating standard of cleanliness. At the same time, he is evoking the catchy, sometimes nostalgic but always mentally pervasive pull of the television or radio jingle; the repetition of product names leads to a natural inclination to buy a product, due to the product's pull on the human subconscious. Finally, Daniele listens to Pink Floyd's *High Hopes* while loading the computer operating system Windows; as was the case with music in the previous chapter, here the reader is again encouraged to work with a purposefully evasive text in order to come to terms with narrative pieces; for example, does listening to *High Hopes* give hope to Daniele's work day? Or does it perhaps allude to his successful avoidance of all germs and as a confirmation or reward of his diligent behavior due to his dutiful use of the wipes? Each of these specific references, therefore, provides an intimate glimpse into the life of the character and to the beginning of the fragmented "tics" of which the main character is comprised.

Next, Daniele's reference to the backpack by the brand maker Eastpak suggests that he has appropriated a speaking language taken directly from the manufacturer; it is as though he is reading to us and, at the same time, emphasizing the importance of the backpack's details as delineated on its label. Incidentally, as an originally American brand, Eastpak now lauds itself as, "... a \$7 billion-plus apparel powerhouse, with an incredibly diverse, international portfolio of brands and products that reach consumers wherever they choose to shop"¹⁴⁰. In this sense, Eastpak, on a micro level, could reflect the macro desire of contemporary consumers around the world; that is, to expand beyond one's specific borders in order to reflect the buzzwords of cosmopolitanism, high quality, and discriminating taste.

¹⁴⁰ VF Corporation website. <http://www.vfc.com/about>.

Furthermore, Daniele's reliance upon his iPod and use of Windows contribute to the way in which he wishes to be perceived by others, where his desire for identification fits well with the postmodern global condition. His need to use both the iPod *and* Windows supports Marilyn Halter's understanding of contemporary identity building, where "...people construct their own identities and define others according to the commodities they purchase" (Halter K97-104). He is in possession of both a Windows computer and an Apple Inc. iPod; these two forms of diverse technological labeling show in themselves that Daniele strives to be as technologically encompassing as possible. Because Daniele emphasizes his need for both systems, he shows that he likely possesses both the monetary means to own these somewhat costly technological products, as well as his desire to always be prepared in case of a system's failure. As such, Daniele's psychological obsession with failure manifests itself through his need for an all-encompassing variety of technology. His behavior further supports what Vance Packard early on in the 1950s saw as the new social stratification of society through consumer consumption. In the *Status Seekers* (1957), Packard states the following:

While American society presents an over-all picture of stratification, most of the individuals at the various layers- excepting only the benighted nonstrivers near the bottom- aspire to enhance their status. This trait, which if not peculiarly American is at least particularly American, offered an opportunity that the depth merchandisers were quick to exploit. It needed to be done with some deftness as no one cares to admit he is a social striver. Packard 126

He goes on to clarify what status means with regard to consumer consumption by quoting Lloyd Warner, a social scientist who concerned himself with American communities in the 1940s which reflect both work and home environments:

Lloyd Warner spelled out the inviting situation to ad men in these words: ‘Within the status system something else operates that is at the very center of American life and is the most motivating force in the lives of many of us- namely what we call social mobility, the aspiration drive, the achievement drive, the movement of an individual and his family from one level to another, the translation of economic goods into socially approved symbols, so that people achieve higher status.’

(126)

Even though Packard was observing from an American cultural perspective, his findings continue to extend across countries and continents. While social mobility may have, at one point, been an intrinsic aspect of a specifically American mindset, with the advent of globalization this outlook has come to be embraced by a wide variety of global cultures. Whether as a conscious decision or not, Daniele’s embracing of popular technology does comment upon his status and/or desire to improve his position within a particular stratum of his society.

Even if Daniele does not have the liquid funds to purchase culturally prized technological tools like iPods and PCs containing the newest version of Windows, he still views the possession of high-end technology as an investment in keeping up with popular culture. In this sense, he ensures that he will remain competitive on a local level in the global race for supremacy. This

would not be possible had Daniele possessed a Sony Walkman or an IBM Zeos, two technological labels which are by now “relics” and out of use in global competition. “Novelty,” according to Halter, “is (...) perhaps the most significant characteristic of modern consumer capitalism” (Halter 8); with this in mind, Daniele is exemplary for his need to always be at the forefront of new technology and for his consumption of brands which reflect ‘the new’.

Finally, Daniele’s mention of the band Pink Floyd and their song *High Hopes*¹⁴¹ is significant for its brand status as well. In the previous chapter, the ways in which music brings forth a postmodern sense of nostalgia was discussed; however, merely the name of the *brand itself* can bring forward a postmodern understanding of nostalgia and the contemporary condition. Of *High Hopes*, Daniele states the following:

Ogni volta che ascolto il brano *High Hopes* dei Pink Floyd ripenso ai miei primi giorni della prima elementare...ricordo il portapranzo in metallo che mia madre mi dava ogni giorno, il formaggino Crema Belpaese, e il volto di ogni singolo compagno di classe. Ricordo che Luca Gagliardo il giorno 22 dicembre mi rubò una penna Paper Mate Replay di metallo e io mi incazzai così tanto che mi venne la febbre alta. (47)

What remains important in the above passage is the way in which the fragments of memory come back to Daniele as he remembers Pink Floyd and *High Hopes*. However, what Daniele specifically remembers are the precise brands which had profound effects upon him, such as the

¹⁴¹ Italics are those of the author.

exact type of Bel Paese cheese which his mother left for him in his daily lunchbox and the type of pen which he used. These descriptions clearly point to behaviors associated with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, in which Daniele's disordered behavior is suggested through his repetition of the pen's specific brand name. Moreover, Both Pink Floyd and the Paper Mate pen are American brands with a heritage; as such, they feed into Daniele's memories as points of nostalgia. This is not unusual; in fact, it is believed that nostalgia connects with the 'authentic', a characteristic considered to be increasingly lost within the artificial and simulated realities of Postmodernity. Halter explains the connection between nostalgia, authenticity, and consumer emphasis in the following: "The search for authenticity is very much related to nostalgia for an idealized and fixed point in time... (t)he more artificiality, anonymity, and uncertainty apparent in a postmodern world, the more driven are the quests for authentic experiences..." (Halter 17). Because we live in a so-called 'inauthentic' world, nostalgia aids us in coming to terms with our existence. Nostalgia for specific brands, such as the Paper Mate pen and the music of Pink Floyd, harken back to a time which, in all of its illusion, still appeared to be more 'authentic,' or truthful. This is the reason why "brand" bands such as Pink Floyd, U2, and The Rolling Stones, all three in their geriatric glory, remain among the most popular global groups; their sound is considered by the world population to be 'timeless,' thereby appealing to the nostalgia of individuals in order to create universal authenticity.

A second way in which globalization, branding, and the Postmodern coalesce is through the contemporary presence of the 'nonplace'¹⁴² within current Irish and Italian fiction. Nonplaces, according to Pico Iyer, are intervals, or anthologies "of generic spaces- the shopping mall, the food court, the hotel lobby- which bear the same relation to life, perhaps, that Muzak

¹⁴² Iyer, Pico. *The Global Soul*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000. Pg. 41.

does to music” (Iyer 43). In other words, nonplaces simulate the feeling of ‘home’ or something supposedly ‘authentic’ in an inauthentic reality. These nonplaces do not cater to the local and / or individual, and they feel no need to do so; that is the reason why Douglas perfume shops have the same scent in Cologne as in California, or that a homesick expat in Zurich can effortlessly buy the same sapphire and diamond wedding ring from the city’s Tiffany and Company store as she would buy in her hometown shop of Westport, Connecticut. Furthermore, these nonplaces have little chance of offending a great majority of people, specifically due to their universally accepted appeal and wide variety of offerings which answer the call of the large majority of consumer needs.

One of the most ubiquitous examples of the nonplace within contemporary Irish and Italian literature occurs in the representation of the shopping mall. According to S. Zurkin, shopping malls in Postmodernity become “heterogeneous consumption spaces” which have “...led to a diversification in, and intensification of, the consumption experience” (MacLeod and Ward 156). As is the case with language, technology use, and music, consumption is another postmodern fragment which becomes heightened and hyper within contemporary society. The nonplace of the mall, with its bland, universal design and content, is ideal for understanding this consumptive focus of society. In order to demonstrate the extent to which the nonplace has become ubiquitous to the contemporary quotidian, I would like to juxtapose two passages, the first from the Italian novel entitled *Come dio comanda* (2006) by Niccòlo Ammaniti, and the second from the novel *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2008) from the Irish writer Éilís Ní Dhuibhne. In doing so, a reader will be better able to note how the blandness and ubiquity of the contemporary shopping mall act as narrative elements which effectively cross diverse cultures and social spheres.

Come dio comanda explores the troubled love / hate relationship between the young protagonist Cristiano Zena and his father Rino. Throughout the novel, the two are surrounded by a large number of troubled souls whose characters are much more complex than initially revealed. The living environment of the Zena men, which plays a key role in its duality of both crudeness and beauty, juxtaposes the reality of the contemporary Italian landscape, where forests coexist with landfills, trailer parks, and shopping malls. In a review of the novel, *Publisher's Weekly* describes the fast-paced, complex series of events in a cohesive way by providing the following insights into the plot:

Plans for an ATM heist go terribly wrong for a bumbling gang of Italian ruffians in Ammaniti's latest. Rino Zena, an unemployed single father with neo-Nazi tendencies, can barely keep his teenage son, Cristiano, out of social services. Zena's friend Danilo Aprea hopes to buy a lingerie shop in order to woo back his wife after the death of their daughter. Their plan, to boost an ATM, hinges on the car-thieving skills of Corrado Rumitz, nicknamed Quattro Formaggi, a not-quite-right misfit obsessed with a porn star named Ramona. After watching *Dog Day Afternoon*, Rino takes the movie as a sign from God not to go forward with the plan, but word fails to get to Danilo or to Quattro Formaggi, who, on his way to meet up, is distracted by a teenager he thinks is Ramona. When a massive rain storm hits, the series of tragic coincidences quickly turns deadly.

Hunt 7/20/2009

Since he comes from such a troubled familial background full of violence and poverty, Cristiano exhibits the typical behavior of one who feels the intense desire to escape the realities of his world. In a sense, he is similar to a caged animal; however, in another sense, he trades freedom from poverty and violence in the trailer park for a cage of another type. This cage is instead the mall, which temporarily imprisons him both with glass and by consumer promise. Narrative description of Cristiano and his family makes it difficult for the reader to envision the boy as ever having enough money to spend freely at the mall; in this sense, he remains caged in his inability to buy freedom through consumer status. We further know this fact to be true, since Cristiano sees the appealing cell-phones outside of the store "Cellulandia" and it is written that "Probabilmente lui era l'unico in tutta la scuola a non averlo" (Ammaniti 139). However, like a typical teenager and especially similar to those who have no central source of community other than a mall, Cristiano still seeks solace within the walls of the shopping center even if he can only dream about owning the goods held between its walls. In the following, Cristiano describes his experience while taking the bus to the mall and shares his immediate impression upon entering it:

Di fronte a Cristiano si stendeva un chilometro e mezzo di magazzini... Un pó più in là il cubo di vetro di Mediastore, e dall'altra parte della strada il grande concessionario Opel-General Motors con le file di macchine nuove e il grande spazio dell'automercato con i festoni delle superofferte. E ancora il parcheggio della sala Multiplex accanto alla casetta di McDonalds... Il centro commerciale era un immense parallelepipedo, più grande di un hanger aereo, costruito a metà degli anni Novanta... Potevi trovare tutto ciò che desideravi: lo sportello

bancario del Monte dei Paschi, punti vendita Vodaphone e Tim, un ufficio postale, la nursery, i magazzini di vestiti e scarpe, tre parrucchieri, quattro pizzerie, una vineria, un ristorante cinese, un pub irlandese, una sala giochi, un negozio di animali, una palestra, un centro di analisi mediche e un solarium.

Mancava solo una libreria.

Ammaniti 137

Each piece mentioned above demonstrates the ways in which the global appropriates and commodifies the local, all the while indicating the lack of originality which identifies a typical mall setting; in short, we can distinguish a mall on a global scale precisely due to its lack of overall distinctiveness. Even though Cristiano still views details of the mall in the above which are arguably “Italian,” these small local preferences are outnumbered with respect to more ubiquitous global stores and preferences. For example, he recounts that there are three hairdressers and four pizzerias, which, in these quantities, might be peculiar to the Italian concept of a mall. There are, however, many more globally recognized and appreciated stores which diminish the importance of local presences like pizzerias and hairdressers. Moreover, there are, in typical mall style, numerous ethnic restaurants; one can eat in whatever part of the world at any moment that one chooses to. This is an example of the commodification of ethnicity; according to Jennifer Gates, this is because ethnic components act in themselves as commodities to be perused, assessed, compared to other expectations, then ultimately accepted validated, purchased, or rejected (Halter 98). However, what arises is a paradox; even though ethnic food, such as that in a typical mall, encourages a foray into a distinct ‘local’ realm, what happens instead is that the local becomes homogenized and bland, like the Muzak that has elements of everything yet particularizes nothing and offends no one.

There is, after all, safety in the ubiquitous, and this fact is not lost on Cristiano. Even though he doesn't know why he is drawn to the mall, for at one point the narration he questions, "Che diavolo era venuto a fare in quel casino?" (139), he still continues on his journey within the mall and exhibits his familiarity with the particular locations of his preferred pub and shops. Especially considering his familial background which focuses on violence and verbal abuse by his alcoholic father, the mall clearly acts as a safe haven from these disordered behaviors present within his home environment; even if it is only a constructed, time-limited nonplace, the mall still provides him with the ability to temporarily experience a better world without poverty and violence.

A further element in the description above which demonstrates how the mall is both indicative of everything and nothing at the same time is through the structure of the complex itself. As a nonplace, the mall sets forth an aura of abstraction; like the shops within, it should not have any overtly particular or possibly disagreeable characteristics. It is, in the words of Cristiano, bigger than a hangar, where the sense of space is palpable. As such, the hangar anticipates the sense of flying and its connection to freedom. This comparison of freedom to flying will become both ironic and important to the end of the novel, where characters are either able to be freed from their burdens in life or will fly to their deaths.

In these mall spaces, one experiences the sense of both freedom and security; freedom in the sense that one can walk *ad infinitum* and never become too lost. David Harvey explains this double sense of freedom and security in tandem with the act of buying, in which the pleasure of the spectacle is determined to occur "in secured spaces, safe from violence or physical agitation" (MacLeod and Ward 156). There is the sense, whether real or imagined, that the shopping mall is a safe space, which is a beneficial symbiosis for both consumer and producer. If the consumer

feels secure and happy, then he or she will be more likely to spend money; if the consumer feels threatened in any way, however, then the impulse to buy will be negatively affected. Those who are threatening to the consumer system are completely marginalized and pushed out of the mall dichotomy, such as “street people, political campaigners, independent artists and buskers, all of whom may be deemed to compromise the strict ethics of ‘consumerist citizenship’” (162). In this way, the mall provides an illusory panacea for postmodern fragmentation and chaos through order, choice, and security.

In its ability to reflect a sense of security, the mall also reflects values which are both intrinsically foreign and strangely appealing to Europeans and which, in their ‘hyperreality,’ or tendency for simulation, are highly desirable. The global mall as we know it, which developed post World War II and which corresponded with the rise in suburban living, particularly in America,¹⁴³ also reflects the country’s culture “in its most commodified, commercial, and consumerist form” (Kroes xiv); according to Baudrillard, the values which the mall reflects can act as a larger reading of America and Americans:

America is neither a dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality. It is a hyperreality because it is a utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved. Everything here is real and pragmatic, and yet it is all the stuff of dreams too. It may be that the truth of America can only be seen by a European, since he alone will discover here the perfect simulacrum- that of the immanence and material transcription of all values. The Americans, for their part,

¹⁴³ “Dawn of the Dead Mall”. The Design Observer Group. 11 November 2009. <http://changeobserver.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=11747>.

have no sense of simulation. They are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but they have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model. As a result, they are the ideal material for an analysis of all the possible variants of the modern world. Baudrillard 28-9

In the above, Baudrillard demonstrates how America is the perfect model for what he calls the “hyperreal,” or that which is a mixture of the real and the fantastical. Baudrillard specifies that America is the model for the way in which contemporary society functions; that is, through “the immanence and transcription of all values.” This is what the core of mall culture represents, for shopping centers, with all of their materialistic concerns and emphases upon purchasing power as the point of prestige, reveal underlying truths about western culture, or what I believe Baudrillard calls “the modern world.”¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Europeans are tempted by and drawn to this sense of vulgar yet appealing culture. Rob Kroes, in his comprehensive study of American versus European consumer culture, affirms that America is, even in its tawdry, consumer-driven culture, “unspoiled, primitive, juvenile. It is unaware of itself...Europeans have tasted the forbidden fruit- they are obsessed by knowledge and reflection- yet hope to lose themselves in America (Kroes 38). In this sense, the shopping mall is unequivocally the representation of American cultural imperialism. Strangely enough, the illusion of perfection as seen through the American-style shopping center probably accounts for the reasons why so many cultures, and not just western Europeans, have embraced it; the mall is an example of regeneration and progress, where it recasts, duplicates, multiplies, crossbreeds, and mass-markets culture” (39). However,

¹⁴⁴ Baudrillard concerns himself with juxtaposing Europe and America within the work. For this reason, I believe he focuses upon a solely western European and North American, specifically U.S., viewpoint when formulating his analysis.

this culture continues to be chased by its historical European roots; Baudrillard writes about California's Disneyland in this context, but I would argue that EPCOT, Walt Disney's Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, is an even more fitting example; the replicas of both western European, Asian, African, and North, and South-American communities, which depict 'authentic' products, attractions, sounds, landscapes, and people from the various countries, is the ultimate example of global simulation within an American context.

Ammaniti's prose regarding the mall is, however, only one particular narrative rendering of the generalized shopping mall from an Italian viewpoint which both embraces and subtly criticizes mall culture. In order to best understand the ways in which shopping malls mirror larger trends in Postmodernity, it is important to compare Ammaniti's view with that of the Irish depiction of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne. In *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007), Ní Dhuibhne broaches both changes to Ireland after the turn of the millennium and the fickle promises of economic prosperity and power in Celtic Tiger Ireland. These promises are particularly changeable, we now know from good experience, since the Celtic Tiger has been 'tamed' and Ireland's housing market is in great financial difficulty. Anna Kelly Sweeney, who is the primary character of the novel, an unhappy wife, mother, and writer caught up in the chaos of the Dublin book publishing world, did not get her name by accident; in short, Ní Dhuibhne's novel is a contemporary retelling of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* for a twenty-first century literary audience.¹⁴⁵ Instead of

¹⁴⁵ Aisling Foster succinctly summarizes the plot of *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* in the following: "Anna, a foxy writer, yearns for success. Married to a mega-rich property developer, she is 'vaguely agnostic, vaguely socialist, vaguely capitalist, vaguely materialistic, vaguely spiritual'. Although Prozac is never mentioned, she seems permanently out to lunch. In between attempts to write 'an Irish Harry Potter,' she trots from boutiques to book launches, bumping into the same set of empty-headed individuals, each on

princesses, baronesses, and countesses, however, thematic elements now revolve around Dublin's high prices, high society, and generally conspicuous material consumption. While the novel has been criticized for its plotline which revolves around subordinate women; over-theorized, perhaps antiquated attitudes toward sexual consummation, and especially a narrator, whose ignorance "about subjects such as fashion, food or the seasons of flowers also becomes irritating, so that only ironic asides about postmodern Ireland rescue the work from pastiche or soapbox" (Foster 12/14/07).

Even though plot negativity may work against Ní Dhuibhne, this same commentary redeems the novel as a good example of postmodern Irish writing from a particularly female viewpoint. Anna is particularly affected by the pressures of a contemporary Dublin obsessed with consumer caché and materialism. For instance, when traveling to the mall to search for a party dress, Anna, like Ammaniti's character Cristiano Zena, feels the immediate sense of security within the mall and the sense of self-improvement which parallels her presence within the mall's environment. As a cosmopolitan young woman and a writer of growing importance, Anna responds positively to the allure of the mall and begins to reflect upon the mall's place in her contemporary quotidian. Upon entering the complex, she describes the following:

...(S)he followed various color-coded arrows to a lift that elevated her into the shopping center- a modern apotheosis. She emerged from the dim underground into a brilliantly lit palace of glass and mirrors. Everything was shining, reflective

their own private quest for love or recognition." Foster, Aisling. "Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow, by Eilis Ni Dhuibhne." *The Times*, 12/14/2007.

or transparent: the lifts were made of glass, so were the sides of the stairs; everywhere she went she caught sight of herself, reflected in some bright surface, rubbing shoulders with well-dressed people... (T)here were no old people here, hobbling around with their trolleys, or flabby women with streaky orange hair and plastic bags, the kind of people you found shopping in ordinary places.

Ní Dhuibhne 40

Here, Anna expresses ideas similar to that of Cristiano using a slightly different perspective. On the one hand, she focuses specifically on the negativity associated with regular shopping outside of the mall, and on the other on the artificially superior environment present within it. While shopping outside of the mall implies excessive bodies, “degenerate” people and general uncouthness, within the mall there is perfection, albeit of an artificial nature. We are here reminded of Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation*, where the artificiality of the mall remains a fact of unreality, yet the shared belief in the general values associated with the mall renders it full of cultural and social meaning. The world of the mall is constructed and artificial; however, Anna’s postmodern vision of the mall ideally fits Baudrillard’s description of the third order of simulacra, that which we inhabit, which is composed of simulation,¹⁴⁶ and which has no ‘real’ to

¹⁴⁶“Baudrillard posits another divide in history as radical as the rupture between premodern symbolic societies and modern ones. In the mode of classical social theory, he systematically develops distinctions between premodern societies organized around symbolic exchange, modern societies organized around production, and postmodern societies organized around “simulation” by which he means the cultural modes of representation that “simulate” reality as in television, computer cyberspace, and virtual reality. Baudrillard’s distinction between the mode of production and utility that organized modern societies and the mode of simulation that he believes is the organizing form of postmodern societies postulates a rupture between modern and postmodern societies as great as the divide between modern and premodern ones. In theorizing the epochal postmodern rupture with Modernity, Baudrillard declares the “end of

imitate (Hegarty 50). As such, it does not matter that the mall is an artificial construct of reality; for Anna, as well as for all of the participants in mall culture, the mall *is* reality.

Furthermore, Anna first takes note of her perception of arising from the dim depths of the parking garage and into the brilliant light of the shopping center itself; this is a clear play on “Plato’s Cave”, where the light of knowledge emerges from the darkness of ignorance. She is, in other words, ‘enlightened’ when entering the consumer sphere of the complex.

At the same time, Anna’s reference to light and the pleasures of what is to be found behind the glass is reminiscent of Émile Zola’s 1883 novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* (*The Ladies’ Delight*), in which Denise, the protagonist, is enchanted by the shops spanning the Rue de la Michonnière and the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin.¹⁴⁷ However, the glass barrier keeps Denise out of the store early in the novel, thus also distancing her from the consumer delights which entice her. Anna, on the other hand, is immediately allowed access into the glass world of the mall, breaking the ‘glass ceiling’ of middle class convention; while Denise works in the shopping center yet is still monetarily distanced from the elegant ladies who shop there, Anna, both from the democratic access of the mall and due to her comfortable economic status, is allowed full participation in the consumer culture common to contemporary, cosmopolitan Dublin society.

Anna’s sense of awe and wonder also mirrors Alice of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*, where Alice’s curiosity takes her back into a magical fantasy world of queens, nursery characters, and creatures from Carroll’s imagination. Just as *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) functions as a literary ‘mirror image’ to Carroll’s first novel, *Alice’s Adventures in*

political economy” and of an era in which production was the organizing form of society...” (Kellner 2009).

¹⁴⁷ Zola, Emile and April Fitzlyon, tr. *Ladies’ Delight*. London: Abelard-Schuman, 1958.

Wonderland (1865), the mall acts as a mirror image to real life; both are, however, merely fantasy worlds.

Moreover, both Cristiano and Anna focus upon the sense of light coming from the transparent glass of the buildings; for Cristiano it is the cube of glass indicating the Mediastore which strikes him, while for Anna they are the glass surfaces which reflect her image and suggest her attractiveness while in the presence of other equally good-looking consumers. Throughout all of these descriptions, however, the focus on glass creates a double-edged sword; while mall designers would like to think that their use of glass represents transparency for the consumer, the glass can also be taken as postmodern illusion, where what we see is, in actuality, a mere reflection of some more genuine or original form. Again, this brings to mind Baudrillard and *America*; like a created entity such as Disneyland, the mall forms a boundary between that which is real and that which is an illusion. Just as boundaries between ‘ideal’ communities create a sense of distance and security, the shopping mall likewise creates a filter between an idealized, illusory vision of perfection and the realities which lie beyond the sanitized walls of the glass shopping center. Two examples of these boundaries can be seen in the borders between Celebration, Florida¹⁴⁸ and Osceola County, with its strongly based immigrant groups¹⁴⁹, and the sanitary fantasy world of the Disneyland parking lot with that of the urban chaos of Anaheim, California.

Finally, Anna picks up on the fact that all the people within the shopping complex are in some way, socially acceptable. This again refers to her idea that in the mall, those who are on the

¹⁴⁸ Celebration is an experimental living community in Osceola County, Florida which was originally developed by Disney and which is based upon Disneyesque ideals of cleanliness, morality, and neighborhood activity. Celebration is predominantly (93.57%) white. Source: "American FactFinder". United States Census Bureau, 2000.

¹⁴⁹ The largest self-reported ancestry group was Puerto Rico in the 2000 U.S. Census. Source: "File:Census-2000-Data-Top-US-Ancestries-by-County.jpg."

economic margin are not welcome and will not come. This is the opposite of Cristiano Zena's world, where Anna's mall experience is contrary to that of "Mallrats," or of the Generation X underclass who visit the mall to escape the reality of poverty. In this sense, therefore, one notices that even in the artificial mall environment, different levels of class can still be identified; while Cristiano's mall experience allows him partial participation, Anna's comments demonstrate that to her, people of Cristiano's world 'do not exist'. In refusing to associate with the "streaky orange hair" bagwomen, she reconfirms her place on a specific social level; in other words, the mall allows her to solidify her perception of herself with the "us" of the middle-class bourgeois consumer, rather than the "them" of the poor, financially strapped women which she meets outside the confines of the shopping center. Furthermore, if one were to consider Anna's postmodern fragmented 'self'¹⁵⁰, one could see that she is here sequentially building up her narcissistic ego in order to provide some unity to her chaotic life; however, like the mirrors into which she looks, this unity of self will remain an illusion.

Later, Anna expresses the personal effect which the mall has on her psyche. In support, she states that:

She had no idea where she was, in relation to anything that lay outside the walls; the points on the compass were meaningless in here; she did not even know which floor she was on, or how many there were- there was a confusing arrangement of storeys and mezzanines, which meant that one always felt lost, but pleasantly, as in a dream of wonderland, a paradise of pleasures. (40)

¹⁵⁰ See "Conclusion: Fragmented Language, Fragmented 'Self.'"

In the above, Anna expresses the nature of the mall to be utterly disorienting, yet it is never in an unpleasant or fearful way. She also suggests the utopian promise of the consumer experience within the mall, as she points to the dreamy “wonderland” and to the “paradise of pleasures,” associated with window shopping, again reinforcing her comparison to Alice in her world of amazement and surprise. While many chaotic issues surround Anna in her daily life, she is given permission to forget them when searching for the item which she seeks. It is here that the illusory power of the shopping mall specifically entices her and allows her to escape into an artificial world where all is right and in which quotidian conflict ceases, at least in appearance, to exist.

While the shopping mall is a specific nonplace which, within its confines, encompasses often universally acceptable and acknowledged corporations, it is a realm in which globally identifiable brand-name companies come together in order to create a very particular, homogenous center of globalized commerce. If it were only for the representation of shopping malls within contemporary literature, or the exaggerated tastes of rupophobes like Daniele Sandroni who rely on specific products and brands, then the case for the centrality of consumerism, label worship, and the prestige of urban culture would exist only in small, specific spheres of influence. As such, consumerism would therefore lack status as a truly indicative aspect of contemporary society. However, the centrality of generic spaces, labels, and consumer preference is not only relegated to the social sphere of the mall; instead, it permeates many sectors of contemporary Irish and Italian literature in the types of brands and forms of modernization which are emphasized, how these elements are used, and in what particular circumstances they become relevant to Postmodernity.

Generic consumer spaces are not merely relegated to that of the shopping center. Pico Iyer, in *The Global Soul*, mentions other examples of globalized nonspace such as the airport and the Olympic Games. However, what happens when the local runs headfirst into the global nonspace? This is precisely what occurs in Stefano Benni's 2009 novel, *Pane e tempesta*, in which formerly localized places generate into generic consumer spaces, consequently developing into examples of postmodern nonplaces. In the novel, the beloved Bar Sport, known for its seedy nature which was the meeting point for "filosofi, ubriaconi, tecnici sportivi, sparaballe, fancazzisti, narratrici, e comari di tutta la valle" (Benni 23), becomes the point of contention when the owners become increasingly concerned with renovation and consumer cachet.

Benni's choice of subject matter is not new. The author first presents the Italian bar as a locale for strong social commentary in *Bar Sport* (Mondadori, 1976). In this collection of stories, Benni first presents the various cast of characters associated with the bar of the title; these characters include "Il professore," "Il playboy da bar," "Il nonno da bar," and "Il tecnico," among others. In presenting these figures, Benni ironically provides a point of reference for readers who share a common understanding of the typical Italian 'dive bar' in all of its contradictions. These contradictions range from the motley group which composes this type of locale, to the generic accoutrements present within bars of this nature, such as pinball machines, pay phones, and billiards. The name Bar Sport itself evokes the generic, as it is easy to find many locales of the same name and style within both the smallest and largest cities of Italy. In this way, Benni already uses the generic Bar Sport in order to engage readers and to provide an ironic social commentary on the ways that locales, such as bars, are perfect examples of the homogenization of particular Italian social aspects.

Later works of Benni revisit the theme of the bar through two more short story collections, *Il bar sotto il mare* (Feltrinelli, 1987) and especially *Bar Sport duemila* (Feltrinelli, 1997). Written before the turn of the millennium, *Bar Sport duemila* examines the ways that typical Italian bars have ‘evolved’; while they still retain traces of the low key style of the past, they are now transformed by the innovations which technology and contemporary social culture demand. These refurbishments include designer style, fancy cocktails, ringing cell phones, and miniscule pastries. While an earlier *Bar Sport* focused on professors and working class engineers, *Bar Sport Duemila* now focuses on overly tanned women, VIP’s, and testosterone driven motorcyclists. Also, the bar itself is transformed from a dingy space to one with streamlined bar counters, overly complicated aperitivi, and coffee which is no longer called coffee: “Si chiama ‘crème,’ ‘crème estivo,’ ‘parigino,’ ‘americano,’ ‘imbiondito,’ ‘francese.’ Viene servito con un minuscolo calice di acqua al seltz e dodici qualità di dolcificanti, compresi lo zucchero di bamboo per panda, la saccarina per maratoneti e il miele di ape monaca” (23). With all of these choices, upgrades, and sophisticated changes in both product and clientele, Benni ironically points out the ways that the people really do remain the same; that is, in the ways that they are altogether hopelessly flawed.

Benni revisits the original type of *Bar Sport* from his first collection of stories a final time in *Pane e tempesta*. As a place where locals of every social and economic level congregate to drink and discuss daily aspects of life, the money-making opportunities provided by the bar overrule the clientele in order to create more economic revenue. As such, the bar is cleaned up in order to substitute one type of clientele for another (Benni 27) and to create a more generally appealing, consumer-friendly atmosphere. The changes in rules pertaining to the bar and which indicate the increased necessity of bourgeois status are delineated in the following:

Rincarare su tutti i prezzi.

Sostituzione della vecchia macchina da caffè Faema Venere 3030, detta la locomotiva del West, fischiante e ululante, con una nuova macchina che faceva il caffè in tre secondi e sembrava un sottomarino nucleare.

Proibito il vino sfuso, solo in bottiglia.

Divieto di accesso ai cani.

Divieto del gioco alle carte.

Sostituzione dei vecchi bicchieri panciuti con magri calici.

Apparizione di file di gomme americane.

Apparizione del Dietor.

Abolizione del flipper.

Affissione dei seguenti cartelli:

La persona civile non sputa

La persona civile non bestemmia

Siete pregati di lasciare il bagno come se fosse quello di casa vostra

(27-8)

The list above, in all of its specificity, points to the general trends pertaining to status and the worship of products and standards considered ‘valuable’ in Postmodernity. Two typical phrases from American business jargon, “price subject to change” and “You are asked to please leave the bathroom as though it were in your own home” work their way into the new vision for an updated, consumer friendly atmosphere. The old relic of a coffee machine to be replaced with

one that prizes speed and newness demonstrates, in a Lyotardian sense, that outdated technology has no place in a postmodern, techno-centered world; this is, as he has stated, an example of technology as a game “pertaining not to the true, the just or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency: a technical “move” is “good” when it does better and / or expends less energy than another” (Lyotard 44). Like the coffee machine, the older glassware is changed from the local, peasant or home-style type to one which is streamlined, thereby serving the dual purposes of appearing new and trendy while at the same time increasing revenue for the bar by serving less alcohol for an equivalent or increased amount of money. Furthermore, the prohibited wine is “sfuso,” or a type of wine which is normally relatively inexpensive, sold in “damigiana” size bottles, and which is associated with the ‘osteria,’ or home-style Italian eating and drinking establishment. The presence of dogs, cards, and flipper (pinball) nostalgically points to locales which run contrary to the rules of Postmodernity as they are local / regional, informal, and associated with lower social strata; as such, they work against the ideals of bourgeois conformity and progress. As is the case in Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*, the naturalization of brand prestige is a socially constructed idea taken as a contemporary requirement of, in this case, bar culture.

Through these changes, Bar Sport has renewed itself as an economically viable entity through the changes which it has undergone; the bar has transformed itself from a local dive joint to one of ‘class’ that could be reproduced almost anywhere around the world; therefore, it has propelled itself from the local to the universal and embraced the changes which globalization espouses. What is most ironic in considering the renovation of the bar, however, is the maintenance of its name. Indeed, the name Bar Sport is universally recognized around Italy in suggesting a certain type of place; usually a very local, working class location for a quick drink, cappuccino, or chat with friends. However, the newly renovated, universally appealing Bar Sport

is the complete opposite; it emphasizes the ideals of the global, new, and technologically advanced for successful competition in the economic race for domination which Postmodernity esteems.

Thirdly, cities themselves, with their historical and cultural peculiarities, take on the characteristics of nonplaces and cater to the globalized, generalized, and sterilized view of contemporary life through an emphasis upon universal branding and consumer appeal. In Giuseppe Culicchia's 2009 novel *Brucia la città*, for example, the city of Torino is the focus of restoration and renewal, moving forward from the dizzying global heights of its place as the host city of the Winter Olympics of 2006. Like Roddy Doyle, Culicchia follows in the footsteps which Tondelli set forth in *Un weekend postmoderno*; while he retains and updates the jargon of a youth culture obsessed with discos and nightclubs, Culicchia's newest novel contemporizes these scenes in order to emphasize the way in which globalism and consumerism, specifically through brand prestige, are prioritized in this particular social sphere.

Within *Brucia la città*,¹⁵¹ Iaio and his DJ friends, Zombi and Boh, live a fast life full of fancy cars, beautiful women, and cocaine in Turin, a city which is rapidly turning away from the local and turning toward the global. Names in the novel themselves allude to brands and branding: The title *Brucia la città*, for example, references the song *Bruci la città* by Irene Grandi which was released in 2007.¹⁵² The song, which was one of the most successful of that summer, makes reference to the comfort of a loving relationship in the midst of life's chaos;

¹⁵¹ I have adapted the following from the Italian-language book jacket of *Brucia la città* (Mondadori, 2009).

¹⁵² The name "Brucia la città" acts as a double palimpsest, in which the title evokes two layers of meaning; on one hand, the song nostalgically references Grandi's version of 2007, which itself hearkens back to an even earlier song with a similar title; "Se bruciasse la città," sung by Massimo Ranieri in 1969. For more on the function of music and lyric within contemporary literature, see "Chapter Three: Music as the Soundtrack of Contemporary Life."

while skyscrapers fall, the city burns, and everything explodes, the consistency of profound love proverbially ‘conquers all.’

Furthermore, the names of the characters themselves provide a revealing glimpse into their carefree, clueless world, providing deeper social commentary on a very northern Italian, upper-middle to upper class social stratum. Iaio’s name, for example, could signify several deeper social considerations; on one hand, it reflects the absence of consonants and instead embodies an almost infantilized, child-like language. In this way, his name could connect to his character as a childish, carefree character who has little to no consideration for an adult reality of cost, work, and consideration for others. His name may further remind the reader of the word ‘Ciao,’ possibly alluding to his appearance at an inordinate number of parties. The names Zombi and Boh are similar in that they also are comprised of almost all vowels, again indicating their detachment from an adult reality. The character of Zombi, for instance, is indeed like a zombie in another world, and the character of Boh lives up to his name by being utterly clueless; “Boh,” in colloquial Italian, literally means “I don’t know.”

Through the absence of “real,” non-colloquial names, all three of the characters magnify their detachment from socio-economic reality. While the group ironically supports the campaign “La Droga Ci Fa Schifo” for monetary and reputational purposes, they still consistently rely upon drugs in order to justify their appearance as the new generation of wealthy, cosmopolitan Torinesi. At the same time, however, their fast-paced, carefree lifestyle has consequences; between hallucinations and unforgettable parties, surreal conversations and endless bottles of champagne, the group searches for some kind of equilibrium within their lives. Instead, because of the superficiality of their existence, they experience a profound sense of disorientation which will eventually lead to dire consequences.

In support of this new, more globally focused perspective on Torino, Chicco, a Milanese architect who is one of the leaders responsible for the project, states the following:

Come sappiamo, Torino non è più una company town. Grazie al know-how dei suoi nuovi manager la Fiat ha saputo risollevarsi da una terribile crisi, ma ora il suo futuro è in Cindia. Ecco perché Torino ha una nuova mission: diventare la città dell'intrattenimento. Un tempo era impensabile. Ma i Giochi invernali del 2006 hanno dimostrato che si può fare, *oh yeah* Culicchia 38-9

In the above, Chicco explains the way in which Torino has changed with the new millennium. Whereas previously the industrial town was mainly home to workers of the Fiat corporation and their families, as a result of Torino's placement on the world stage for the 2006 Winter Olympics, it should now be considered the "city of entertainment". In further support for his vision of Torino as a cosmopolitan, globally-minded city, Chicco also peppers his discourse with English words and phrases, hoping to make his vision even more convincing to his friends and investors. What Chicco ultimately emphasizes here, then, is the fact that global appeal can only come through an embodiment of a global language; by now, of course, that language is English. However, this is not colloquial English; instead, it is a particular language of business jargon which can be identified and appreciated by a global audience. Chicco's constant repetition of the expression "*oh yeah*" is further important for the ways in which it references both Italian and American consumer society. In an Italian sense, the expression hearkens back to the commercials which were run in 2009, which was also the year of *Brucia la città's* publication. The

commercial, which features soccer players such as Alessandro Costacurta, promotes suitcases for the brand Roncato¹⁵³; instead of stating “*oh yeah*” as Chicco does, they repeat the expression “oh yessss.” It is ironic that the advertisement focuses on the possibility of effortless travel to the United States through a light, modern design and a secure lock system. In these ways, Roncato emphasizes the cultural dominance of American capitalistic society. In an American sense, the expression “oh yes” suggests the ‘American Dream Machine’; that is, a world of endless possibilities, relaxed attitudes, and a ‘yes we can’ consumer mentality. It is important to remember that all of these cultural references are completely non-political and purely capitalistic; in this way, all exterior socio-political elements remain secondary to a global economic audience. In embracing this type of capitalistic discourse, Chicco therefore hopes to more effectively ‘sell’ his product through his knowledge of ‘big business’ and the linguistic codes which accompany it.

Chicco is not alone in his understanding of the Olympic Games as transferring potential growth and prestige from a local to an international level. Pico Iyer, in *The Global Soul*, speaks in great depth about the effects of the Olympic Games upon global order; he states, for example, that the Olympics have intrinsically come to represent mass market globalism (Iyer 190) and blatant kowtowing to the global order through urban transformation and mass market appeal. “Whenever I wish to get an update on the state of our One World order-” Iyer remarks, “how much it is coming together, how much it is falling apart- I try to take myself to an Olympic Games”.

¹⁵³ “Spot della nuova Roncato light.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-hEyMmDON8&feature=related>. See also “RV Roncato: Martina Colombari e Alessandro Costacurta testimonial d’eccezione in tv per l’innovativo trolley.” *Marketing Journal*, 2 April 2009. <http://www.marketingjournal.it/rv-roncato-martina-colombari-alessandro-costacurta-testimonial-deccezione-tv-linnovativo-trolley/>.

In creating his global vision of a thoroughly contemporary Torino, what Chicco specifically searches for, he later clarifies, is not a new slogan for the city, for the city had been previously known as the city ‘that never stands still’; “Torino Non Sta Mai Ferma” (39). Instead, he desires not a new slogan, but rather a new *brand*- one that would be universally “*hip, cool, young, un nome charming, successful, friendly, un nome brand-new, up-to-date, yé-yé: un nome hot, oh yeah*”(39).¹⁵⁴ While Chicco obviously again throws around popular English buzzwords in order to put forth his idea for a new Torino, what he actually suggests are the universal qualities which speak to the contemporary global order. On one hand, the name evokes the world famous slogan of Manhattan as “The City That Never Sleeps.” In this way, a tie is established between Torino and Manhattan, in all of its global fame, ‘melting pot’ mentality, and emphasis upon speed and cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, what Chicco ultimately comes up with is anything but a buzzword; instead, after careful consideration of the names Brittany (“in disgrazia”); Paris Hilton (“non lo si può usare per ragioni di copyright...”); Bicherinville (connected to the idea of Torino’s famous hot chocolate) or Juventus City (for the soccer team), the group finally dreams up the name Gisèle, in order to evoke the city’s international tradition, the model and current resident’s international appeal, and the “multiethnic” characteristics of the new Torino; after all, “La Bundchen... è brasiliana” (40-42). All of these characteristics point to the universal consumer appeal of a Torino which tries to portray itself as internationally recognizable; Paris Hilton, Brittany Spears, and Gisèle Bundchen are equally as famous in China as in California, while food and drink speak all languages, and soccer is the most globally recognizable sport. Moreover, the name evokes a sense of the chic by playing into Torino’s geographical vicinity to France. The name Gisèle is altogether old world, classy, and unquestionably French; in this manner, it evokes the glorious history of Torino as the elegant ‘Grand Dame’ of Italy’s cities.

¹⁵⁴ Italics between quotation marks are the author’s choice, not mine.

While Culicchia as author pokes fun at the future appeal of a Torino based upon buzzwords, cultural associations, and world famous models and superstars, what he instead demonstrates is the way in which global popular culture permeates the local and traditional. Instead of being popular for its own particular characteristics, Torino only has a place on the global map if it becomes a nonplace composed solely of universally recognizable brands and names. Torino post- 2006 Olympics is therefore an example of Iyer's vision of "how the global market hovers above the global village and sometimes threatens to swallow it up altogether" (Iyer 217), meaning that above all, it is the mass global market which drives economic and social power, rather than the individuals themselves, no matter how multiethnic or international they may strive to be.

A great deal of textual self-selection is reflected in the diction, theme, and imagery of the above passage. There is, above all, a subtle tone of snarky cattiness and self- importance which goes along with a discussion of Torino, which historically represents both the historical hegemony of the House of Savoy and which has long been considered refined and elegant, due to its mix of classical styles and emphasis on cultural pursuits. Moreover, as Italy's first capital, Torino has historically mixed aristocratic, bourgeois, and working class elements. While Torino was the 'Grand Dame' of Italian cities which catered to the aristocracy in the past, it simultaneously supported progressive thought by advancing a literary-based legacy; this is specifically noted through the dissemination of postwar intellectual thought, such as that of the Einaudi group. In the recent past, however, the city is most noted for its reputation as the city which was left behind as Milan and Rome flourished. In this way, contemporary Torino is composed of a double soul, for the city reflects working-class and bourgeois social levels which are perpetually in flux.

The sarcasm which the characters demonstrate self-selects the novel's own audience; Chicco and friends forcefully strive to deny Torino's classical past as having any relevance to contemporary society by showing how global brands and celebrities are now what the Torinesi will soon be seeking within their city. The novel also self-selects the reader demographically; on the whole, it is likely safe to say that older, regional Italians, especially from the periphery of Torino and beyond, will have little in common with the English-based vocabulary and culture relevant to Chicco and his friends. Moreover, the biggest moment of sarcasm comes when Chicco ultimately chooses resident supermodel Gisèle Bündchen as the brand title; her name is vaguely French, hearkening back to Torino's proximity to the French and Swiss borders; instead of that rich cultural heritage being reflected, however, the group decides to embody the name of a world-renowned supermodel; it is, in some respect, the ultimate exchange of classical culture and history for that of global consumerism, sex appeal, appearance, and superficiality.

Another peculiar aspect of the contemporary nonplace is that it has, in Postmodernity, become a global space valued more highly than that of the local or particular. There is a paradox here, however; even though Halter shows that people value qualities associated with the traditional, ethnic, or culturally distinct¹⁵⁵, what instead surfaces is that they truly value what is popular or beneficial to the consumer on a global scale. This is particularly true of Ireland, which is a country conflicted by the appeal of its (often constructed¹⁵⁶) traditional heritage and the realities

¹⁵⁵ See ref. 23: Halter K179-86.

¹⁵⁶ Much has been made of the "traditional values" associated with an Irish heritage that have been fabricated or rendered obsolete by both time and distance. For more, see William Flanagan's *Ireland Now: Tales of Change from the Global Island*. Indiana; University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

associated with a contemporary global quotidian. Anna, in Ní Dhuibhne's, *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, for instance, reveals this discrepancy. As she is traveling with her husband Alex after a wedding, she decides to tell him the truth about her unhappiness and her love for another man, the "handsome and enigmatic" Vincy Erikson,¹⁵⁷ when she states the following:

They were somewhere in County Laois, passing through a little town that seemed untouched by modern times. How could anyone bear to live in such a place, Anna thought, looking at the little shops, the tiny terraced houses with dirty windows, the café called the Hideaway, like something left over from 1960. Did anyone really live there? What did they do all day? And night?

Ní Dhuibhne 298

As a sophisticated, cosmopolitan Dubliner, Anna cannot comprehend how anyone could, in modern times, remain in such a remote place lacking evident interest in modernization and progress. Even though County Laois is known for its natural beauty and agricultural emphasis, it is still close to urban centers such as Dublin and Kildare. For this reason, Anna is shocked that people would voluntarily come to live or remain there. In particular, she questions what residents would actually "do," in the sense that she compares this small town of Laois with more vibrant cities, like Dublin, which have activities and distractions available both day and night.

Anna's words, which demonstrate the paradox between the idealized local sphere and the more utilitarian sphere of the global and cosmopolitan calls into questions what Marilyn Halter would define as "(t)he search for recognizable or familiar points of reference in a cold,

¹⁵⁷ Back book jacket, *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*. Belfast; Blackstaff, 2007.

impersonal, and fragmented world” (Halter K179-86). What Anna is not able to see, at this point, is that people crave the ethnic local and traditional as represented in the isolated town, in order to counter the chaos and uncertainty of the contemporary quotidian. What is ironic, then, is that Anna does renounce her life in urban Dublin for this local, rural sphere at the end of the novel; what remains questionable is if she will be able to come to some kind of balance between her former status as a cosmopolitan woman and her new place within the realm of the very local. In any case, Anna is a good example of a “glocal” being, or one who embraces both the local and the global. According to George Ritzer, glocalization is a key element in the globalization of culture, for it, along with grobalization,¹⁵⁸ helps us to better understand the “transplanetary processes” (Ritzer 15) of the world. In theory, the glocal helps individuals and groups to be considered as important and as creative agents; at the same time, the pluralism of the world in a glocal society allows for sensitivity to differences within and between areas of the world.¹⁵⁹

On a more personal scale, however, Anna exemplifies one who now finds solace in a local society which she previously scorned. In order to understand the ways in which Anna desires to ultimately immerse herself within an Irish local sphere, one should consider Marilyn Halter’s explanation of how strong sentiment with respect to the local functions in the face of postmodern global consumer culture:¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Globalization “...(T)he imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas.” Ritzer, George. *The Globalization of Nothing 2*. London: Pine Forge Press, 2007.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid 21.

¹⁶⁰ While the following quotation in *Shopping for Identity* refers to ethnic revivals in her discourse, I believe that it is equally as applicable to the current paradoxes between the local and the global, such as in the difference between Irish rural countryside and urban metropolis.

(M)any... people see direct links between the modern life of material abundance and a perception of spiritual impoverishment. In this way, ethnic identities are continually being reinvented to fulfill our longing to feel anchored to a secure, harmonious, and localized past, although we are living amid the vast and chaotic landscapes of consumption that characterize the present.

Halter K179-86

What Halter truly acknowledges, then, is the way in which human nature identifies with the idealized local as a means by which to feel better about ourselves and our spiritual lack in our current daily lives. Nature has traditionally been a form of refuge (one need only to consider the Romantics in order to prove it), and as such, it is still a way in which people are able to escape the pressures which the urban city places upon humanity. Early on, Anna is unable to appreciate the appeal of the local landscape, due to her attachment to her frenetic cosmopolitanism. However, even she, like the residents whom she questions in Laois, will ultimately succumb to the power of nature. This is ultimately proven in the final moments of *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, when Anna receives spiritual fulfillment from an unnamed wood and is once again able to find her ability to write which had lain dormant when she was an active participant in urban, frenetic Dublin.

The nonplace is only one locus in which branding and consumer prestige influence society. In specific spaces, such as the home, label and brand appreciation is just as important for social, economic, and cultural cachet. Culicchia's novel is again useful in demonstrating the ways in which these brands affect and shape people on an individual basis. Iaio, the main character of

Brucia la città, lives only for the brands which he consumes. He always describes himself, for example, as wearing a pair of Levi's Big E *limited edition* and as carrying his Nokia (Culicchia 198). His friends present themselves almost in the exact manner; for this reason, Iaio tries to distinguish himself from others by the ringtone of his particular Nokia. When out with friends, for example, he remarks that "Si sente un cellulare. Il trillo è in stile vecchio telefono, quindi deve essere il mio: ho appena deciso di usare questa suoneria per distinguermi dalla massa" (Culicchia 19). This statement, which focuses upon the centrality of the particular ringtone of the cell phone, alludes to the contemporary condition in a variety of ways. In considering the past within the present, one can notice that the old style telephone ringtone recalls nostalgic symbols and sounds, demonstrating how even in the contemporary quotidian, there is still appreciation for that which is antique and reminiscent of times gone by; as the saying goes, 'everything old is new again.' Also, Iaio's situation is by now universally relatable, for as anyone who has a cell phone knows, it is often difficult to distinguish one person's receipt of a call from another; all iPhones come with the same ringtones, all Nokias come with the same ringtones, etc. In order to sort out the chaos, then, one must rely upon choosing a less common ringtone; in this case, it is ironically the nostalgic sound of an old style telephone which stands out from the masses. Iaio's emphasis upon distinction, which exists on a minute level through his ringtone choice, is ultimately magnified in all the aspects of his life which matter to him, especially in his careful selection of his clothing and his SUV.

The connection between brands and status is not new, as for centuries individuals have aimed to distinguish themselves from others based upon coveted items and products. However, what does become new in contemporary novels such as Culicchia's is the frequency and speed with which these products are named, often in the form of a postmodern list. An example of this

emphasis upon listing is found in the following selection, taken from a list which Iaio specifies and which runs for approximately two pages:

Oggi sono in giro per spese e anche se in tutto ho già trentasette, no, trentotto paia di jeans, tra Levi's, Levi's Engineered, Levi's Big E della linea *limited edition* Vintage Clothing, Levi's Red, Levi's White Label, Evisu, G-Star, G-Star Raw, Wrangler, Wrangler Bluebell, Diesel, Diesel Lab, Helmut Lang, Replay, sto ancora cercando il jeans perfetto, il jeans con il taglio e il lavaggio giusto per me, il jeans che a volte mi chiedo se troverò mai, un pensiero che mi fa veramente sclerare. (311)

In the above quotation, the fascination with labels, as well as the pure need for individuality through branding, is exemplified. This, however, is where the irony of Postmodernity lies; even though the search for individuality through status and designer labels appears to provide endless possibilities, what instead results is a mere illusion; anyone, with the right amount of money, can buy that which is considered to be “individual” to another person. As a result, what a contemporary listing of brand names and status symbols indicates to us is that which we already know from Postmodernity; when consumerism is king, individuality really is ‘dead.’

From the list above, one further realizes that fetishism, which in part is defined as an irrational obsession with, or attachment to, something and which often has a sexual connotation, remains of key importance in the contemporary quotidian of worlds with similar values to those of Iaio and his friends. On one hand, the language is extremely obsessive; not only do we have the repetition of the word “jeans,” but we also notice the pedantic listing of the specific brands

which comes across as almost irrational in its hyper-specificity and orderliness. Furthermore, the jeans create a false sense of individualization; even though Iaio desires to individualize himself by having as many pairs of special, unique jeans as he can, he still fetishizes them by choosing all of them; therefore, in choosing all of the jeans, Iaio renounces the possibility of ever achieving true individuality. This fetishization of the jeans which means to individualize him but instead renders him another commodity of the masses is not new; Marx, in an 1842 paper on fetishism,¹⁶¹ already determined the connection between desire and commodity fetishism. It is stated that, “The material object that the fetishist worships does not possess magical powers. It cannot gratify his desires. It cannot protect him from danger. In fact, by endowing the material object with magical, life-giving properties, the fetishist deprives himself of the real powers of his own living desires” (Kaplan 133). In this sense, material objects take the place of living, ‘real’ objects. However, by attributing so much power to the commodity such as jeans, fetishists like Iaio ultimately alienate themselves from both their ‘selves’, as well as the rest of society.¹⁶² What ultimately, and almost simplistically, comes to be understood from analyses like those of Culicchia is that no matter how consumer-centric society becomes, money still can’t buy happiness. The Levi jeans prove this, for Iaio’s insatiable desire for the most prestigious pair of jeans leads to an interminable quest for that which cannot be found; in other words, the jeans serve as contemporary symbols which indicate the natural need of human subjects to search ad infinitum for greater happiness and personal satisfaction.

Iaio’s unsatisfied desire percolated early in his childhood. Even as a youngster, objects replaced affection from his parents. In typical postmodern narcissistic style and similar to

¹⁶¹ Reference from Kaplan, Louise J. *Cultures of Fetishism*. New York; Palgrave, 133.

¹⁶² Ibid 133.

Carlotti's "bamboccione" of Daniele Sandroni, Iaiò blames his parents for his lack of happiness in the following:

Riempirci gli armadi era il loro modo per sentirsi a posto con se stessi. Avevamo centinaia di scarpe Nike e felpe Best Company e polo Lacoste e jeans Levi's e piumini Moncler e cinture El Charro e calze Burlington e zainetti Invicta e giacconi Henry Lloyd e trapuntini Barbour e giubbotti Avirex e Chevignon e Spiewak e Schott, e naturalmente né io né Ludwig eravamo mai contenti.

(144)

In the above, it is clear that Iaiò blames his wealthy parents for his unhappiness and current need to content himself through the acquisition of luxury goods. He explains that they would take him and his brother, Ludwig¹⁶³, to various shops separately in order to buy out whole stores' worth of globally recognizable status clothing. As is the current case with his Levi's, Iaiò was raised on a diet of prestige-worthy clothing representing an international array of luxury items; for Iaiò status was, and continues to be, based upon his and his family's ability to acquire international goods which the majority of people would not be able to obtain. Again, it is not new for children to blame their unhappiness on parents who are both absent and who believe that a child can be satisfied only through material objects; what is new from an understanding of this type of contemporary literature, however, is the status which is given to the specific names of the labels

¹⁶³ The name of Ludwig is most likely a deliberate choice. This name alludes to the 1972 movie *Ludwig* by Luchino Visconti. The film discusses the life of "mad" King Ludwig II of Bavaria who, like the Ludwig in *Brucia la città*, also commits suicide.

and the frequency with which these same labels are mentioned in conveying a character's internal unhappiness.

Ní Dhuibhne suggests a similar emphasis when she describes the difficulties which Anna faces in creating a satisfactory Christmas for her children. She is not as fortunate as Culicchia's Iaio, as she is one of the masses who can afford to buy what she needs but does not have the connections to do so. All of the children are spoiled by the wealth to which they have become accustomed; on one hand, for example, her son Rory is momentarily content because "...his presents had cost more than ten thousand euro, not that he knew or cared whether they had cost a million or ten euro, as long as his every wish was satisfied"; on the other hand, her daughter Emily is absolutely distraught, screaming "I wanted an Xbox 360" when she instead receives an older version of the video game console (Ní Dhuibhne 214-5). What Anna comes to realize, however, is that no matter how much she is able to provide her children with, she will never be able to keep up with the demand which society pressures herself and her children to value. Realizing that she lives in a "perfect" household without any financial hardship, Anna resigns herself to a permanent state of discontent when she expresses the following regarding her family's wealth and status:

For the Kelly Sweeneys, as for a lot of people, it wasn't easy to make Christmas special because every day was Christmas. That was probably why so many people went away these days. There was nothing they could do to make their home in Ireland better than it already was... In Anna's childhood, fires in the bedroom had

generated Christmas warmth and cheer. Now, you had to go to Thailand to
achieve the same effect. (216)

In this passage, Anna expresses the sense of frustration at not being able to satisfactorily create the perfect Christmas atmosphere for her children, even though she is able to economically provide them with whatever they please. Even though she does not mention specific brands here, she does point to the traditional escape of people who enjoy a certain level of socio-economic comfort; that is, to travel to exotic places the majority of people would not be able to afford and where idealistic ‘new experiences’ can be found. For Americans, travel of this type emphasizes the desire to portray oneself as both world-wise and economically superior and is traditionally focused in the British Isles or in Western Europe. For Europeans, the intellectual and economic motivation is the same, although the region of vacation travel moves from Western Europe to Asia. What contemporary characters such as Anna demonstrate to be different now, however, is that the question of status through travel is only one small facet; what really lies at the heart of travel is that since wealth and the possession of an inordinate amount of goods can be had almost anytime, anywhere, and in any part of the world, given a certain level of wealth, what travel grants is one last hope for an idealized search for the happiness which money can no longer provide.

Furthermore, her emphasis upon a place such as Thailand as an exotic space, completely ‘Other’ to that of her western European mindset, is even more potentially appealing to her, for it implies that she will be able to temporarily escape the mundane facets of her upper-middle class

life¹⁶⁴. The paradox, however, is that the places where these escapist trips occur; normally Bali or Java, for instance, cater to a high volume of international tourists and maintain a fairly elevated standard of living. In this sense, Anna's desire to seek a completely different experience is, in several ways, a mere illusion of a "special" experience.

Finally, since the travel is occurring at Christmastime, Anna, in a sense, uses the trip as the perfect Christmas present which, in turn, becomes the perfect contemporary consumer paradox. From one perspective, she buys her way out of a traditional holiday period, along with all of the difficulties that go along with it. From another perspective, however, she is a victim of that which she hopes to opt out of; in buying her way out of the stresses of a traditional urban holiday atmosphere, she still must be a consumer with the means to purchase a trip of a fairly costly fiscal nature.

A fourth way in which Irish and Italian fiction demonstrate how status symbols and global labeling are intrinsic to contemporary society can be identified through the ways in which these same elements are able to act as fragments which complement larger narratives. If one turns back to Culicchia's *Brucia la città*, for example, one can see how the significance of Iaio's expensive and prestigious Hummer H3 reflects deeper events and emotions associated with narratives pertaining specifically to him. In order to recognize how the relationship between material object and narrative occurs, one need only look at Iaio's detailed analysis of his Hummer to more deeply understand Iaio's persona. Iaio frequently offers lengthy discourses pertaining to the centrality of his SUV. For a clear example of how the Hummer drives narration forward, one

¹⁶⁴ For a humorous yet relevant example of the excess associated with the mania for travel to Thailand after the turn of the millennium, see "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," directed by Beeban Kidron and starring Renée Zellweger, Colin Firth, and Hugh Grant (2004).

need only to consider the scene in which Serenella Deturpi, a handbag designer and daughter of a wealthy architectural magnate, aims to engage Iaio in a conversation. Both have sought out one of Torino's most trendy and chic 'aperitivi,' also known as cocktail hours, and which are usually full of young 'fighetti,' or cool, usually wealthy twenty-somethings. Serenella initiates the conversation in the following manner:

(Serenella) Divertente?

(Iaio) Bé, sì... Non come il mio Hummer H3, ma comunque divertente

(Serenella) Che cos'è uno Hummer H3?

(Iaio) Uno Hummer H3 è un SUV... Cioè, è *il* SUV. Il suo cuore pulsante è costituito dal motore Vortec 3700, con trasmissione manuale a cinque velocità di serie o automatica a quattro velocità come optional.

(Serenella) Interessante.

Culicchia 70

In the above passage, one notices how Iaio's discourse centers upon a complex knowledge of his SUV and provides details into the characteristics of his life which are important to him. Because of the extreme details which he chooses to include, the reader can see that Iaio is compelled to convey this type of information even when meeting a potential companion like Serenella for the first time. He does not think, for example, to consider her for a moment, knowing that she has no entry to this masculine, testosterone-driven language; in fact, she chastises him, after his continual pontification, for not having offered her even a simple flute of champagne (71). In

analyzing the development of his conversation, the following is noticed; it is a monologue during which it is difficult to gauge Serenella's interest level from her one-worded response of "Interesting." Also, one sees the narcissistic self-centeredness of Iaio, who fails to acknowledge the presence of the other person and prizes the expensive object over human companionship. In a sense, the masculine tone of the conversation which prioritizes the phallic power of the Hummer and completely ignores any feminine qualities, either machine or human being, isolates Iaio from his interlocutor. At the same time, it is possible that Iaio desires to be that "interesting" person, as Serenella's monosyllabic response propels him, in a sense, to keep up his lengthy, one-sided discourse. Finally, one comes to understand the great extent to which Iaio values quality and prestige through his elaborate emphasis upon the type and quality of the Hummer's special engine. As a result, the discussion, which revolves around the prestigious object of the Hummer, provides greater insight into the true characteristics of Iaio as the novel's main protagonist.

Iaio's self-centered discourse does not end there, however. Instead, he continues to gush first about the motor and then about all of the expensive brand name accessory items of the Hummer. Immediately after Serenella makes her remark in order to show her interest, Iaio elaborates the following regarding the motor:

(Iaio) Progettato in modo specifico per autocarri leggeri, Vortec 3700 è un motore ad alta tecnologia, che consente al veicolo un perfetto equilibrio fra prestazioni e consumi. La sua durata elevata lo rende la scelta migliore per uno Hummer H3.

(Serenella) Davvero?

(70)

Again, Iaio conducts his “conversation” with Serenella by elaborating upon the exceptional performance and consumption qualities of the SUV’s prestigious brand-name engine. As a consumer, his precise vocabulary, as well as the return of his fetishism and his ability to name all of the detailed aspects of the Hummer, show the way in which the product is internalized and almost becomes a part of Iaio’s obsessive ‘Self.’ He has successfully memorized the SUV’s slogan and proudly spouts it out as an indicator of his sophisticated, technically precise knowledge. Of course, the diction is also macho and sexualized through Iaio’s word choice, such as in his use of “prestazioni,” “consumi,” and “durata elevata” in direct address to Serenella. Again, it is hard to gauge her reaction, as her ambiguous “davvero?” can point either to her interest or to her boredom. In any case, both the language of the Hummer and the discourse with Serenella points to a concern with performance, again tying the commodity to the sexual. Throughout the novel, it is clear that Iaio’s persona cannot be separated from the objects which define him, and the Hummer here is no exception; these fragments of references to his SUV demonstrate how Iaio equates objects with human emotion and materialism with sexual drive.

A final example in which narrative fragments pertaining to Iaio’s Hummer provide deeper insight into the larger framework of the novel occurs after some of the more serious events of the novel have taken place. Directly after a paragraph referring to a memory of his deceased brother, Ludwig, who was obsessed with Nirvana and who killed himself with a gunshot wound the same day on which Kurt Cobain killed himself in the same way, a selection of the characteristics of the Hummer is delineated:

Tutti gli Hummer H3 dispongono di serie di doppio airbag anteriore dotato di sistema Passenger Sensing per il rilevamento della presenza di passeggeri...

Un'altra importante caratteristica di sicurezza dello Hummer H3 è rappresentata dagli airbag laterali a tendina per la protezione del corpo, che si estendono dal tetto alle cinture. Nel caso di impatto laterale, moderato o di notevole intensità, gli airbag laterali a tendina si gonfiano per proteggere ulteriormente il capo dei passeggeri accanto ai finestrini, sia sul sedile anteriore sia su quello posteriore.

(251)

Upon first glance, Iaio's explanation regarding the safety features of the Hummer reads identically to the promotional materials which reflect an SUV of this caliber. The language, for example, is extremely detailed; the more valuable features of the SUV such as the side airbags are reiterated, and the specific brand name of the security system, called Passenger Sensing, is cited. These features of the language, however, serve more than to again point out Iaio's material obsession with his Hummer. Instead, the fragments point to deeper narrative levels and pieces which are slowly being revealed.

The mention, for example, of his deceased brother Ludwig is key, as it clearly points to an unstable moment in Iaio's past which continues to haunt him. Perhaps Iaio's obsession with safety dulls him into believing that he or his friends are protected from trauma, accidents, and death, even if they are also drug users and could potentially die as a result of their drug use. Moreover, the narrative fragment specifically speaks to a sense of self-contained security, due to the airbag's coverage of each passenger from top to waist and side to side. However, other pieces

of narration have already led the reader to question Iaió's complete sense of control and security; in fact, his descent into mental deterioration and physical addiction through drugs is already palpable. What an emphasis upon the positive consumer qualities of the Hummer depicts, then, is the way in which Iaió vainly attempts to keep his life from spinning out of control; in this sense, the specific, detailed references to the SUV help Iaió to maintain some sense of personal control or order, all the while providing narrative connections which are useful in enabling the reader to better grasp the many facets of the novel at large.

Brucia la città is not the only example of a contemporary novel which includes a postmodern emphasis upon brand names, consumer prestige, and / or globally identifiable goods in order to contribute information to the larger narratives within the text. In Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* (Bloomsbury, 2006), for example, brand names are again fundamental in assisting the reader to distinguish between pieces of narration, all in an attempt to sort through the schizophrenic chaos of references which consistently point to different times, places, and people.

Often, McCabe's novels and characters question what happens when a traditional culture, in the past based upon deprivation and neglect, is confronted with rapid economic prosperity¹⁶⁵, and *Winterwood* is no exception to this question. In this case, McCabe's muse is Celtic Tiger Ireland, and the protagonist questioning this clash of cultures is Redmond Hatch, a mountain man from the Midlands of Ireland. As is par for the course in McCabe's novels, it is difficult to discover the realities behind the true personae of the main characters; if we are to reconsider Yeats's dancer paradox within the concept of McCabe's work, we would then be forced to separate the dancer from the dance, or the fragments of text from that of the narrative itself. As such, the reader is constantly forced to ponder the question, "Who really IS Redmond Hatch?" Is

¹⁶⁵ Welsh, Irvine. "The Man from the Mountains". *The Guardian*, Saturday 4 November, 2006.

he somehow related to “Auld Pappie Strange,” the old storyteller / keeper of Irish rural tradition who holds the keys to all of the secrets which the mountains contain? Or is he the middle class, cosmopolitan Celtic Tiger family man who bounces back and forth from Dublin to London in search of economic prosperity? In all, he is both an unreliable narrator¹⁶⁶ and a “shape shifter” which, in Celtic mythology, represents one who changes one’s form for survival, rebirth, punishment, or protection (White 2000). For Redmond Hatch, all of these reasons emerge, always within the context of a sinister and foreboding narrative style.

The novel, which begins innocently enough, quickly turns into a psychological tour-de-force. Redmond Hatch, a forty-year-old- Dublin journalist of unremarkable repute, decides to return to his childhood home in the mountains of Slievenageeha. He is befriended by Auld Pappie Strange who, as an Irish storyteller, must naturally be taken with a proverbial ‘grain of salt.’ James Flint’s literary analysis of *Winterwood* provides assistance in confronting the remaining narrative occurrences/discrepancies:

... Redmond returns to his life in the city, where he meets Catherine, a woman 18 years his junior. They fall quickly in love and are planning to marry when the news comes through that Strange has been arrested for raping and murdering a boy, and has committed suicide while in custody. At this point the weird thing happens: Strange's shade starts visiting Redmond at night... Strange's ghost is a story-telling spirit, just like its living counterpart. However, it speaks not of vicious encounters with ex-wives and girlfriends, but of sexually abusing

¹⁶⁶ For a more complex discussion of Redmond Hatch’s double persona, please see “Conclusion: Fragmented Language, Fragmented ‘Self.’”

Redmond when he was a boy... Now, McCabe starts to show his peculiar skill as a novelist. He hopscotches forward through the rest of Redmond's life, which in its pattern of upsets and disasters increasingly begins to resemble that of Ned Strange.

However, even if some narrative events seem to be clarified, in reality many paradoxes and questions remain:

... As the story unfolds, the narrator – Redmond himself – starts undermining himself. Is he really the happy-go-lucky bloke he tells us he is, a victim of circumstance? Or is his bad luck in fact due to a rootless, psychotic side that he reflexively hides? Is he violent, and if so, just how violent is he? Are the haunting and the dreams ways of justifying his unacceptable behaviour? Or is he a once-abused child now handing out abuse in his turn?

Flint 11/12/06

Within *Winterwood*, the complexities associated with Redmond Hatch's persona are supported by the text's use of brands of all types; from media and television, to toys, to books and finally to songs.¹⁶⁷ By including these narrative fragments referring to actual products and cultural

¹⁶⁷ For a comprehensive look at the place of music within contemporary literature, see "Chapter Three: Music as the Soundtrack of Contemporary Life." While I choose to focus on narratives other than

references, McCabe provides a sense of historical accuracy within a narrative fraught with spacial and temporal questions.

One of the textual fragments which enables the reader to make some sense of Hatch's convoluted, questionable narration is through the specific brand names which he repeatedly mentions. One of these brands, specifically My Little Ponies, helps the reader to better comprehend the various time periods which are evoked as the narration is propelled forward. On one hand, the My Little Ponies mentioned within the text coincide with the time periods being mentioned. Each section of the novel¹⁶⁸ is assigned a specific date or a general time period, beginning with "Eighties," and finishing with "2006", "Present" and "Eternity," respectively. Because the sense of time within the novel is so disordered and schizophrenic, these section titles 'propose' a sequential plot based upon a linear progression of time. Gerard Genette's *Paratexts* is again useful here, for McCabe's chapter titles 'appear' to provide us with a context and an order. As Genette mentions, these titles are not necessary and are geared to the limited readership of those readers who browse or read the book (Genette 294).

However, these titles are more complex than they seem, as they confound the reader's understanding of the plot instead of clarifying it. On one hand, it is difficult to know exactly who is stating the titular information; is it Redmond Hatch? Or is it Patrick McCabe? These titles, after all, propose objective periods of time. The titles further confuse the reader through these same specific time periods. Since our narrator is unreliable, we must question that he is indeed correctly recollecting plot moments. This is particularly true for section titles referring to specific

Winterwood, McCabe's novel also fits well into the contemporary categories which both connect and shape fragments of music and narration.

¹⁶⁸ Sections are different than chapters. Sections refer to periods of time (Ex.: "2006; Eternity"), while chapters refer to people, places or things (Ex.: Heaven's Golden Halls; My Little Pony).

moments in time, such as “Eighties” or “Mid-Nineties.” As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the narrator regularly confuses memories, hallucinations, and chronological time, again contributing to the unstable narrative plane which the reader must confront.

A reader’s assertion that the information is indeed muddled is confirmed by noting the My Little Ponies which Hatch’s daughter, Imogen, covets. These ponies serve to provide a context for the events which Hatch narrates regarding his past. In this way, the reader is able to conclude that even though Hatch is an alcoholic, prone to hallucinations, and mentally disturbed, he is still not inventing his whole discourse; rather, the tangible details relating to the specific toy brand help to prove that at least in part, these events really did occur. To what extent the narrator can be believed, however, is never concretely established.

One can use the fragment of the specific Hasbro pony, “Pinky Pie,” in an attempt to put together narrative fragments in order to arrive at an understanding of historical time. This plastic pony is mentioned repeatedly throughout the decades by Hatch and is always connected to a discourse referring to Imogen. The first time Pinky Pie is mentioned in the “Eighties,” the reader notices the strong bond between Hatch and his daughter. He states that in these times, “(w)e always had great fun walking through Queen’s Park, with her sucking her lollipop and me singing the theme song from *My Little Pony*, shouting ‘Kimono!’ and ‘Pinky Pie!, the name of all the characters she loved” (McCabe 26). From this memory, as well as in his mentioning of other ‘eighties brands such as Raymond Briggs’ The Snowman, and petite plastic figurines called Polly Pockets, one notices that Hatch depicts himself as a caring, loving, and involved parent. However, this is a false sense of both time and persona, as he later proves to be incapable of escaping the demons of his past through his nightmarish recollections and hallucinations.

In “The Nineties,” My Little Ponies again attempt to provide a historical context which alerts the reader to crucial events in the text and appears to provide a reference point to progressing time periods. When Imogen and Hatch pretend to be the ponies Pinky Pie and Kimono, for example, he states that his daughter “...used to make me feel young” (52). By this point, however, some of Hatch’s narration begins to take on a sense of the peculiar. He states, for example, that when pretending to turn all of Queen’s Park into “Ponyville from My Little Pony,” the old woman watching winces and takes offense at the great chaos which the father and daughter emit (52). In this scene, Hatch goes beyond the norms of fatherhood with his daughter; he acts the part of the pony by whinnying and acting out the movement of imaginary reins. He also weirdly mentions the “afraid things” which scare Imogen, again tying these frightening images to the pony; in support, he states that “Pinky Pie was a sweet lamb of a pony who loved to try all these fun new things but sometimes could get just that little bit nervous. Sometimes Immy liked playing at being her because she liked me comforting her when the ‘afraid’ things were over” (52). This statement, along with the previous action between father and daughter, force the reader to question both Hatch’s sanity and his relationship with his daughter more carefully, specifically by keeping other narrative fragments in mind. While alcohol, spousal and child abuse, restraining orders and robbery come to plague Hatch as the novel develops, he still longs for the pure connection which he once shared with Imogen. In support, he later states, “I told the judge that I regretted a lot of my behaviour- especially the sudden irrational rages. I had just wanted us to be the happiest family ever, but, unfortunately, things hadn’t developed that way” (67). The ponies, therefore, provide two differing points of reference; for Hatch, the ponies represent his attempt to be an ideal father and to have a perfect family; for the reader, on

the other hand, the ponies come to act as ironic symbols of the perverted and destructive behaviors which plague Hatch throughout the years.

In addition to the way in which My Little Ponies help to complicate a sense of time in *Winterwood*, these brand objects come to represent deeper textual moments through their reference to masks and masking. In one of Hatch's memories of time spent with his daughter, he recounts the following nostalgic moment resulting from a happenstance discovery of one of Imogen's preferred videos:

...after the taxi had pulled away and after dazedly wandering into a shop, the first thing I came upon happened to be a video of *My Little Pony*. And not just an old copy of it either, but the very one I remembered watching with Immy- *The Enchanted Mask*, in fact. Where Rainbow Dash, Minty, and Wisteria are going to the magic castle with Sunny Daze. I remembered it especially because Pinky Pie wasn't in it and Immy had been very disappointed by that. (75)

It is particularly interesting that Hatch remembers this particular episode of *My Little Pony*, entitled *The Enchanted Mask*. The naming of the video, which refers specifically to masking and which stars the little plastic ponies which Imogen adores so much, clearly corresponds with the events of the novel itself. In an allegorical sense, Hatch himself is the one wearing the mask; he is the shape-shifter, where the boundaries between himself and Ned Strange become more

blurred as the novel develops. In this sense, Hatch's 'mask,' when uncovered, reveals characteristics pertaining to Ned Strange. This comes to fruition at the end of the novel, where the difference between Strange and Hatch ceases, at least for a moment, to exist.

Moreover, Hatch's reference to *The Enchanted Mask* may also refer directly to his place as a father. Even though he does, throughout the novel, exhibit ideal characteristics of a father, at the same time Hatch proves to be a less than an ideal father figure to Imogen. There are, for example, veiled references to child abuse and the clear implementation of the restraining order which prevents Hatch from seeing Imogen. Moreover, Hatch behaves in strange ways when with his daughter; in one moment he may chastise her for wanting to watch the video a third time, and in the next he will call her Pinky Pie and let her watch it for as long as she pleases (75). Furthermore, there are often references to Hatch's 'scaring' of Imogen. For instance, he recounts the following: "Do the 'afraid' things, she'd say and I'd scare her. Pinky Pie was the 'scarediest' pony... But she always loved it when the time came to comfort her." (75). It is clear that Hatch is able to put on a convincing mask for his daughter, either as one of the ponies in the television series or as an 'afraid' thing from which she needs salvation. In these ways, the brand of *My Little Ponies*, both through the representation of the toy and the media, helps to create a textual connection between the innocent mask of the children's video and the sinister multitude of masks which Hatch comes to represent.

While McCabe first appears to create a parallel between brand names and historical time, it is all for naught; in the reality of Hatch's case, however, these markers of the past instead act as further indicators of a very real, disturbing present. What McCabe ultimately brings to light, therefore, is the way that Postmodernity cannot be separated from fragments of the past. Even though one can attempt to place certain images within a historical time frame, it is a fruitless

labor¹⁶⁹; McCabe, like Culicchia, textually proves that the parodic nature of Postmodernity can never escape the nightmarish quagmire of the historical past.

Globalization and consumer culture within current Irish and Italian fiction have developed so far as to become necessary to the ways in which contemporary authors confront the realities of a post-millennial existence. While a literary emphasis upon branding and consumerism existed long before the 21st century, it has never been expressed in such detail and with such tangible richness and clarity. Works such as Tondelli's *Un weekend postmoderno* and Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* paved the way for current authors concerned with the ways in which society embraces and prizes consumerism and the global through their keen descriptions of a 'rebellious' and self-centered youth culture. Even then, the mythical circularity of Yeats's cohesive dancer and dance whole was put into question.

However, this disbelief in cohesive wholes is magnified by the work of more contemporary writers such as Carlotti, Ammaniti, Ní Dhuibhne, Benni, Culicchia, and McCabe; through their fragmented depictions of, and emphasis upon, a consumer-heavy and globalized world order which prizes speed, cost, quantity, status, accessibility, efficiency, and personal happiness through the accumulation of goods and services, these writers demonstrate that a singular, linear narrative in the style of Yeats's dancer and dance is no longer relevant to the contemporary quotidian. Instead, they 'postmodernize' these characteristics of production and globalization through fragmented symbols and references within fragments of often disordered narrative, as well as in the myriad ways that global products and technology appear on the page. Nonplaces, which are intimately tied to both consumer culture and globalization, represent both everything and nothing at the same time. They often economically succeed in putting the

¹⁶⁹ Carroll, Claire. From discussion notes, 5/26/11.

societies in which they participate on the same proverbial global page, often obliterating social, cultural, and political distinctions at the same time. Consumer products and references themselves now assist in propelling pieces of narrative forward, as references to such consumer preferences as Hummers, coffee machines and cleaning products can stand both stand on their own and without the support of a fixed narrative context. Finally, allusion to specific brands can assist in creating narrative complexities and fragmentation by creating an unstable narrative plane; in doing so, linear cohesion between past and present is undermined. At the same time, nostalgia for brands and branding shows that the present is not only a parody of the past, but instead reinforces the past through narrative fragments which complicate historical time. While the locations, characters, and situations change across space and time, the disjointed experiences associated with consumerism and globalization and as presented through the literature of contemporary Irish and Italian writers successfully provide the reader with a better understanding of a shared postmodern world order which lacks both comprehension and cohesion.

Conclusion: Fragmented Language, Fragmented “Self”: A Selection of Contemporary Irish and Italian Literary Works

As my study draws to an end, it is important to reflect on the particular ways that fragmentation surfaces as a fundamental aspect of contemporary literature. Throughout my study of the characteristics pertaining to Postmodernism in contemporary Irish and Italian literature, I have delineated the ways in which fragmentation affects all areas of literary depiction of the contemporary quotidian. In technology, for example, the fragmentation of communication influences how people choose to engage in or reject human connection. In consumer society, the pastiche of choices and global options becomes simultaneously seductive and overwhelming. In music, fragmentation occurs in how song titles and lyrics are textually portrayed and in how they contribute to narrative pieces. Furthermore, all of these cases refute Yeats’s understanding of narrative as the sense of the cohesive dancer and dance, as fragmentation is intrinsically present within and an inherent symptom of postmodern narration.

Yet, what is still left to be considered is how the effects of fragmentation affect the literary ‘subject.’ Again, I use the term generally and in quotations, as we have already established that the subject, in Postmodernity, is supposedly ‘dead’. In any case, one still needs a term to describe the thinking, breathing, and often speaking entity which comes alive within the pages of the novel that at any given moment we might be reading; if the subject per se is no longer viable, the individual no longer viable, and the character no longer viable, etc., then what *is* that entity coming alive to us page by page?

The goal, therefore, is to come to terms with the ways in which fragmentation reaffirms, at least partially, the ways in which a subject is still a subject, even if it is intrinsically disparate,

impermanent, and incomplete in Postmodernity. Difficulties in coming to terms with society in general, schizophrenia, narrative unreliability and stylistic traits of language offer ample ground for critiquing the ways in which the fragmented 'self' is manifested both specifically on an Irish and Italian comparative literary level and, more generally, within current society as a whole. Finally, the ways in which language is expressed will be useful in determining how the 'self' simultaneously portrays itself and is portrayed to the reader. Are these characteristics of disparate language always portrayed in the same way, or do they vary? Coming full circle, then, are we afforded some sort of individuality within the Postmodern, or is it consistent with what has been established within the tenets of Postmodernity? What ultimately begins to surface from an examination of these disparate Irish and Italian literary characters, or fragmented 'selves,' is a new patchwork quilt of communication resulting from difference; whereas once Yeats's dancers relied on spatial relationships of contact through touch, sound, and sight, contemporary narrative now shows that the individual no longer relies on these basic human needs in order to create new forms of participation in the contemporary social order.

It is fitting, therefore, to begin a study of fragmentation by posing some general questions. Of course, any elementary student of Postmodernism knows of "the death of the subject," in which, according to Lyotard, "(e)ach individual is referred to himself. And each of us knows that our *self* does not amount to much" (Lyotard 15). However, in considering the self prior to Postmodernism, some interesting connections can be identified. In defining what is "I," Jacques Lacan discusses in great detail the ways in which human beings are split into multiple dualities, where the human psyche, for example, is comprised of two different subjects. On one hand, the human psyche represents an object-like narcissistic subject of *being*, and on the other, it represents a speaking subject; moreover, the subject is split into conscious and unconscious

parts (Ragland-Sullivan 1). Already in a pure analysis of Lacan's understanding of the human psyche, one can see the presence of fragmentation in the dualities of being and *subject*, conscious and unconscious, *moi* of alienated subject / object of Other and *je* as subject of speech which directs its discourse to others (3). Lacan is, by nature, interested in the plurality, disunity, and ambiguity of the human psyche; moreover, through his theories, he is able to prove that the human subject is:

... discontinuous, contingent, and fundamentally unreliable. Thus, the idea of a static and substantive inner reality waiting to be found or that of a deep structure waiting to be uncovered-whether one refers to philosophical truth, linguistic presupposition, or psychological experience- is merely an example of a comforting myth of wholeness and ontological reason. (14)

Even in an era significantly prior to the codification of postmodern terms and conditions, Lacan already presupposes key characteristics which pertain to the human subject and which will later be refined in Postmodernity. Like Yeats's dancer and dance, the concept of a "whole" subject is, for Lacan, a myth. If we did, for a moment, question the total death of a postmodern subject, we would discover a narrative speaking subject composed, to a great extent, of the same fragmentation which Lacan theorizes in the above. As a result, then, how are we able to reconcile the presence of subject-like qualities in Postmodernity if the postmodern subject is supposedly 'dead'?

The answer lies in Lacan's understanding of when and how the development of this

intrinsic fragmentation begins to occur. Since Lacan completely refutes the idea of the whole self,¹⁷⁰ one must then ask the question concerning the place of the formation of the fragmented human subject. Similar to a postmodern narrative pastiche, in which characteristics overlap, regenerate, break apart or form new patterns of connection or disconnection, the human subject is privy to some forms of “discrete unities” in the earliest stages of cognition and self-awareness:

Lacan argued that even though body image or ego is experienced as permanently incomplete, both are composed of a series of discrete unities. But because an infant first perceived (or judged) its body to be a collection of discrete part-objects, adults can never perceive their bodies in a complete fashion in later life.

Ragland-Sullivan (from Lacan’s *Seminar I*) 21

In the above quotation, it is easy to perceive the similarity between Lacan’s reading of the natural developmental process of the child with that of Postmodernism’s emphasis on the fragmented human subject. In both Lacan’s and Postmodernism’s two cases, the human subject has never been a unity; it may be composed of pieces which appear to coalesce and unify, but at the foundation lies always an incomplete subject with discrete unity. If one were to consider the case of Yeats’s dancer and dance, then, one would note that there is no ability of the dancer to unify him or herself with other elements of the dance, such as partnering, sound, and gesture; these elements may be incorporated, manipulated, or exploited, but what remains to be true is that the human entity remains fundamentally incomplete.

¹⁷⁰ “There is no whole “self” in Lacan’s epistemology” (41).

Further support for the connection between Lacan's reading of the fragmented subject and that of Postmodernity is found in the "zero," or "pre-mirror" stage of an infant subject. At this stage, which is clarified as occurring within the first six months of life, an infant is aware of and experiences his or her own body, yet still lacks control over this same body; it is, in other words, "a period in which an infant experiences its body as fragmented parts and images" (Ragland-Sullivan 18). As such, Lacan proves that fragmentation is intrinsically present from the earliest stages of human life and is a characteristic unique to human subjects.¹⁷¹ In accordance with postmodern thought, the fragmentation of the human subject never resolves itself. In Lacan's mirror stage, for example, when a sense of the *moi*, and thus identity, begins to take shape, the discordance between desired homogeneity and intrinsic fragmentation creates an additional disparity within the subject. In this stage, which is driven "toward fusion and homogeneity, we find the earliest experience of "self" in parts, fragments, and differences" (22). This conclusion is precisely where the accordance between the postmodern "dead subject" and the pre-postmodern, structuralist fragmented subject begins to mirror one another. The paradox for a desire to conform versus the fragmentation which an individual feels (and, I would add, is unable to fully overcome) is expressed in both of these 'subjects'; whereas Lacan is focused on the natural, unconscious, and innate elements of the fragmented subject, Postmodernism does not care about origins- it merely reflects the ways in which this fragmentation is manifested on a daily basis and within contemporary life.

These manifestations of fragmentation are clear cut in Irish and Italian contemporary

¹⁷¹ Within the six month zero stage of infancy, "...the infant has no sense of being a totality or an individual unit, because a pre-maturation at birth (by comparison with other animals)- a phenomenon termed fertilization by embryologists- marks human babies as uncoordinated and physically helpless" (18). See also a discussion of Lacan's "intra-organic and relational discordance (Sheridan *Ecrits* pp. 18-19).

fiction, as I will later prove. Narcissism, for example, is exactly as Lacan envisioned it to be; that is, not an example of a pathological disorder, as was the case for Freud, but instead as "... the atemporal (spatial) feature of human identity":

Rather than attribute the persistence of narcissistic wounds in an adult to "bad" mirroring or insufficient parenting idealization, Lacan located narcissistic difficulties in a lack of psychic separation from the (m)Other and the resultant incapacity to submit to the metaphorical reality principle: the Law of the Name of the Father, or Oedipal structure. (34)

While Lacan's theory of narcissistic development is dualistic, often complicated, and somewhat mentally laborious to understand in full, it is clear from the above that Lacan sees the development of the primary narcissistic state as occurring from a sense of lack rather than as indicative of a pathological disorder. Furthermore, in positing narcissism as the above-mentioned "irreducible and atemporal feature of human identity," Lacan suggests a connection between the 'subject' and Postmodernity in its place as one of the defining features of both the body and the theory; identity is connected to so-called 'reality' through narcissism in the same way that the fragmented subject is connected to Postmodernity through narcissism.

Finally, the ideologies of both Lacan and Frederic Jameson connect to Postmodernity through an emphasis on the subject's correlation with the concept of schizophrenia. For Lacan, schizophrenia is defined as a language disorder tied to a missing link in the formation of the psyche; this leads, in general terms, to what can be described as an inability to distinguish the real and the imaginary. While Jameson states that he is unable to support the validity of Lacan's

clinical claims regarding the disordered psyche, he does support the structuralist's "aesthetic model" of the breakdown in the "signifying chain of syntagmatic (sic) series of signifiers" which constitutes utterances or meanings:

His conception of the signifying chain essentially presupposes one of the basic principles (and one of the great discoveries) of Saussurean structuralism, namely, the proposition that meaning is not a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified, between the materiality of language, between a word or a name, and its referent or concept. Meaning on the new view is generated by the movement from signifier to signifier. What we generally call the signified -- the meaning or conceptual content of an utterance -- is now rather to be seen as a meaning-effect, as that objective mirage of signification generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves. When that relationship breaks down, when the links of the signifying chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers... If we are unable to unify the past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life. With the breakdown of the signifying chain, therefore, the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time.

Jameson 26-27

In the above, Jameson not only supports Lacan's reading of the ways in which the schizophrenic mind functions, but he takes Lacan's theory further by applying it to a general discourse of

Postmodernity. What the schizophrenic is left with, then, is no longer a duality of time and language, but is instead the breakdown of *all* signifiers. As such, the question of space and time becomes moot; even if the schizophrenic exhibits the knowledge of differing space/ time components, the mental breakdown of signifiers, for Jameson, proves that the only possibility left is a series of disparate, fragmented presents even if those ‘presents’ intend to reflect past, present, future, or imaginary experiences. We will come to see that these series of disparate presents and breakdown of signifiers clearly exemplify the condition of postmodern fragmented “selves” in language, thought, and action.

The first way in which postmodern Irish and Italian literature exhibits a textual focus on a fragmentation of so-called “dead” postmodern subjects is through the narcissism associated with these same characters. One would think that narcissistic personality disorder, which is defined as a pathological disorder characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance or grandiosity, would place an emphasis on the falsely reasoned, delusional unity of contemporary literary characters. However, narcissism within current contemporary Irish and Italian literature proves that postmodern ‘subjects’ are inherently fragmented; that is, all unities of self are false, and that since this has been and always will be the case, one must now focus upon the ways in which new forms of pastiche, duality, and fragmentation manifest themselves and form alternative moments of meaning within the words and actions of the characters being described.

Pathological narcissism can be identified by one or all of the following characteristics; of requiring excessive admiration; of having a grandiose sense of self-importance; of preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, and/or brilliance; of the sense of being the best and, as such, entitled to only the best; of a sense of entitlement in deserving special treats or favors; of exploiting interpersonal relations; of lacking empathy and concern for others; of envying others

and deserving to be envied by others; finally, of displaying arrogance.¹⁷² All of these categories can be identified within the character traits of Irish and Italian contemporary literary ‘subjects,’ often proving that innately fragmented postmodern human entities do not necessarily need to be diagnosed with a psychological disorder in order to experience the characteristics of narcissism; instead, what contemporary literature proves to the reader is that narcissism is endemic to contemporary society; in other words, the ego encourages a universal participation in a society which encourages and rewards narcissism. Again, this is nothing new; Lacan and Freud both drew lengthy connections between the ego and superego, *je* and *moi*. What is new, however, is the speed and frequency with which narcissistic characters appear in contemporary Irish and Italian fiction, as well as the ways in which their strong language reflect the underlying fragmented nature of the postmodern literary entity.

One of the most fitting characters from recent contemporary literature who exemplifies postmodern fragmentation through the guise of narcissism is Giuseppe Carlotti’s Daniele Sandroni from *Non sono un bamboccione* (Fazi Editore, 2008). In this text, the underlying fragmentation of the character is demonstrated through his narcissism, for he consistently brings everything back to the “io,” or to himself. Like Bret Easton Ellis’ character, Patrick Bateman, who is the well-to-do Wall Street protagonist and psychopath of *American Psycho* (Vintage, 1991), Daniele is a psychologically fragmented self struggling to maintain a level of normalcy in his bourgeois environment. Furthermore, in embodying an inherent propensity to be self-centered, Daniele demonstrates the ways in which narcissism helps him to confront complex issues pertaining to a rapidly developing postmodern, global world.

¹⁷² Modified from *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed., American Psychiatric Association, 1994. *McGraw-Hill Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2002.

From the beginning of *Non sono un bamboccione*, the narcissistic, self-obsessed tendencies of the main character in confrontation with the postmodern world immediately take shape. Even the title of the work, which alludes to Daniele's persona, suggests denial of an identity and the negation to be identified in a certain way; that is, as a "bamboccione," or aging 'Mamma's Boy.' In this way, Daniele reaffirms what he is not, instead of what he is; this already indicates some sort of embedded psychological denial. In order to better understand Daniele's clear-cut narcissism, one need only to glimpse at his opening discourse:

Mi chiamo Daniele Sandroni. Sono nato l'11 maggio 1974 e sono morto nello stesso anno. Scherzo. In ogni caso nasco allergico al latte. Una cosa abbastanza grave, perchè nell'Italia del 1974 nessuno sa niente di allergie. Trascorro i miei primi dodici mesi in tour, esattamente come una rockstar. Solo che, mentre una rockstar suona, io mi becco decine e decine di prelievi del sangue tra un ospedale e l'altro. Il tutto senza ottenere una risposta anche solo lontanamente accettabile.

Carlotti 11

In the above passage, the reader is immediately able to determine the way in which Daniele regards his situation as self important and 'special.' He begins, for example, by introducing himself and then jokes that he had died in the same year for dramatic effect. He goes on to compare himself to a rock star, albeit a rock star who has been wronged by the doctors who are continually incapable of deciphering the details of his poor health. In this particular sense, Daniele further distances himself from so-called 'normality' by emphasizing how he has a milk

allergy; in doing so, he rejects that which is natural, instinctual, and foundational as found through mother's milk. Instead, that which is supposed to be natural instead becomes something which could ultimately harm him. While the passage here does not speak directly to the case of Postmodernity, it nevertheless foreshadows the impending postmodern fragmentation of the character, the over-emphasis upon the speaking "I" and "my," and the drama of the personal situation which never alludes to anyone other than himself.

However, the ways in which Daniele's narcissism begin to surface, thereby demonstrating his difficulties in coping with Rome's contemporary quotidian, are revealed in his rejection of the label of bamboccione. In order to discuss his inability to accept the term as indicative of his self-identity, Daniele recounts the history and problem with the term in the following:

Un bel mattino del 2007, un mattino di merda come tanti altri, tale Signor Padoa Schioppa definì "bamboccioni" tutti i ragazzi della mia generazione. Non avendo un cazzo di meglio da fare, esattamente come immagino capiti a ciascuno di quei simpatici personaggi che gli italiani si ostinano a eleggere e a pagare decine di migliaia di euro al mese, Padoa Schioppa, invece di dedicarsi a risolvere l'enigma del Cubo di Rubrik o al nuovissimo *Guitar Hero III* per Playstation, decise di coinare un neologismo... *Ragazzo che, giunto oramai attorno ai trent'anni, ancora vive a casa con mamma e papà.*

Mia madre fece subito tesoro di questo preziosissimo vocabolo, e iniziò immediatamente a vomitarmi in faccia il termine "bamboccione" per una media di

venti volte al giorno. Mia madre non guarda mai la televisione ma ha uno speciale sesto senso che le permette di cogliere le migliori cazzate che girano nell'aria e farle proprie. (64)

In analyzing the above passage, one notes that Daniele takes great offense at being called the contemporary equivalent of a Mamma's Boy. However, as a thirty-something male still living at home and requiring great care and attention, he narcissistically continues to refuse to see that he does indeed fulfill the term's meaning.

Moreover, he likes to distance himself from the masses that elect and pay people who haven't anything better to do than to come up with petty neologisms¹⁷³. In this case, Daniele acts as a barometer of contemporary thirty-something culture. Padoa Schioppa, after all, was the Italian Minister of Economy and Finance from 2006-2008 who supported the Italian Center-Left Coalition. In scoffing at Prodi's label "bamboccione," Daniele makes a political statement by suggesting his allegiance to a more conservative Italian socio-political mentality. As such, he remains an active participant in a postmodern media culture which encourages the superficial, self-centered and self-important behavior which he criticizes. This is reinforced by his occupation as a world-weary employee in the editorial office for an Italian serial television program entitled *Misteri tricolori*, a clear allusion to the RAI 2/3 television program "Blu notte-Misteri italiani" hosted by Carlo Lucarelli, which concerns unsolved criminal cases. To reiterate: To be a narcissist is nothing new to either society or to literature; however, it is still the means by which Carlotti is able to newly depict universal difficulties which empty, jaded selves (those who

¹⁷³ "Mandiamo i bamboccioni fuori di casa." *Corriere della sera*, 10/4/07.
http://www.corriere.it/politica/07_ottobre_04/padoa_bamboccioni.shtml

confront the morning “as a shitty one like any other”) employ in confronting the quotidian manifestations of Postmodernity.

As one can see, Daniele’s self- importance is based within the context of the contemporary quotidian; he reasons that for all the euros which the above-mentioned “Padoa Schioppa” receives for coining new terms, he could be contributing to current society in other, more “productive” ways. He also blames his mother for her beliefs in the stupidities which the world creates while he still does not see that the term which he believes to be falsely representing him is actually true. Finally, his ironic tone in trying to understand the fascination with the new term “bamboccione” reveals his place within the postmodern rhetoric. It is Daniele’s narcissistic ‘self,’ then, that is unable to come to terms with his true position as a bamboccione within a redundant and depressing post-millennial quotidian. While the postmodern self may still be dead, then, the selfless entity which is left self still contains characteristics of selfness, such as narcissism, which continue to manifest themselves and act in concert with contemporary life in new patterns and forms.

In some examples of contemporary fiction, narcissism and paranoia act in tandem when identifying the postmodern ‘self’ in crisis. Daniele is an excellent example of this duality, as he is excessively discriminating as he goes about his daily routine. As such, Daniele’s difficulty in coming to terms with the postmodern world is his self- diagnosis as being a rupophobe¹⁷⁴, which is generally defined as one who has a fear of dirt. For instance, he introduces himself, for the second time in the novel, diversely as the following: “Sono Daniele Sadroni. Ho trentaquattro

¹⁷⁴ Rupophobia: rhyphobia, rypophobia, rupophobia 1. An extreme fear of filth, defecation, or of being soiled (dirtied). 2. An abnormal aversion to or morbid fear of dirt or filth. This phobia may be related to fears of contamination and germs and therefore to fears of using public toilet facilities. From Encyclo Online Encyclopedia; <http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Rupophobia>

anni, sono laureato in giurisprudenza, abito a Roma. E sono rupofobico” (13). At this point, the reader can squarely place the character within a contemporary context, where his age is thirty-four, the year is 2008, and the environment is, to be discovered, middle-class, urban, and media-centric Rome. In addition, Daniele’s short, choppy sentences which continually refer to “I” serve a dual purpose; on one hand, the repetition suggests rupture and fragmentation, while on the other hand, it suggests the need to self-assert or “suture,” in Lacanian terms, oneself together. In doing so, Daniele is successfully able to cover up the feeling of personal absence, or ‘lack.’ Shortly thereafter, the reader learns of the habitual preparations which he must take in order to face the world of Rome’s contemporary quotidian:

Ogni mattina la mia sveglia suona alle cinque. Mi alzo, faccio nove volte la doccia con Docciaschiuma Sanex Dermoprotettivo Antibatterico, mi asciugo per nove volte con nove asciugamani differenti, prendo i miei vestiti e li metto nella camera di sterilizzazione a raggi UVA. Mentre aspetto che il ciclo sia completato, tolgo dal cellophane un camice sterile e vado in cucina camminando dentro due scatole di Kleenex riempite di cotone idrofilo... Sorbisco otto sorsi di latte intero freddo, equivalenti a due grammi di proteine e sessanta calorie circa, poi avvolgo il resto del cartone in due buste Cuki Gelo Più prima di gettarlo nella pattumiera. Quando indosso i miei vestiti che nel frattempo sono stati sterilizzati, apro il terzo cassetto a destra della scrivania, prendo un paio di guanti di lino bianchi, li indosso ed esco.

(18)

Here, we witness obsessive compulsiveness together with Daniele’s narcissism concerning the outside world. It is clear that Daniele is unable to face the outside world as a normal, mentally lucid human would do. Instead, he systematically seals himself off from the outside world

through excessive attention to sanitation and sterilization. This magnifies the sense of paranoia which surrounds Daniele's mental existence. While a typical reader might find the brand snobbery and egotism of the character in protecting himself excessive, one can still view the behavior as subtly indicative of the contemporary quotidian; we are ever increasingly reliant upon personal and public hand sanitizers, as well as the advice to be aware of health dangers in public, in order to ensure our well-being in the contemporary quotidian. What Daniele proves, then, is that the obsessive-compulsiveness of a singular literary character on a micro level successfully reflects the paranoia which Postmodernity embodies for a larger, more universal group of people.

Another key element in analyzing the fragmented 'self' regards the ways that characters attempt or refuse to come to terms with themselves within the realm of daily life. In the vast majority of contemporary Irish and Italian literature, the difficulties placed upon human entities associated with current society are expressed in new ways. For instance, schizophrenia, the grotesque, and paranoia are often exhibited as intrinsic to the contemporary condition. However, what really begins to surface within these works is the way in which fragmentation of both language and self cannot be avoided; these two qualities, therefore, act as defining characteristics of the postmodern condition.

The obsessive-compulsive and neurotic behavior which Daniele Sandroni exhibits is not only relevant to *Non sono un bamboccione*; instead, mental disturbance resulting from trauma is notable in a wide variety of Irish and Italian works of contemporary fiction and comes to act as a defining characteristic of postmodern literature as a whole. In *La solitudine dei numeri primi* by

Paolo Giordano (Mondadori, 2008), for instance, the trauma of Alice, who is injured in a ski accident as a young child and who consequently becomes anorexic, is mirrored by yet always distinct, from that of Mattia, a boy who must care for his special needs sister who causes his unpopularity. This traumatic background ultimately causes him to engage in self-mutilation.

Giordano effectively plays with the postmodern reconfiguration of fragmentation, as these two separate characters, who always seem to come so close to one another, still remain “prime numbers”; Mattia explains his reasoning in regarding himself and Alice as similar to these mathematical symbols in the following:

In un corso del primo anno Mattia aveva studiato che tra i numeri primi ce ne sono alcuni ancora più speciali. I matematici li chiamano *primi gemelli*: sono coppie di numeri primi che se ne stanno vicini, anzi quasi vicini, perché fra di loro vi è sempre un numero pari che gli impedisce di toccarsi per davvero. Numeri come l'11 e il 13, come il 17 e il 19, il 41 e il 43. Se si ha la pazienza di andare avanti a contare, si scopre che queste coppie via via si diradano. Ci si imbatte in numeri sempre più isolati, smarriti in quello spazio silenzioso e cadenzato fatto solo di cifre e si avverte il presentimento angosciante che le coppie incontrate fino a lì fossero un fatto accidentale, che il vero destino sia quello di rimanere soli.

(129-130)

In the above, Mattia demonstrates how the “special” category of twin prime numbers stay close together but are destined to remain apart. Like these numbers, Alice and Mattia are “special”; they are misfits, or outsiders, to the social culture of their peers. They are also “twins” who share traumatic pasts that haunt them; while the physical deviation which causes bodily harm is

different; Mattia cuts himself and Alice has an eating disorder based upon extreme control and lack of nourishment, the two are as one in the traumatic memories of the past which haunt them at present.

What is so disturbing, however, is that these two characters are destined to travel through life sharing the burden of mental trauma, yet they will never be able to offer each other complete solace or to find their way through life as partners. In support, it is stated that “Mattia pensava che lui e Alice erano così, due primi gemelli, soli e perduti, vicini ma non abbastanza per sfiorarsi davvero” (21-22). Again, as was the case for McCabe in *Winterwood*, the weight of the past is not dead and buried; instead, it finds new forms and provides new traumas within the context of Postmodernity.

From a reading of *La solitudine dei numeri primi*, it is evident that the environment of the contemporary quotidian contributes to the fragmentation of the ‘self.’ Similar to Mattia and Alice, Patrick ‘Pussy’ Braden, of Patrick McCabe’s *Breakfast on Pluto* (HarperCollins, 1998) experiences profound inner fragmentation as a result of her¹⁷⁵ socio-political environment. Even though McCabe’s work is published two years before the turn of the millennium, the clear ways that the protagonist’s environment helps to shape her disturbed persona is further helpful in understanding how fragmentation functions within the realm of the daily quotidian.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ I have chosen to address Pussy as “she,” following the more common form of reference within the novel. See footnote (8) for further analysis of changes in gender reference regarding Pussy Braden.

¹⁷⁶ A brief, generally clear synopsis of the novel is found in the following: “Set in the politically tumultuous London of the 1970s, ‘Breakfast on Pluto’ follows the misadventures of Patrick “Pussy” Braden, a transvestite prostitute on a quest to find love and a place to call home. Pussy narrates his own story, occasionally pausing to direct comments at Dr. Terence, the psychiatrist who suggested he write it. Born in the border town of Tyreelin, Ireland in the mid 1950s, Pussy is the product of an encounter between the village priest and his beautiful teenaged housekeeper. Abandoned by his mother and unable to contact his father, Pussy is raised by “Whiskers,” a chain-smoking, beer-guzzling foster mother. When Pussy begins demonstrating a penchant for women’s clothing and female impersonations, he is booted out

As is par for the course with his novels, McCabe again brilliantly voices the fragmentation of the individual through his choice of a protagonist full of contradiction. Patrick “Pussy” Braden is described as “the enduringly and endearingly hopeful hero(ine) whose gutty survival and yearning quest for love resonate in and drive the glimmering, agonizing narrative in which the Troubles are a distant and immediate echo and refrain.”¹⁷⁷ This description effectively portrays Pussy in all of her contradiction; on one hand, she is considered by the author to be an optimistic “transvestite prostitute” from Tyreelin, Ireland, who makes his¹⁷⁸ way in the world by negotiating “the minefields of this world through pastiche, wickedness, and cheek” (McCabe xiii). This description is a postmodern reference in itself, for Pussy is inherently fragmented through gender (dis)order, while at the same time struggling to navigate through life by employing postmodern techniques of irony and pastiche.

Pussy is not only a primary example of the fragmented individual through her portrayal of the conflict between physical and psychological gender discrepancies; instead, like McCabe’s other characters of Ned Strange and Chris McCool, Pussy demonstrates schizophrenic tendencies which on the surface appear to be a random series of recollections. This is especially evident in discussions which can quickly move from a particular outfit and its accessories to the commemoration of the 1916 uprising in her small city of Tyreelin (17-18).

of his house. He finds temporary contentment with a British politician who acts as sugar daddy until he is killed by the IRA, leaving Pussy alone once more. Searching for his birth mother, Pussy winds up in London where he finds himself hustling in Piccadilly Circus. Although decidedly apolitical, the terminally exuberant Pussy cannot help being drawn into the terror around him as his friends and lovers are murdered and bombings become a regular occurrence. As he flirts with a soldier in a club one night, a bomb explodes, blowing the soldier to ribbons. When Pussy is arrested on suspicion of planting the bomb, he begins to lose his already tenuous hold on reality. Despite the obvious losses, Pussy never seems to lose hope in his dream of finding love.” From *Powell’s Books*, <http://www.powells.com/biblio/17-9780060931582-0>.

¹⁷⁷ From the book jacket of *Breakfast on Pluto*.

¹⁷⁸ The author uses the pronoun “he” in this instance; however, for other references, Pussy is referred to as “she.” In this sense, McCabe adds an additional layer of meaning by playing with preconceived notions of gender identification.

Yet, unlike Strange and McCool, Pussy Braden's fragmented memories do help to provide a direct order to the narration. As readers, we are able, for example, to see that chapters follow linearly from her principle title of "The Life and Times of Patrick Braden."¹⁷⁹ After establishing the title for her collection of memories, Pussy first discusses her out of wedlock birth, then moves to such discussions as her experiences at age thirteen; her introduction to her sugar Daddy, aka "Mr Dummy Teat! My darling Married Politician Man"; and finally to her experiences during The Troubles as a prostitute within the politically volatile city of London (31). In this sense, fragments of narration which Pussy delineates do provide a linear sense of time, in spite of their disparate themes and contexts.

Throughout the novel, however, it is clear that Pussy is never able to rectify the discrepancy regarding her place in a politically volatile environment with that of her own changeable social milieu. This is particularly notable at the end of the novel, when Pussy concludes her recollections and expresses the effect which telling them has had on her psyche. After voicing her desire to burn her written reminiscences after the doctor appeared to 'abandon' her, Pussy states the following: "Now that time has passed, however, I'm glad I didn't, because I still do love him in a strange and special way. Just as I do anyone who takes me in his arms and says: 'Pussy? You do know something, do you? You do know that you and I are going to make our home in this world together, don't you? Which we most certainly do-except that it never

¹⁷⁹ This is a clear play upon Laurence Sterne's so-called 'Irish' novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Pussy prefaces her discussion of the title, which aims to elucidate her written memories of her past, by stating the following: "I don't regret writing all of this (in the end I put a name on it- *The Life and Times of Patrick Braden*- original, eh?)" (McCabe 4). In this sense, Pussy plays upon the ideas of postmodern pastiche by mimicking Sterne's title; like Braden's series of recollections, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* reflects a novel in the first person which explores the egotistical persona of the speaker. As a side note, a character named Laurence Feely with Down's Syndrome makes an appearance within Braden's world, as is ironically described by her as perhaps "...the first Down's (s)yndrome boy shot in the Northern Ireland War" (McCabe 47). For more on Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, please see "Chapter Three: Music as the Soundtrack of Contemporary Life."

happens!” (McCabe 197-8). Even though this direct moment is never further clarified and remains embedded within a context which is both nonlinear and full of completely disparate, schizophrenic references, Pussy is still able to effectively acknowledge her unhappiness and convey her continual state of alienation. For the first time, then, the reader is able to note a possible moment of realistic lucidity; while Pussy retains her optimistic, happy-go-lucky attitude when recounting the horrors which political unrest bring about, she here expresses the bored, hopeless situation of a contemporary quotidian which leaves the self looking forward to a future filled with alienation and unfulfilled expectation. In the end, both Pussy and the novel come full circle, as she is left looking through the same nostalgic magazines which she was first found reading at the beginning of the novel. In the end, McCabe leaves us with the suggestion that the alienated, inherently fragmented individual can only approximate a sense of completeness and solace within the postmodern context of nostalgia.

In some cases of contemporary Irish and Italian literature, crises of the self manifest themselves through external sources. In Rossana Campo's *Più forte di me* (Feltrinelli, 2007), for example, crises of the fragmented 'self' take shape through the main character's abusive use of alcohol. She, like Yeats's dancer, feels the need to function within the circle of other symbols, whether human or otherwise, which provide her with meaning. However, in her fragmented state, she must rely upon alcohol in order to create meaning and to order the disordered signifiers within her life. As a writer of the group of *Giovani Cannibali*¹⁸⁰, who, according to Stefania Lucamante, seek to reimagine language "...by employing new linguistic findings" and by reproducing "...as mimetically as possible both linguistic and social realities" (Lucamante 13), Campo is

¹⁸⁰ "Young Cannibals" movement, notably since 1996 (Lucamante 13).

successfully able to put into words the experiences which alienate, degenerate, and ultimately break down the sense of self which participants in the contemporary quotidian experience. From the beginning of the novel, one knows that the unnamed female character, or 'lei,' is experiencing some sort of personal crisis. At the opening she states, "Ah ma che vita è questa... Ma che razza di vita" (Campo 13). Her immediate schizophrenic thought process begins to take shape, as she discusses the strangely changing weather, the book which she then tries to read, notices the smell of the book, and then focuses on the phrase by Christopher Robin which states, "C'è una cosa che devi ricordare, anche se siamo lontani io sarò sempre con te" (14). This phrase, she states, immediately affects her negatively; as she recounts, "Questa frase mi ha messo addosso una malinconia bestiale... (14). The fragments of her thoughts keep the reader engaged, for we know that something is amiss yet are not yet privy to exactly what the character's inner turmoil refers to. It is only as we read on that the schizophrenia, paranoia, and fragmentation of the speaking 'lei' begins to surface through the context of the alcohol which she struggles to renounce.

For 'lei,' the duality of Lacan's *moi* and *je*, being and subject are regulated through her choice to indulge in or to renounce alcohol. Campo's story is not a merely fictional account of a female alcoholic; rather, the novel seeks to experience the thoughts of the main character as they are happening and in all of their frank discontinuity. For example, after having drunk quite a bit at a dinner with her friend Fred and his friend, Emmanuel, Campo's female protagonist begins to lose herself to the alcohol. She candidly describes the sensation in the following:

...mi alzo e vado verso la cucina. Mi sto accorgendo che le gambe non mi reggono bene, il corridoio si è messo a sbandare, si è girato tutto e si è come infossato su un lato. Non ho mai visto il muro del corridoio così storto, sento che mi costringe a camminare storta a mia volta e questo non ci voleva. Per non cadere vado avanti con una spalla che striscia contro il muro. Arrivo in cucina e cerco la macchinetta del caffè. A prima vista è scomparsa. Muovo piano la testa, evito movimenti bruschi per fermare le pareti, ma porca miseria, almeno lei la mia vecchia cucina non può tradirmi, non può mollarmi così, cominciare a spostarsi tutta da una parte. Ci metto un bel pò a preparare il caffè e a trovare il vassoio, le tazzine, i cucchiaini e tutto quanto. (91)

In this passage, the narrator expresses her loss of self through her disjointed account of the very troubling aspects of the scene. These narrative pieces, such as the random placement of the coffee to one side and the difficulties in finding the standard variety of utensils necessary for tea, demonstrate how the effects of alcohol cause her to lose her sense of a mythical unified self. Even her good old kitchen, which is the place in the home where nurturing occurs through food and drink, is acting as a “traitor” to her ability to keep up appearances for her friends. In this sense, therefore, alcohol both supports and denies the persona which ‘lei’ portrays to the world; on one hand it helps her to feel more comfortable in her own skin, while on the other, it causes her life to be fragmented and incomprehensible.

Alcohol for Campo’s female narrator also contributes to her schizophrenic and obsessively fearful behavior. From the beginning, she recounts to the reader how her life is filled

with paranoia; for instance, at one point in a heated discussion with her husband, she recounts the following: “Avevo cercato di non dare retta a quelle sensazioni sinistre che mi salivano dallo stomaco, avevo cercato di dirmi che il senso di panico e disperazione che avevano cominciato a azzannarmi il petto e la gola erano dovuti solo alle nuvole nere cariche di fulmini che stavano arrivando nel cielo sopra di noi” (19). In this remark, ‘lei’ mentions the physical effects of her turbulent nature, where one random sensation after another strikes her and where she attempts to deflect these same sensations on her surrounding environment, rather than acknowledge the sinister feelings arising within herself. Moreover, the language is telling here, as the wreckage of emotions and sensations, both physical and mental, come in a flood of words with no clear sense of linearity. In this passage, therefore, we are able to clearly see the main character’s inability to come to terms with her ‘self’ begin to take shape and form.

Dependence upon alcohol later in the novel further supports the multiplicity of ‘lei’s’ fragmented ‘self’ through her volatility of character. Psychoanalysts of Modernity were familiar with the effects which substances such as drugs and alcohol have on the brain; however, contemporary literature gives us a stronger view of how these substances affect ‘selves’ through the means of narrative fiction. ‘Lei’s’ schizophrenic nature again manifests itself in her random choice of words and actions after excessive drinking. For instance, at the end of the aforementioned party with friends, the following is recounted:

(Fred) La tua vita tesoro, la tua vita è un po’ insensata, ma non vedi come ti comporti in questi ultimi tempi, le cose strane che fai,

(Lei) Strane? Per esempio? Fammi un esempio, merda! che strano e strano, fammi un esempio concreto cazzo,

(Fred) Ma dai ti stai facendo delle storie con degli esseri allucinanti, e poi cominci a bere presto, cominci già al mattino,

(Lei) Al mattino... Mi faccio una birra, che significa...

(Fred) Non ti limiti a una birra,

(Lei) Bè, dai,

(Fred) E poi mi salti addosso appena... salti su per niente, appena io dico qualcosa, appena ti faccio osservare...

(Lei) Ma porca troia! (93)

Here, the conversation between Fred and the female narrator demonstrates the ways in which alcohol manifests the schizophrenic duality of her nature; moreover, it is ironic to see how effectively 'lei' is able to embody, and yet mentally reject, everything which Fred tells her. He states, for instance, that she is inconsistent in her choice of discussion and in her violent, quick nature which consistently occurs after drinking. While refuting him, however, 'lei' fails to see that she is engaging in this exact behavior. From these examples, one can see that 'lei's' 'self' is not dead, in the postmodern "death of the subject" sense of the term; however, it is instead controlled and made duplicitous as a result of the alcohol which she is unable to renounce.

Even at the end of the novel, the female narrator is unable to experience a sense of a unified, complete 'self'; this is, I argue, where her Postmodernity lies. She is fully accepting of her destiny to be a fragmented individual; not as a dead subject, but rather a human entity who is resigned to never fully renouncing her sense of fragmentation. After having battled her alcoholism and when fully immersed in her recovery, the narrator recounts her final emotions when chatting with her friend and partner in recovery, Yolande:

La mia amica è riuscita a costruire in pochi secondi una bomba di gioia, l'ho sentita bene che prendeva forma nella sua pancia, saliva veloce verso il cuore e veniva catapultata fuori attraverso il suo sorriso e attraverso gli occhi che sprizzano scintille, e io mi sono sentita di nuova confusa, ma anche commossa e grata per il fatto che siamo qui, noi due insieme, a contarcela su, proprio dove siamo, e come siamo, con le nostre chiacchiere un pò ossessive e le analisi dei nostri umori e delle nostre pensate, tutt'e due insieme in questa casa troppo piena di ricordi e di giorni che non girano e di groppi che non se ne vanno. (276)

In the above passage, it is evident in several ways that the narrator still suffers from the pieces of her 'self' which will never unify. She cannot, for example, leave behind the memories which permeate the house and cannot be rid of the lumps in her throat which refuse to cease. She is, by all means, consistently held back by the scattered relics of her past. Moreover, her language exhibits how she is still unable to get a grasp on her emotions; her sentences continue to flow without pause, as she seems to verbally "explode" sensation and emotion in the same way that Yolande explodes joy. In the end, she remains confused; however, her confusion is now tempered by new emotions of gratitude. She is settling for what Jameson would call a "perpetual present" (Jameson 1998). Since she is unable to renounce the past completely, she must rely upon discordant fragments of past and present in order to make sense of her world. In this sense, even though the days remain monotonous and her past continually remains a physical presence within her body, the speaker is resigned to dealing with the fragments of her 'self' in order to continue on with her physical and emotional recovery.

An additional element of contemporary Irish and Italian narrative which speaks to the fragmented nature of the self is the unreliability of the narrator. While Lacan saw human beings as discontinuous and fundamentally unreliable in general, others, such as Jameson, believe schizophrenia to be a defining factor of the postmodern condition. In both narration and language, the unreliability of the narrator and schizophrenic language demonstrate a distinct disconnection from reality. However, even though these two characteristics prevent any totality of 'self' in the form of whole unities, fragments of the self are still able to create ever changing patterns which ultimately suggest cohesive forms of self-expression.

One of the most unreliable narrators in Irish contemporary literature is that of Redmond Hatch in McCabe's *Winterwood* (Bloomsbury, 2008). It has already been noted that McCabe is masterful in crafting main characters which are fundamentally schizophrenic and psychologically flawed, and Hatch is no exception. What Hatch's unreliable narration leads to, however, is an understanding that he is mentally unable to come to terms with the events occurring in post-millennial Celtic Tiger Ireland.

From the outset of the novel, the reader is instructed to be wary of the narration through the primary character of Hatch. He is told to be on guard concerning the whimsical stories of Ned Strange, or 'Auld Pappie,' who is a fiddler and informal historian of the remote area of the town of Slievenageeha. He is also the character that we later learn had been imprisoned for the sexual abuse and murder of a young boy named Michael Gallagher. The barman whom Hatch first meets upon his return to the town warns him "Just be careful of them auld stories of his. You wouldn't know whether to believe them or not" (McCabe 5). However, what the reader learns by the end of the novel is that one must be wary of both Hatch and Auld Pappie's narration, as the two prove to be equally unreliable. Irvine Welsh makes a strong connection

between the relationship of Hatch and Ned as indicative of Irish mythological ‘shape-shifting’¹⁸¹; that is, the mythological transformation of the body into a different entity, often an animal. One may consider the Celtic mythological tale of the Children of Lir, for instance, who change from children into swans, or Sadbh, the wife of the great Irish hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill, who was changed into a deer. However, Hatch’s shape-shifting is much more relevant to the present day and much more sinister. Like Campo’s narrator, Hatch also tries to fight his inner demons and fragmentation by using alcohol. He states that as far back as 1989, ‘I’d wake in the night, in the iron grip of unease. Having sensed the chilling *presence* in the room. I could feel it standing stock-still beside me. It was a horrible time” (29). While he never specifies exactly to what presence he refers, he does clarify that he relies upon the anesthetic quality of the pub in order to try to put his life back together. In this moment, he is in crisis with his wife and his work, and he states, “I gravitated towards those pubs because just by sitting in them I could construct a pretty accurate picture of my future” (29-30). However, what really occurs at this moment is an example of one of the places in which the narrator begins to descend into madness; he is trying to hold on to some vestiges of an idealistic unified ‘self’. In truth, the whole novel manipulates the universal question, ‘Who am I and where do I come from?’ However, what becomes clear, as the novel develops, is that even though Hatch provides fragments pertaining to personal biography and experience, at the same time he endlessly confounds the narration, causing these fragments either to overlap or negate one another.

Halfway through the novel, for example, McCabe suddenly reveals the connection between Hatch and Strange based upon the complexities of the Irish word “ait,” which Hatch defines as ‘place’ and which is pronounced ‘atch,’ as in ‘Hatch’; yet, Ned Strange clarifies that

¹⁸¹ Welsh, Irvine. “The man from the mountains”. *The Guardian*, 4 November, 2006.

“ait” additionally means ‘strange’ (129). This complex play on words creates a dual connection between Hatch and Strange through the concept of “ait” as both name, as in strange, and in place, as in the shared sense of the mountains as ‘home.’ However, in revealing this one seeming ‘unity’ of identity, another, more complex layer of fragmentation pertaining to biography and place begins to surface. Are the two related as family members, for example, or does Strange merely create the connection to show how similar the two think and feel? Alternatively, are the two characters the same? These complex questions concerning identity arise only when the seemingly crucial, illusory unity of self within the novel is revealed. In the end, we as readers are unable to provide a definite answer, as the question of the fragmented self is always left open.

When Hatch later becomes emotionally tormented by the demons of Auld Pappie Ned, he is again unreliable as to how he has exorcised the memory from himself. He states, for example, “Ned and the mountain were history and shouldn’t have been referred to in any capacity at all. I mean, he hadn’t entered my thoughts quite literally- for years. Which itself tells its own tale” (154). However, this is clearly untrue, for six months earlier when in the company of his daughter Imogen, he states, “I felt like rasping into Ned Strange’s face: -So this is something dreadful then, is it? (146). Hatch’s recollections are lost in a pastiche of past and present, and he is schizophrenic in his breakdown of signifiers leading to what he chooses to narrate or to omit in his narration.

The postmodern irony which McCabe infuses into the text culminates with Strange’s “finishing” Hatch’s tale for him. At this point, the reader has absolutely no idea whom he or she should trust within the narration. Strange chooses to complete Hatch’s tale for him in the following:

Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to allow Redmond Hatch to conclude his own story. Regrettably, however, this is impossible. There are times, it has to be acknowledged, when he will make the most valiant efforts. But somehow he never seems to transcend a certain point... After that, I'm afraid, he appears to lose the power of speech, just sits there staring, uttering sounds which are quite indecipherable. Certainly making no sense. Poor fellow. It really is dreadful. It must have been quite an ordeal. (239)

The reader immediately notices a change in tone within this passage, as Strange's sympathy for Hatch is obviously dramatized. Furthermore, it is ironic how well Ned Strange is able to understand and convey Hatch's madness. This keen understanding is fundamental to the schizophrenic duality of the character(s). In the end, Strange takes on the task of finishing Hatch's story, yet he recounts that he will add bits of melodrama for effect. In support, he states, "...it must inevitably come to me to finish his story, me, his oldest friend and neighbor on the mountain... Although, given my reputation, one runs the risk of certain liberties being taken with what, after all is a straightforward narrative. Of my inserting certain 'flourishes' of a certain 'fanciful' nature perhaps. As us old mountain fiddlers have been known to do" (239). Here, it is evident that Strange, as narrator, will again prove to be undependable. His language is both erratic and fragmented, and he fails to clarify what is real and what is hyperbole. McCabe also plays upon the Irish bardic tradition of storytellers, chroniclers, and satirists through the character of Strange, although instead of weaving a comprehensive narrative based strictly upon fact or fiction, he specifies that he will embed flourishes of fancy within a 'straightforward narrative' which is, ironically, everything except linear. As readers, we notice an inverted

dancer/dance narrative, where meaning is created through difference, instead of through unity. As a result, what ultimately surfaces is that the reader is once again unable to take anything Strange says at face value, maintaining the unpredictable level of narration.

The fragmentation of Hatch/Strange is never resolved. However, in the final scene of the novel, images of Hatch, Strange, and Hatch's wife, Catherine, all coalesce, creating a moment of unity out of three illusory fragments. The reader is again on a very unstable narrative plane, as one does not know if the narration describes Heaven or Hell, Hatch's mind, or Strange's mind. In the chapter simply named "Eternity," Hatch finds himself faced with the apparition of his wife in some sort of a great beyond. She states, "May you never lay your head down without a hand to hold" (241-2). However, his companion is not Catherine, as the narration changes to recount the following: "Realising just who his companion was, as I flashed my incisors and drew him towards me: Little Red. Slipping the chocolate bar into his hands, as we lay there together beneath the tall pines..." (242). Because the narrator is so changeable at this moment, as he switches unexpectedly from a third person to a first person narration, it is difficult to claim definitively that Redmond Hatch's companion here is Ned Strange; even though this is the most obvious answer, the narration is so volatile that it forces the reader to continually doubt oneself and to question a greater number of thematic possibilities. Could this be Redmond Hatch facing the little boy whom he abused? Or is Hatch equating "me" and "Little Red," suggesting his own place as a victim of abuse? On the other hand, could Ned be the Devil? Or could it be an instantaneous switch in narration from a Hatch already in the great beyond watching his body joining him, whereupon the dualistic selves consequently unite with each other, hand in hand? Even though these questions remain open to interpretation, they allow for a postmodern multiplicity of narrative meaning. Also, since the narrator's unreliability leads the reader to try to

grasp fragments of narration in order to avoid completely getting lost in the chaos intrinsic to the novel, this same narrative unpredictability ultimately leads to richer, more varied readings of standard contemporary fictional works. Furthermore, as was the case for *Winterwood's* use of fragments pertaining to consumerism in order to better understand the depth of the characters' psychological trauma, one notes that recollection and memory as portrayed by Strange/Hatch is forever mired in the past through the "nightmare of history"¹⁸²; as such, McCabe proposes that Postmodernity is not a pure reiteration of the past, but that it is instead reliant upon the past in order to exemplify new forms of trauma and psychological weight which manifest themselves in the contemporary quotidian.

Another strong literary character whose unreliable narration has major implications on both the fragmented nature of the text and to his own 'self' is found in Niccolò Ammaniti's novel, *Come dio comanda* (Mondadori, 2006). In this work, the character of Quattro Formaggi plays a fundamental role in leading the lives of the secondary characters into chaos and disorder. As with the Ned Strange / Redmond Hatch dichotomy, Formaggi's breakdown of signifiers and confluence of past and present time indicates exactly what Jameson describes as the representative schizophrenic 'self' in Postmodernity. However, this schizophrenic self is not without a clear desire for rationale; as such, Formaggi demonstrates the complexity of the postmodern "self" who reflects some sense of a unified subject yet remains, throughout his whole existence, an inherently fragmented and mentally unstable human entity.

As the third person narrator, Ammaniti clearly enjoys playing with the reader while simultaneously putting narrative reliability into question. The third person narrator introduces us to Quattro Formaggi, born Corrado Rumitz, as having received his name due to "... un'insana

¹⁸² Carroll, Clare. Informal notes to chapter discussion, 5/26/11.

passione per la pizza ai quattro formaggi con cui si era nutrito per gran parte dei suoi trentotto anni...” (Ammaniti 32). What is ironic here is that Quattro Formaggi, who does descend into further madness throughout the novel, is not named Formaggi because he has mad tendencies; rather, the author leads us away from that line of thinking by focusing on the explanation of a person who has a voracious appetite for pizza. In this way, the unreliability of the narrator is already established in his ability to utilize narrative fragments for the purpose of leading the reader astray.

However, as the fragments of Formaggi’s biography are revealed, little pieces which indicate the schizophrenic nature of his mental state are embedded within the narration; it is the reader’s job to sort through the fragments in order to better understand the chaotic events which comprise the past and present of each specific character. For instance, the narrator recounts the following regarding Formaggi’s deteriorating mental state: “Ultimamente si accorgeva di ricordare spesso cose che non esistevano. Oppure scambiava cose che aveva visto alla televisione con i suoi ricordi” (33). In this description, the reader learns early on that Quattro Formaggi is unable to distinguish what is and is not “reality.” He is fragmented in his inability to distinguish among three entities; his past, his present, and the simulation of reality which occurs through visual media like television.

Later, the narrator again confuses the reader with further descriptions pertaining to Quattro Formaggi’s past biography and present mental capacity. It is explained that Formaggi, when younger, was subjected to both a punishing education by religious figures and an unfortunate event in which he was physically scarred by an electrical shock while fishing. At first, the narrator recounts that Formaggi “(n)on era mai stato troppo sveglio” and even said of himself that he was slow-minded, or “pensava piano” (35). As readers, we are led to believe that

Formaggi is naturally naive and incapable of advanced thinking as a result of his accident and difficult childhood.

However, later in the novel, the primary character of Cristiano remarks about Quattro Formaggi, "... (n)on era vero che era scemo. Se chiacchierava poco era perché l'elettricità già aveva incasinato il modo di parlare. Ma era attento, ascoltava tutto e con la testa faceva degli strani movimenti come se dirigesse la conversazione" (91). Due to this change in description, the reader is now led to question the instability of Formaggi's nature; is he truly mentally unstable, or does he simply think slowly in order to digest all of the information which surrounds him? Cristiano affirms that he appears to follow the conversation, but does he pretend to understand conversational discourse? Or does he truly comprehend? These considerations point precisely to the questions of a unified or disjointed "self" which the unreliability of the narrator forces the reader to ponder.

Further scenes which simultaneously question the reliability of the narrator and ask the reader to consider Formaggi to be a fragmented self with a clearly unreachable desire for physical and mental unity revolve around his presepe, or nativity scene. This presepe, which is so central to Formaggi's ability to act and reason, is described in the following way:

Una stanza di una ventina di metri quadrati tutta ricoperta di montagne di cartapesta colorata, di fiumi di stagnola, di laghi fatti di piatti e bacinelle, di boschi di muschio, di città con case di cartone, deserti di sabbia e strade di stoffa. E sopra c'erano soldatini, animali di plastica, dinosauri, pastori, macchinine, carri armati, robot e bambole. Il suo presepe. Era da anni che ci lavorava. Migliaia di

pupazzetti raccolti nei cassoni della spazzatura, trovati nella discarica o dimenticati dai bambini ai giardini comunali... (37)

In this description, the fragments associated with Formaggi's mental state begin to take shape. He has obviously spent years gathering the scraps and forgotten pieces of others and has brought them together as his own. It is almost as though the fragments which Formaggi has gathered so carefully over the years reflect the schizophrenic nature of his mind. This is mirrored in his actions, such as the way he dresses himself in seemingly random pieces of clothing and the dirty, cluttered, and disorganized way in which he keeps his home.

However, the reader is again forced to reconsider the true nature of the schizophrenia of Quattro Formaggi when details arise as to how he tends to the presepe. He is described as arranging the pieces in the following manner:

Sopra la montagna più alta di tutte c'era una stalla con il bambino Gesù, Maria, Giuseppe, e il bue e l'asinello. Quelli glieli aveva regalati suor Margherita per Natale, quando aveva dieci anni. Quattro Formaggi, muovendosi con una insospettabile grazia, attraversò il presepe senza far cadere niente e sistemò meglio il ponte su cui avanzava una fila di Puffi blu capitanata da un Pokémon.

(37)

It is obvious that Quattro Formaggi exhibits some form of mental instability due to his

preoccupation with a presepe composed of plastic children's figurines. However, it cannot be said that his schizophrenia completely lacks unity; he still does, for example, know which religious figures to emphasize, which animals traditionally are associated with these religious figures, and he further goes about his task in a most careful and organized way. Later on, it is again reiterated that Formaggi relies upon keeping the presepe 'a posto', or in place, in order to function; in support, it is stated that "(b)isognava rimettere subito in ordine. Non poteva fare niente sapendo che il presepe era in quello stato" (191). Finally, in the last moments before he is about to commit suicide, Formaggi pays the same careful attention to where he stands in order to avoid knocking down or putting any of his figurines out of place. Through his example, Formaggi proves that the schizophrenic nature of the postmodern self does not lack complete unity; instead, it embodies this unity in order to reinforce just how fragmented the self actually is.

Mentally, the voices inside Formaggi's head continually provide an order to the chaos which surrounds him. For instance, when he ends up following the young girl Fabiana, who fits his vision of his idealized porn star "Ramona," he attempts to ignore these voices. Even though he knows that this girl is not the porn star, for he says that the female whom he sees is "(l)a bionda identica a Ramona!" (219), he ends up confounding reality and his preferred television porn, ultimately raping and killing the young girl. What Ammaniti is seamlessly able to do at this point is to slowly move the focus away from a general third person narration in order to enter into the mind of Formaggi. In this scene, for instance, he sequentially relies upon the events of the film to guide him. Mentally, voices in his head tell him to follow the episode accordingly. However, he demonstrates an awareness that his actions aren't just when it is related that "Quattro Formaggi chiuse gli occhi cercando di non ascoltarlo,"; this voice in particular is that of

Bob the Boscaiolo, the T.V. porn character who mentally pushes Formaggi to continue his search for Fabiana (220). Intellectually, Formaggi knows that his voices will lead him to a negative end; however, these same voices provide some kind of order to the chaos in his mind, thereby propelling his schizophrenic and ultimately fatal actions forward.

After his murder of Fabiana, Quattro Formaggi's mind deteriorates even further. He begins, for example, to place more emphasis on the self-righteous religious aspect of his actions. It is important to note that by now the narration regarding Formaggi is told almost exclusively in the third person, but from his standpoint; this is a change from the beginning, where the third person narration more fully described the background, appearance, and biography of Formaggi than truly entering into and reflecting his mind. Because of this, the reader has suspended belief in the rationality of Formaggi's ability to think properly and is resigned to follow the thoughts of a schizophrenic "madman." At this point, Ammaniti relies more heavily upon Formaggi's particular symptoms of madness, such as excessive religious devotion and putting blame on others, in order to provide the desire for unity which the mentally unstable character lacks. He states, for example, that Rino, who understood that Formaggi is the murderer of the young girl, "...si opponeva il volere di Dio," thereby becoming an impediment to his success (409). Since Rino is opposing the will of God, Formaggi then rationalizes that it is his duty to kill Rino. Later, after experiencing a nightmare which from that point on leads him to call himself the "Uomo delle Carogne," Formaggi deflects his guilt by rationalizing that it wasn't his fault if "Ramona" (Fabiana) led him to sin. His discourse to himself reflects his rationalization in the following:

Ma perché diavolo Ramona aveva scelto di passare nel bosco? *Ha sbagliato. Io gliel'avevo detto. Non è colpa mia se è passata nel bosco.* Se avesse preso la circonvallazione ora non sarebbe successo niente e lui sarebbe stato bene e Rino non sarebbe finito in coma. E tutto sarebbe stato come prima. (424)

In the above example, the use of both the conditional and the hypothetical, as well as the clear difference between the short, choppy sentence and the long run-on, demonstrate Formaggi's lack of clear mental status. However, he still continues to rationalize his actions, successfully moving the guilt away from himself in order to provide some sort of relief from his fragmentation and inner turmoil.

Finally, the reader again must call into question the reliability of the narrator when Formaggi is about to make his final fatal choice. Because his actions throughout the novel have affirmed his mental instability to the reader, it is surprising that in the final moments before taking his life, the general third person narrator returns in order to enter into a chaotic, yet at the same time revealing, dialogue with Quattro Formaggi. The narrator asks the following:

Cosa diavolo aveva portato quell'uomo nudo a salire su una sedia e mettersi un cappio al collo?

L'Uomo delle Carogne conosceva la risposta.

La sua testa... La sua testa pazzo. Quella testa anche gli aveva rovinato la vita. Lì dentro c'era qualcosa che gli aveva fatto sentire troppe cose, che lo aveva fatto

sentire sempre fuori luogo, diverso, che gli aveva fatto fare cose che non poteva dire a nessuno perché nessuno lo avrebbe capite, che lo aveva terrorizzato, esaltato, accecato, che lo aveva fatto rintanare in un buco pieno di immondizia, impaurito come un sorcio, che gli aveva fatto sognare un presepe così grande da coprire tutto la Terra, da sostituire montagne, mari e fiumi con montagne di carta pesta e mari di carta stagnola.

Bé, quella testa lo aveva stancato. (493)

In the above quotation, one is able to recognize how even in the final moments before electrocuting and ultimately killing himself, Quattro Formaggi still maintains some sort of lucidity and corporeal unity. Even though he is clearly experiencing a schizophrenic breakdown of Jamesonian signifiers, he still knows definitively that it is precisely his head which has caused him to act the way that he has throughout the years. What begs to be asked, then, is the following question: If the “mad” person knows the origin of his madness, then is he fully and truly mad? This is the question which contemporary fiction poses regarding the fragmented “self”. Formaggi is fully aware that he embodies a man in irreparable pieces, for he equates the various fragments of his life with the pieces of garbage in which he lives and thrives. At the same time, however, he is the epitome of the fragmented self with Lacanian discrete unities in the sense that he is aware, up until the very end, that his fragmentation is caused by the driving forces which center in his head and which cause him to act.

In the last moment that Quattro Formaggi is alive, he comes to realize that he himself has been the missing piece to his presepe. He states, in the moment when his brain seems to explode

and when he ceases to breathe, that all of a sudden “(c)apì cosa mancava al presepe. Non era Ramona. Era così semplice. *Io. Mancavo io*” (494). In this sense, Formaggi represents both the representative ‘dead’ self who can no longer confront the pieces of his existence and who, at the same time, demonstrates the postmodern schizophrenic self’s ability to use the ego in order to continue to exhibit some forms of “selfness”. Furthermore, the unreliability of the narrator forces the reader to question the true meaning of “Mancavo io.” Does Formaggi realize that he is the embodiment of ultimate evil and should be the sacrifice? Or does he believe that he is the only devoted one and should be placed next to Jesus and Mary within the nativity? A return to the general third person narrative contributes to the chaos and confusion of the moment, as it is stated that after the blinding flashes of light, then “ci fu il buio che libera” (494). Does this liberating darkness refer directly to Formaggi, or instead to those whom he has terrorized within the earthly realm? The text does not state, for example, that it was specifically the darkness that freed him, as it omits the indirect object of “lo,” or “him”. In this sense, therefore, the narrator remains deliberately vague in order to encourage the reader to continue to question the intentions of Formaggi and his schizophrenia until the last possible relevant narrative moment. While the lengthy, complex novel does sum itself up within the course of one and a quarter pages, the reader remains until the very end riddled with questions pertaining to Quattro Formaggi’s mental state and qualifications as a good/evil character. He is truly the epitome of the schizophrenic postmodern antihero who is intrinsically fragmented, yet always struggling to find order from the chaos of his contemporary daily life.

A final way in which the self is questioned in postmodern Irish and Italian contemporary fiction is through the means in which language is visually expressed upon the page. We have already seen examples of how language reflects the fragmented self through Campo’s unnamed

female protagonist, McCabe's Hatch / Strange, and Ammaniti's Quattro Formaggi; these literary figures represent a postmodern style of fragmentation and chaos through their sentences which frequently sit on two ends of the grammatical spectrum; that is, they speak and think either like tidal waves, with a deluge of words without moderation through punctuation, or like choppy pieces, composed of terse bits of sentence fragments. One of the most fitting examples of this dichotomy lies within the work of Aldo Nove, who masterfully demonstrates postmodern fragmentation specifically through the means of language and sentence structure.

While the style of Nove remains fairly consistent in his work both before and after the new millennium, the many facets of his writing clearly reflect postmodern fragmentation. Much of his work, for example, is composed of disparate short stories, in which each chapter recounts a completely different personal narrative. These narratives may either reflect a similar topic, coming together through the fragmentation of each separate chapter, or they may remain thematically disparate from one another. In all cases, however, there is a movement from the local to the general, or the minute to the universal, in which the various pieces of language and narrative form a patchwork quilt of ideas pertaining to the larger crises associated with contemporary life.

In order to understand the crisis of the individual, one may look to Nove's *Superwoobinda* (Einaudi, 1998) as a primary example. In this collection of short stories, individuals exhibit strong moments of crisis through both fragmented language and narrative. In considering only narrative structure in *Superwoobinda*, for example, stories range from a child who kills his parents because of a particular brand of shampoo, to a boy who is upset that Berlusconi's right-winged media will no longer allow viewers to see Woobinda ("Animal Doctor"), and finally to a girl named Rosalba who spends her life orally servicing the men whom

she meets. Even though these topics are absolutely spread apart from one another, each serves to comment upon the chaotic and desperate situation of Postmodernity. In his short stories, Nove advances postmodern literature by forming new modes of identification through pieces of narrative; while each character in *Superwoobinda*, for instance, is of a different sign of the zodiac, this fact really has no greater impact in connecting the stories. There is no other general framing device, apart from the general feeling of chaos, confusion, desperation, and fragmentation which the various characters face. A further characteristic of Nove's work which takes him one step further than Calvino in simultaneously developing postmodern narrative and depicting an updated picture of the postmodern condition is through the language which he chooses to employ. Like the *Giovani Cannibali*, Nove is not afraid to focus upon and describe the sordid reality which human entities encounter in the contemporary quotidian; in doing so, he greatly magnifies the way in which "selves" are unfailingly fragmented. For example, of Rosalba mentioned above, the following is recounted:

Mi chiamo Rosalba, ho ventisette anni e sono un attimino bella. Per questo ho sempre un cazzo in bocca. Da quando avevo quindici anni gli uomini quando mi vedono diventano cretini e vogliono subito mettermi il cazzo in bocca...

... All'inizio era noioso perché il prete che insegnava al ginnasio voleva che gli facessi le seghe il primo giorno era timido il secondo di meno poi sempre più rompicazzo quell prete gli ho detto vatti a farti segare dalla Madonna ho preso l'esame di religione.

Poi per la strada mi gridano sempre ciao bella figa complimenti suca 'sta minchia
io ogni tanto le succhiavo ma non a tutti non si può.

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In the above passage, much is revealed within the fragments of narrative which Rosalba chooses to recount. Because *Nove* is clearly working within the realm of the Postmodern, there is no fear that an audience will be scandalized by his language or choice of subject. Rosalba is straightforward when it comes to her expressing her beauty and how it has led to her profession, and she is further resigned to conveying fragments of her biography in a matter-of-fact way. In Postmodernity, shock value is no longer viable; everything that a reader could be exposed to has already happened in Modernity, and so one is left to only use language in order to grasp at a piecemeal understanding of her biography and point of view. As opposed to earlier postmodern work, however, this type of language becomes even more hyper-magnified; what before might have been considered pornographic here becomes a mere expression of the contemporary quotidian. The reader is neither shocked nor appalled; instead, one reacts on an emotional level to Rosalba's narration of the events which occur, rather than to her strong use of language in itself.

Stylistically, Rosalba depicts the chaos of Postmodernity through her frenzied run-on sentences, hyper-candid language and underlying sense of irony. In structuring her language in this way, Rosalba, in a sense, represents the postmodern effects of technology and technocracy upon her everyday life. Her language, without its pauses and continuous ebb and flow, reminds the reader of a confessional style reality T.V. show; one has the sense that she would be right at

home on an episode of *Oprah* or *Jerry Springer*.

Moreover, Rosalba's language which places a strong emphasis upon irony is particularly indicative of Nove's Postmodernism. Again, the use of irony as a primary mode of expression is nothing new; it was present in Modernity and is a force which remains from that time onward. However, it is the way in which this irony is expressed which continues to develop within the context of Postmodernism. Jameson clarifies the relationship between irony and Postmodernity in the following:

I take such spatial peculiarities of postmodernism as symptoms and expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentering of global capital itself. Not even Einsteinian relativity, or the multiple subjective worlds of the older modernists, is capable of giving any kind of adequate figuration to this process, which in lived experience makes itself felt by the so-called death of the subject, or, more exactly, the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last (which can no longer even serve the function of the Jamesian reverberator or "point of view").

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In the above passage, Jameson demonstrates exactly how the language of irony plays out and continues to develop within a continually changing postmodern context. To equate the development of irony with questions pertaining to the bourgeoisie and to global capital is not a stretch; Nove's stories, for example, tend to reflect middle-class bourgeois life, as well as the characteristics which pertain to this type of life through brand names, media, television, money, and politics. The chaos of Postmodernity, therefore, is continually supported through irony; the difference between modern and postmodern irony, however, revolves around the changing ways in which a fragmented subject's "discontinuous realities" continue to shape this same entity's perception of his or her own perceived, conceptual "reality."

From a study of a variety of contemporary Italian and Irish texts, the apparent crisis of the "self" through fragmentation becomes evident. While this crisis may occur due to factors such as narcissism, as in the cases of Pussy Braden and Daniele Sandroni, it may instead go deeper into the psyche, as in the cases of Hatch/Strange and Quattro Formaggi. Fragmentation of the self in Postmodernity may be due to outside influences, such as the reliance of 'lei' upon alcohol, or may simply be endemic to society, such as in the stylistic characteristics of Nove's language. What lies at the heart of postmodern fragmentation, however, are the ways in which "selves" attempt to come to terms with this sense of the breakdown of the self. While characters such as Pussy and Daniele hide their personal crises behind their self-importance and narcissism, others, like Campo's 'lei,' may at any moment use either outside sources, such as alcohol, or resign themselves to being inherently fragmented for life. Schizophrenia as exhibited by Quattro Formaggi and Hatch allows a complete escape from self-fragmentation through a breakdown of signifiers and through a confabulation of events linking past, present, and future.

In concluding my dissertation with a discussion of fragmentation, the many disparate elements of postmodern Irish and Italian fiction begin to surface; in this sense, one can claim that it is the most important trait of Postmodernity. In considering technology, for example, an emphasis upon speed and technological innovation help to both vary and enrich the level of textual meaning ultimately creating new points of reference for a contemporary readership. In the case of music, fragmentation manifests itself through the frequency and placement of either direct reference or allusion to lyric. These textual aspects provide both division and association, creating ever- changing patchworks of narrative reference. This variation of narrative is noted equally in consumer culture, where brands and branding are responsible for connecting the past to the present, as well as redefining the way in which narrative time is understood. Finally, what begins to surface from an examination of fragmented ‘selves,’ is a new patchwork quilt of communication resulting from difference. It is here, then, that the total “death of the subject” must be refuted. Even though selves are inherently fragmented, they still call for some sort of order and, within their fragmentation, demonstrate the vestiges of ‘selfness through nostalgic or traumatic associations with the past.’

Whereas once Yeats’s dancers and dance relied upon spacial and temporal relationships of contact through touch, sight, and sound, current narrative now proves that the fragmented self no longer relies upon these basic forms of connection and unity. Instead, what we are left with are the pieces of remaining fragments, either biographical or narrative, which these same fragmented ‘selves’ employ in order to create new modes of function or participation in the contemporary social order.

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