

Most Colonial, Postcolonial, Post-postcolonial?: Irish Skulls and (K)iwī Bones

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Abstract: This essay takes a comparative approach to the continuum between 1990s debate regarding the representation of the Irish story in postcolonial terms and questions of contemporary Irish self-fashioning. Keri Hulme’s *the bone people* (1984) is employed as a framework for a series of encounters with Eilís Ní Dhuibhne’s *The Dancers Dancing* (1999), which highlights the latter as both a manifestation and interrogation of Irish postcoloniality. In so doing, these encounters act as a bi-focal lens, focalizing the concerns of the context of composition of Ní Dhuibhne’s text and also the challenges of the Irish context over a decade on. This essay engages with the palimpsestic layering that characterizes historical and cultural inheritance in late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century Ireland, attending to questions of materiality and the postcolonial and the exegetical properties of the latter as a frame for the evolution of Irish experience.

I am Irish. I teach in Aotearoa New Zealand: a space inhabited by the descendants of its first settlers, who now constitute a fourth-world indigenous group, the “neither [colonizer]/nor [colonized]” (Slemon 30) descendants of second-wave European (Pakeha) settlers and more recent multicultural arrivals. Unsurprisingly then, and unlike a significant group of late twentieth-century Irish studies commentators, a student audience in New Zealand takes little issue with the notion of the postcolonial encompassing multiple and diverse scenarios, such as those afforded by Northern Ireland’s mix of native Catholics and descendants of Protestant settlers, and by the webs of complicity and resistance that characterize the history of the Republic (hereafter “Ireland”) as former Free State, former constituent of the United Kingdom, and former

colony. This essay broaches the relationship between the 1990s debate regarding the representation of “Ireland’s story” (Foster 6) in postcolonial terms and questions of contemporary Irish self-fashioning; and it does so by comparing two novels, one from New Zealand and one from Ireland.

The same year (1999) that Éilís Ní Dhuibhne published *The Dancers Dancing*, the third Galway conference on colonialism closed with a plenary session entitled “Was Ireland a Colony?” The subject was the site of little dispute in the context of a gathering that included Luke Gibbons, David Lloyd, Christine Kinealy, and Terry Eagleton, but it had been the source of much controversy throughout the preceding decade and remained so in the early 2000s. Revisionist historians and critics had frequently asserted the disingenuousness of Irish claims to both historic colonial status and postcoloniality on grounds of Irish complicity in empire, false equivalencies between Ireland and third world postcolonial spaces, and the appositeness of European conflicts as comparative contexts.¹ Postcolonialists were cartooned as the blame Britain brigade and were famously diagnosed by one revisionist historian as suffering from MOPE syndrome: “Most oppressed people ever” (Kennedy 121). Postcolonialists countered that the revisionists suffered from an historical myopia that insisted on “‘modern’ Ireland” as the author of its own ills and maintained that “the only appropriate time frame for understanding [modern Ireland] has to set the clock running” at the 1916 Rising. According to postcolonialists, the revisionist stance deemed “[a]ny efforts to broaden the time frame . . . evasive—a delusional retreat from the reality that modern Ireland (for which read the Republic) can be understood only as a construction of Irish people themselves alone—and a hopeless construction at that” (Whelan, “Between Filiation and Affiliation” 96–97).

By the mid 2000s, “overly tidy schematizations” of these opposing groups were the subject of effective critique (e.g., Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune* 3). Nevertheless, the social and economic transformations of the Celtic Tiger period (1995–2007) had intensified the schism regarding modernization that characterized these factions. Conor McCarthy and others have established the correlation between revisionist thought

and modernization theory,² while, as Joe Cleary writes, postcolonial studies retained a “warier” stance regarding “modernization discourse,” believing it to be “a contemporary variant on the nineteenth century bourgeois ideology of evolutionary progress, the occluded side of which has always been European imperialism” (*Outrageous Fortune* 5, 18). For postcolonialists, modernization is a sign first of colonization,³ then of postcoloniality (seen as the exertion of, or a response to, the legacy of colonialism), given that the vigorous pursuit of post-independence modernization and normativity, following a period of “aspiration for a revived national culture . . . is a common enough feature of national post-independence narratives everywhere” (Cleary, “Ireland and Modernity” 14). If the drive for modernization both attests to and seeks to eclipse a postcolonial condition, the realization of that drive, in the form of the neo-liberal state, threatens to relegate some versions of the “postcolonial” narrative permanently. In and beyond the first half of the reign of the Celtic Tiger, anxiety about such relegation resulted in postcolonial commentary emphasizing the extension of the postcolonial inheritance to psychic wounds generations after the fact of colonial experience.⁴ Such accounts have traditionally acted as the red flag to the revisionist bull or, rather, have had the effect of producing revisionist red flags in relation to suspected postcolonial bull.

Against mid- to late-1990s declarations of the difficulty of “wallow[ing] in post-colonial self-pity, when the ex-colony is wealthier than the old mother country” (O’Toole, “Emerald Tiger” C1), there stands the twenty-first century assertion that “a decade of transformation cannot undo historical legacies” (Moane 114) and Luke Gibbons’ famous 1996 dictum that “Ireland is a First World country, but with a Third World memory” (*Transformations* 3 [further extended in his 2002 “The Global Cure?”]). This sentiment resonates with Terry Eagleton’s construction of the Famine as “the Irish Auschwitz” (13). A version of this debate erupted in New Zealand in the same period. In a 2000 speech to the New Zealand Psychological Society Conference, Tariana Turia, then Associate Minister for Maori Affairs and future founder and co-leader of the Maori party, generated a national furor by asserting a Maori “holocaust” and claiming that Maori and other indigenous groups were suf-

fering from “Post-Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder (PCTSD),” one of the symptoms of which involved the perpetration of domestic abuse. Turia’s case was based on intergenerational trauma, on the effects of parents and grandparents being beaten for speaking their own language, and on historic land seizures (n.p.). The same controversy resurfaced in February 2012, when Te Reo Maori teacher Keri Opai laid claim to a “holocaust” from which Maori are “still recovering” (qtd. in Dickison n.p.). The Ireland of 2012–2013 faces renewed questions of self-representation and national inheritance, following a period in 2010–2011 when, in an inversion of previous critical concerns regarding the eclipse of a postcolonial condition, populist rhetoric surrounding the loss of economic sovereignty in the wake of the collapsed Celtic Tiger threatened (as we shall see) to obscure the vicissitudes of Irish postcoloniality. This essay engages with the palimpsestic layering that variously characterizes historical and cultural inheritance in late twentieth-century and twenty-first century Ireland, focusing on questions of materiality and the postcolonial and on the exegetical properties of the latter as a framework for the evolution of Irish experience. How does an emphasis on “actually existing political, economic and cultural conditions” (Parry 12) impact the tenure of the term “postcolonial” in relation to contemporary Ireland?⁵

As well as lending itself to mid/late 1990s debates regarding Ireland’s postcoloniality, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s novel, *The Dancers Dancing* educes concerns regarding cultural inheritance that have only increased in relevance since the novel’s publication in 1999. A highly pragmatic text, very much grounded in the material, the novel raises questions regarding the (over-)availability of postcoloniality as a rationale for Irish life rather than promoting the postcolonial as a tool for “the reconstitution of alternative narratives” of Ireland and Irishness (Lloyd 17). If Irish postcolonial studies has, among other things,⁶ sought to “determine how Irish social and cultural development was mediated by colonial capitalism” (Cleary, “Misplaced Ideas?” 43),⁷ Ní Dhuibhne’s novel cautions against the distortion of this project into simplistic calibrations of cause and effect.⁸ This text is characterized by ambivalence and ambidexterity; it induces questions rather than consolidates positions.

What we might see in this novel as an overly narrow materialist perspective on the postcolonial can equally be seen as facilitating a critique of reductionism. My recourse to a comparative context here, as opposed to a contextualization of Ní Dhuibhne's novel in terms of her Irish literary peers, asserts both the relevance of the wider postcolonial context and an interest in the parameters of Irish postcolonial narratives. I use Keri Hulme's Booker McConnell prize-winning novel, *the bone people* (1984), as a framework for a series of encounters with Ní Dhuibhne's text, highlighting the latter as both an incarnation and an interrogation of Irish postcoloniality. These encounters act as a bi-focal lens, bringing into focus the concerns both of the novel's (late 1990s) time of composition and over a decade on. In both moments, the question of viable and relevant cultural inheritance is paramount. This question looms large in both Hulme's and Ní Dhuibhne's texts, not least in their representations of language and the relationships brokered between past and present.

Hulme's novel is generally seen as integral to the flowering of biculturalism in New Zealand, while Ní Dhuibhne's text arrived around the apotheosis of brand Ireland.⁹ At the centre of each text is a hybrid figure. Ní Dhuibhne's novel focuses on thirteen-year-old Orla Crilly: the Dublin child of an English mother (who has determinedly embraced Irishness) and West-of-Ireland father. Hulme's text presents the triumvirate of artist Kerewin Holmes (one eighth Maori by blood, white by appearance, all Maori by inclination), her less controversially Maori peer Joseph Gillayley, and his mute Pakeha (allegedly of Irish descent) adopted son, Simon P. Gillayley. *the bone people* seems to embrace the Maori motif of the *koru* or double spiral ("an old symbol of rebirth" [45]) in both its ideology and compositional structure by literally placing "the end at the beginning" (prologue title) and closing with "TE MUTUNGA – RANEI TE TAKE" (445), translated in the work's glossary as "the end – or the beginning" (450).¹⁰ The "symbolic centre and structural spine" of Ní Dhuibhne's text is the burn (St. Peter 29)—a body of water that is "endlessly beginning and endlessly ending" (Ní Dhuibhne 2), so that the relationship between past and present is continually up for review. This impression is enhanced by the units of the

text (which are not labelled “chapters”) having titles but no numbers and by the way the narration keeps two “presents” in play: the novel is set in 1972, while an epilogue entitled “Now” refers to an unspecified period between 1997 and 1999. Where *the bone people* refashions the Künstlerroman (Buckman 49), *The Dancers Dancing* innovates the Bildungsroman (Kiberd, “Declan Kiberd” 296), resolutely avoiding climaxes in its chronicling of a three-week summer period in the lives of young Dublin and Derry schoolgirls spent at an Irish college in the Gaeltacht (or Irish-speaking area).¹¹

Both texts experiment with language. Puns in Maori and English abound in Hulme’s text, while both writers display a penchant for neologisms. More importantly, each novel, though composed in English, features an indigenous language. Hulme’s text contains an incomplete Maori/English glossary, while Ní Dhuibhne’s offers no such resource for the untranslated Irish. It is long established that “the choice of leaving words untranslated . . . is a political act” (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 66) and that the significance of this act varies. Maori is clearly privileged in Hulme’s text. As many commentators have noted, it is the language of emotion and connection to place,¹² and it decentres the main language of transmission in line with the assertion of cultural agency we have come to expect from postcolonial novels. Those who speak and understand Maori are thereby validated and privileged amongst the novel’s readership. Yet the existence of the glossary points to the novel’s extension of itself to those outside Maori culture (Maori and non-Maori alike). The glossary includes translations of such fundamental terms as “Maoritanga” (“Maori culture, Maoriness” [446]) and “Haere mai” (“as well as a greeting, this phrase means Come here” [448]) for the complete novice, while its selectiveness also keeps its novitiates at arm’s length.¹³ The overall effect cultivates mystique, reinforcing the idea of Maori as a sacred language (“no swear words in that tongue” [12]). Non-Maori-speaking Maori readers may be galvanized to embrace the language, and if other readers are left wanting in, the onus is on them to (l)earn their way towards cultural insiderness (to borrow Melani Anae’s model). All pointers, then, are towards an increase in Te Reo Maori’s stock price, albeit via exoticization.

On the face of it, the absence of a glossary from Ní Dhuibhne's *The Dancers Dancing* looks like an act of agency that enforces the exteriority of those outside the Irish language. However, my sense is that the immediate function of this absence has less to do with the desire-inducing gaps in Hulme's glossary than with an alternative strategy that facilitates a specific critique of Ireland's relationship with its own language.¹⁴ Ní Dhuibhne seems less concerned with demarcating insiders and outsiders than with the dynamics of an inside group. She has made it clear, in interview, that outsiders are effectively casualties of her method and purpose:

If I use a few words in Irish e.g., basic greetings, it would be patronising for me to offer translations to Irish audiences. It is part of my artistic purpose to refrain from doing that in a novel such as *The Dancers Dancing*. . . . I don't think I can change my approach in the interests of people outside. ("Appendix" 178)

Most of the text's Irish, with its significant component of statements of rule, was, until close to the end of the twentieth century, the daily fodder of Irish lessons in National School: "Ná bígí ag labhairt Béarla!" "Nílimid ag labhairt Béarla, a mháistir!" (176) ("Don't be talking English!" "We're not talking English, Master!"). The untranslated Irish in the text thus exists at and highlights the limits of the average Irish reader's knowledge of the language.¹⁵

The very fact that the text's untranslated Irish is comprehensible to Ní Dhuibhne's primary audience is a critique of the way Irish was taught in National Schools: a system that emphasized learning by rote (parodied in the inanity of rebellious Derry schoolgirl Pauline's translation of stock "ballroom of romance" lines in her flirtation with teacher "Killer Jack" [196]). The Irish language featured in the novel is not predominantly the language as Ní Dhuibhne would have it (note that Irish in the novel is, in places, italicized and thereby exteriorized in a way that the unitalicized Maori in Hulme's text is not). Rather, it is largely the language of a blinkered school system, the institutionalized arbiter of middle-class expectation. Irish, as Orla is well aware, was crucial at that time to employment in the civil service.¹⁶ Until the success of

the Language Freedom Movement's campaign in 1973, a pass in Irish was (in an example of "reverse ethnocentrism" [Parry 41]) required for the award of the Leaving Certificate, in the same way that, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o tells us, a pass in English was required for an overall pass of the Kenya African Preliminary Examination "no matter how brilliant . . . [the performance] in the other subjects" (12). As a result of these state measures, Irish is not regarded by Ní Dhuibhne's characters as the medium for "intimate" conversations (159) or "important" information (241); it is not deemed worthy of the beautiful soprano voice of Alison, who is permitted by the teachers to sing in English (177). A non-Irish speaking reader will be aware of Ní Dhuibhne's agenda in so far that Ní Dhuibhne is explicit about the existence of multiple Irishes, which are not accommodated by the largely monolithic (largely Dublin) version of Irish instituted within the National School system: "Donegal Irish is so much more outlandish than Connemara Irish and so much more unusual. . . . *Caidé mar atá tú* instead of *Conas atá tú*" (41). However, that reader will not be sensible of the full extent of the critique of the institutionalization of language, where the reader's existing knowledge of the language functions to a significant degree as indictment.

This critique of post-independence state practice then moves into classic postcolonial resistance territory with the blatant strategy of "abrogation and appropriation" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 39) enacted in the section "A traditional Irish schoolhouse" (42). The opening paragraph is delivered in standard English. The first line of the second paragraph makes a concerted leap into Hiberno-English (Irish as variously spoken in Ireland): "Six classes there are, all and every one of them in the schoolhouse" (42), but the paragraph increasingly moves beyond Hiberno-English and closer to a direct translation of Irish: "Will not the folk and animal life of Tubber be putting in on them" (42). The translation becomes more literal as the vignette continues: "Repeat the pupils the sentences after her, and then learn they them by clean mind" (43). This drastic domestication of English (see Rushdie 64) is simultaneously, and more importantly, the Irish language at its most assertive in the novel. Irish is at its most flamboyant and most impressive at the moment when it is most conspicuously absent. In this way, Ní

Dhuibhne promotes the language that the reader does not have, the language that the average Irish reader would not understand (had she included it).

That Ní Dhuibhne locates the most transformative writing in the text in “A traditional Irish schoolhouse” identifies that site as, historically, one of decolonization and targets the shortcomings of nationalist strategies of language preservation within that space. Ní Dhuibhne does not stop, however, at the appropriation of English and the promotion of an absent Irish: her exertion of cultural agency also radicalizes Hiberno-English and thereby subverts the nationalist orthodoxy that dismissed Hiberno-English in favour of an increasingly institutionalized Irish. The continuum between Hiberno-English and Irish is enforced (i.e., where does Hiberno-English in that section end and the literal translation of Irish begin?), and we see a simultaneously playful and pragmatic investment in the cultural capital of a blended or hybridized inheritance.¹⁷

An emphasis on Ireland as the progenitor of its own problems may have been the hallmark of the revisionist ethos in the late twentieth century, but it is hardly the case that Irish postcolonial studies is uncritical of the rigidities of nationalist pieties, much as revisionists have liked to conflate proponents of the two. When asked towards the end of a 2003 interview about the relevance of postcolonial discourse to Ireland (having invoked “the postcolonial Irish” at the start of the interview [“Moloney” 104]), Ní Dhuibhne answered, “It’s very complicated, isn’t it” (114), before elaborating on the enduring duality of the Irish character, which, she suggested, could be a consequence of having to cultivate a separate persona to deal with the overlords (115). The end of the interview seems to broadly assert a logic of postcolonial “reaction” (115) (though the concluding response is markedly unclear);¹⁸ however, the final stages of the interview also indicate the nature of the “complicat[ion]” Ní Dhuibhne perceives: “What one would be aware of historically is that Irish nationalism constitutes a backlash against everything that’s British, but has produced a terribly rigidly Catholic, censorial, punitive society which evolved after independence and which most people now would have enormous problems with” (115). The “but” is commensurate with the traditional site of postcolonial and revisionist contest. In the first

clause, Irish nationalism and its produce are the legacy of colonialism and consequently comprise Ireland's postcolonial baggage. The "but" creates space for the second clause to function as a qualifier, allowing for the backlash and its evolution into de Valera's Ireland to exceed the exegetical properties of a basic framework of postcoloniality and for the society that "evolved after independence" to warrant consideration on discrete terms.¹⁹ We can chart this same trajectory in the narrator's account of the novel's "Irish college":

Not the kind [of Irish college] you find in Paris or Louvain, homes from home for prieststeens bravely defying the Penal Laws . . . in ancient Catholic cities far from the chilly Mass rocks . . . that await their heroic return, bearers of . . . the magic words, the holy chalice which encloses . . . the identity of the nation. Our body, our blood. . . . Our paradise. Our link with Rome and Jerusalem, Spain and Paris. Everything that is exotic, different, warm, unreal and other. Other but not English. (20)

Within this parodic rendering of resistance is set the ambidexterity of the phrase "Other but not English," which functions as a hinge in a manner similar to the "but" of the later interview. On the one hand, the phrase, in the context of this passage, asserts colonialism at the root of all ills: as inducing, or at least stimulating, the reflex that produced the extreme commitment to Catholicism that would yield a warped future. On the other hand, in its self-deprecating tone, the phrase also critiques the active agency (mimicked and gently mocked by the narrator in the surrounding passage) that devises and perpetuates its own (ultimately self-limiting) terms. This ambivalence extends into the second paragraph: "It is an Irish college of the other kind, born in the heady days of the Celtic Revival, allowed to fade somewhat during the long dull struggle for self-assertion, the deprived harsh childhood of the new Ireland, and revived again now that the country has reached adolescence and is breaking away from its Roman fathers" (20). This sentence facilitates two competing perspectives. The substitution of subjugation to the Church for subjugation to England could be seen as consistent with the pathology of decolonization intimated in the

previous paragraph. That diagnosis is countered by an alternative view of the sentence which sees the postcolonial frame (the trope of the nation-child's struggle for self-assertion against the imperial parent)²⁰ hijacked, overwritten, and overridden by the juggernaut of Catholic Ireland.

The text's potential to reflect 1990s debates culminates in Orla's discovery of the infant skeletons at the burn. Possibly "a cillín (communal burial site for unbaptized children)" (McGovern 249) but more likely a site of serial infanticide (St. Peter 40), it is striking that what this young Dubliner discovers buried in the earth of the West is not a famine grave but rather this counter-monument to the rigidities of Catholic Irish society. The cause of one million deaths and the source of an equal loss to emigration, the famine—for so long neglected by professional historian and public discourse and then reclaimed by academic and popular attention around the time of its 150th anniversary in the mid-1990s—plays a pivotal role in the postcolonial narrative of Ireland, testifying to colonial neglect and exploitation at a time when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom (Kinealy, "Was Ireland a colony?") and to the recesses of cultural memory.²¹ John Waters, writing in the *Irish Times* in 1994 famously postulated the inherited trauma of the famine and urged Ireland (in the words of Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham) to "remember those things we never knew" (9). Yet what we have in Ní Dhuibhne's skulls is another, not unrelated, inheritance, one that applies particularly to women in and of this place.

The burn is where Orla feels most herself: "Orla belonged with the river. She was nothing there. . . . And completely herself. . . . Just Orla" (86). Her restorative relationship with the burn is like that experienced by Kerewin Holmes at Moerangi (her "real home" Hulme [164]): "O land, you're too deep in my heart and mind. O sea, you're the blood of me" (166). In *the bone people*, Kerewin is cast as "the digger" (336). She has recurring dreams of a marae (or meeting place) at the centre of an island and is told to dig (254). In a further dream "[s]he diminishes to bones, and the bones sink into the earth which cries 'Haere mai' and the movement ceases" (428). Orla experiences a comparable (if converse) communion with the land at the burn. As Susan Cahill points out, just

before uncovering the skulls (an act that involves instinctive recognition and a palimpsestic “pulling and scraping” [Ní Dhuibhne 236]), Orla feels the land enter her, weigh her down, and this coincides with her menarche (80). Orla’s discovery is followed by a dream that, like Kerewin’s, seems to be imbued with clairvoyant properties and to involve cultural transmission. In terms notably similar to “remember[ing] those things we never knew,” the narrator asks “Can you dream what you do not know?” (245). This phrasing encourages attention to representations of the relationship between the cultural (especially female) inheritance signaled in Orla’s dream and the Great Hunger.

Orla dreams of a forebear in pre-independence Ireland,²² Nuala Crilly, and Nuala’s giving birth, casting the child over the burn, and being hanged for her crime (245–46). Where Joe’s abuse of Simon in *the bone people* conforms, to a large degree, to Tariana Turia’s PCTSD model by (re-)enacting both Joe’s own mistreatment as a child, occasioned by his looking too Maori and “the narcissistic pattern of violence which Fanon describes as a consequence of (neo-)colonial repression[:] . . . an expression of frustrated disempowerment” (Keown 111), what of the infanticide in Orla’s dream? The latter is bound up in a social system entrenched by the “devotional revolution,” Emmet Larkin’s now canonical term for the nineteenth-century emergence of archetypal Irish Catholicism,²³ which was consolidated by “the cultural carnage of the famine” and church opportunism and expansion (Whelan, “Cultural Effects” 138). Orla’s dream occurs in a unit entitled “The workhouse” (245). This title has an ambiguous relationship with the unit’s content, drawing the issue of framing and elucidatory contexts to the reader’s attention. The draconian workhouse was often the only avenue available to unwed mothers and their offspring in late nineteenth-century Ireland. However, the workhouse is also inseparable from famine horrors. In keeping with the text’s penchant for provocative titles that effect strategic incongruities with units’ subject matter [e.g., “A traditional Irish schoolhouse,” “The truce is over (but not to worry it’s 1972)”], the gap between this title and the section’s content accommodates not only the potential for the famine to provide an explicatory framework for Catholic Ireland but the potential for such re-

course to the famine to obscure as well as to elucidate. Where Whelan worries that “[c]ommentaries that neglect this deeper [famine-centric and, to a large degree, colonial-centric] history [of Catholic Ireland] in favour of a foreshortened version run serious risks of distortion and shallowness” (138), this section of the text induces wariness regarding an alternative contraction: one that is implicit in the encapsulation of Catholic Ireland as a colonial and subsequently “Postcolonial Traumatic Stress Response” (Episkenew 9).

In any case, Kerewin’s and Orla’s dreams pertain, respectively, to the eclipse of Maoritanga and the Irish women and children who belied the Catholic and nationalist construction of Ireland as “the desirable rural idyll” (Ní Dhuibhne 6). The title of Hulme’s novel relates to a pun: “E nga iwi o nga iwi” (395). We’re told in the glossary that “[i]t means, O the bones of the people (where ‘bones’ stands for ancestors or relations), or, O the people of the bones (i.e. the beginning people, the people who make another people)” (450). The triumvirate of Kerewin, Joe, and Simon are the inheritors of the past—symbolically, if not in all cases literally, descended from the ancestors—but also the harbingers of renewal: those who renew the community through recourse to the past. Orla, in her uncovering of the skulls (in one of the pseudo-climaxes of the text), is also of the bones of the people: “He knows I am connected to the skulls, although I don’t know how, myself” (242). With Kerewin, the call is to uncover a lost, buried, cultural centre, to renew community through connectivity and also contact with the land (and thereby the past). Orla’s experience, by contrast, is less a vocation she is to share with the reader than an invitation for readerly speculation regarding the porousness of time and place and how this issue bears on both the nature and narrative framing of cultural inheritance. In response to this invitation, I will consider the relationship between past and present and the issue of cultural inheritance in each text before returning to the issue of framing.

We know that *the bone people* posits the end at the beginning and the beginning at the end, but what are these various ends and beginnings and what of the material in between? Homi K. Bhabha assessed Frantz Fanon as recognizing

the crucial importance, for subordinated peoples, of asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories. But [Fanon] is far too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial cultures to recommend that “roots” be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenizing the history of the present. (9)

Whether or not *the bone people* shares this awareness has been a point of critical contention (e.g., see Keown and Shieff). The recourse to the past in *the bone people* has led to accusations that the novel perpetuates the Edenic fallacy of the golden age. The biblical terms of this charge are supported, to begin with, by the famously diverse range of cultural myths as well as philosophical and new-age material alluded to within the text.²⁴ Mark Williams writes that “Hulme has projected backwards into prehistory the familiar settler myth of New Zealand as a possible Eden” (96). As Williams notes, it is not that Hulme is simply trafficking in an equation between the pre-contact and the prelapsarian. When the kaumatua (or elder), Tiaki Mira, speaks of what has been lost in New Zealand, that loss is located pre-colonization:

I was taught that it was the old people’s belief that this country, and our people, are different and special. That something very great had . . . given itself to us. But we changed. We ceased to nurture the land. We fought among ourselves. We were overcome by those white people in their hordes. . . . We forgot . . . that Aotearoa was the shining land. (364)

What is sought, then, is a reconnection with “the spirit of the islands, part of the spirit of the earth herself” (364). While Maoritanga is clearly privileged in the text, this is not so much about recapturing a prelapsarian cultural scenario as it is about a renewal of the present, involving recourse to an admittedly idealized “spirit” of the distant past and also self-conscious invention. This is discernible from the representation of language in the text, which acts as a register of the novel’s conception of the past in relation to a desired cultural reality.

Sensitive to this register, Williams writes of “the novel’s pervasive hankering for the lost pre-industrial world in which the names of trades and tools of trades seemed to have a closer connection to actual things than they have in the ‘fallen’ post-industrial world” (93). Certainly the text flirts with the essentialist discourse associated with a prelapsarian construction of the past. The most extreme example of this is the critically-neglected runic carvings on Kerewin’s knife, “Seafire,” where the runes, which double as Kerewin’s initials, have an essential relation to Kerewin (as referent): “They’re letters, but not our kind. They’re called runes, cen, os, and hagall. My initials. They also have other meanings. It is a strange and providential chance that what they stand for and my initials, are the same thing” (304). “Cen” (“Kenaz”) or “K” entails the “beacon,” “torch,” “fire of transformation and regeneration. Power to create your own reality” (Halvorsen n.p.). “Cen” “reversed” (or inverted, in a negative state) is a harbinger of “disease, breakup, instability, lack of creativity” (Halvorsen n.p.). Remember that Kerewin, wallowing in negativity, is subject to disease; she cannot paint and cannot forge genuine bonds with Joe and Simon. Kerewin healed, however, is a transformative force. “Os” (“Ansuz”) or “A” involves “power of words and naming” (Halvorsen n.p.). “Os” reversed portends “grandiloquence” (Halvorsen n.p.). Joe tells us that he needs a dictionary to talk to Kerewin whose defense is often excessive verbiage. “Hagall” (“Hagalaz”) or “H” relates to “Controlled crisis, leading to completion, inner harmony” (Halvorsen n.p.). This kind of essentialist discourse, however, is not ultimately consistent with the linguistic impetus of the text.

Though Williams is right that “the personal language of signs used by Simon, the mute boy, is a form of language in which there is no gap between thing and sign” (93), Simon does, however, come to exploit slippage and enjoy wordplay by the end of the text. Similarly, while “[t]he [Maori] names of precious stones and of the stars” do retain “the numinous quality of spiritualised things” (Williams 93), this privileged position of Maori (and the text is explicit about Maori being in part subjectively imbued with specialness: e.g., “the thanks in Maori don’t . . . draw the normal emotional response” [118]) co-exists with an emphasis on new language. Kerewin decrees, “One must name cats, people,

whoever whatever comes close, even though they carry their real names hidden inside them" (432). Kerewin is not attempting to regain the inaccessible (as per an Edenic fallacy); she is interested in using new, arbitrary language to connect with the immediate and changing environment and to testify to that lived connection within the context of acknowledged limitation.²⁵ Kerewin's attitude to language, then, is reflective of Stuart Hall's sense of the postcolonial relation with the past as "always-already 'after the break'" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 226). But while the novel does evince Hall's awareness of that relationship as "always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (226),²⁶ the closing emphasis on newness pushes such awareness to the point of inducing a kind of historical oblivion. We might think here of the delirious quality of the novel's opening/closing pages (3, 445). Kerewin's brief at the end of the text entails "[l]earn[ing] to label with new names" (434), a sentiment that correlates with Joe's sense that "maybe there aren't words for us yet" either in Maori or English: "Not whanau, not family" (395). The trinity of figures at the centre "have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new" (4).

At the core of the text is a hybrid, eclectic, cultural vision. If we think about the figures instrumental in the formation of the bone people, we light on the kaumatua who rescues Joe and on the nameless figure who facilitates Kerewin's recovery. The kaumatua regards himself as "the keeper" (345); yet despite being the repository of culture in the text, he has "no faith in the old ways and no hope in the new" (355). He is in need of replenishment by new blood, new faith, and this comes in the form of the unity of Joe, Kerewin, and Simon, which is foreseen by the kaumatua's grandmother and therefore remains within a Maori framework. However, this union is only effected thanks to the intervention of the kaumatua's counterpart: a nameless figure of "indeterminate" age, sex, race, and accent, with "half a face" erased (424). This creature is the ultimate unclassifiable hybrid. It is the influence of the kaumatua, and this figure who consolidates Kerewin's position "at home" (healing her and tending house), that engenders the future for hybrids and strangers and those who are willing to embrace each other and the land within a broadly Maori framework.

This envisaged cultural inheritance is not, however, unproblematic. For much of the text, Kerewin and Joe conform to Seán O’Faoláin’s account of the culturally lost. They sense that “[s]omething powerful and precious hangs in the air . . . but what it is we can hardly define because we have so few concrete things that express it” (qtd. in Whelan, “Between Filiation and Affiliation” 95). The trajectory of the text involves the concretization of this powerful and precious cultural quotient in the buildings that emerge: Kerewin’s refurbishment of the marae at Moerangi and her reconstruction of her former tower as the spiral shell house, private “but all connected” (434). These buildings concretize an ethos of community and ecology, inspired by Maoritanga but coextensive with new-age sensibilities prevalent at the time of the novel’s composition. In the novel’s materialization of the mauri or life force, which is inherited (very literally) from the past in the form of the stone Joe carries, the text takes and, as Williams notes (100), expands and generalizes a core Maori concept: “the mauri, set down, sunk itself into the hard ground” (Hulme 445). This infusion of the supposed spirit of the distant past, combined with the novel’s closing emphasis on newness, posits a panacean contraction of “the end” and “the beginning.” This is presented as instantiating the Maori double spiral but evades the associated dynamic spiraling through time whereby “[at] the same time as the spiral is going out, it is returning. At the same time as it is going forward it is going back” (Ihimaera qtd. in Keown 123). This contraction of inspirational distant past and radical newness threatens to “elide” the problematic interim history (Shieff 56), which is relegated, in the kaumatua’s previously quoted account, to the status of detour or wrong turn.²⁷ It also risks rendering Joe’s final statement on Simon’s injuries (“It’s past, but we live with it forever” [444]) lip service within the text’s scheme of cultural inheritance.

As with *the bone people*, the relationship between past and present in *The Dancers Dancing* is manifest in its conception of language; however, Ní Dhuibhne’s representation of language presents a multi-layered conception of history, one that gradually solidifies as well as invests in the kind of porousness evident in Orla’s palimpsestic experience of the skulls. Orla, like Simon (ultimately), is something of a nominalist:

“With Orla words are words are words and the link with reality is always in question” (216), but the “question” of this “link” assumes greater importance:

[N]ames often do not mean what they first seem to, however. Bun na Toinne, where her aunt lives, does not mean the Bottom of the Wave, but something about the family at Ton. Nobody knows what Ton means. Names . . . are so ancient that in some cases they are not even Irish, not even Celtic and nobody knows what they mean. There are layers in language, as there are layers in the earth. . . . You dig and dig and sometimes you don't recognise what you find. (217)

Place is here embedded in language and vice versa. Linguistic partisanship is superseded by an inheritance of lived language: of language as a register of lived experience. Ways of life may be forgotten, but language is their repository. Where *the bone people* also advocates a lived language (naming that with which you come into contact), the emphasis on willed choice and newness speaks to the subtext of “amnesty and amnesia” (to borrow Whelan’s phrase [“Between Filiation and Affiliation” 93]) within that work, by comparison to the more intricately layered inheritance and organic forgetting registered in language in Ní Dhuibhne’s text.

The privileged position of Te Reo Maori in *the bone people* finds a negative corollary in Ní Dhuibhne’s linguistic-historical scape, where the active assertion of the Irish language in relation to place constitutes an imposition. If the history of an area involves the hybridization or even the partial erasure of its language, the enforcement of an official version of the indigenous language in the present (equivalent to a despotic version of Hulme’s “new” language) then acts as a further erasure of the “linguistic contour” of the layered “landscape of . . . fact” (Friel 52). The reader is told the following:

The college has its own special jargon, which is in Irish. So all the people and the places have a different set of names from those Orla has known—or they have known themselves. . . . They all sound much more important, it seems to Orla . . .

than they do in their own funny Donegal English. . . . But she knows there is something wrong with them. Their tone is false . . . like the tinny sounds of children playing on xylophones when you are used to . . . deep ancient drums. (36–37)

This passage opposes the institutionalization of language (epitomized by the nationalist treatment of Irish) and lived language (ironically the nationalist goal) and critiques a strategy of language preservation that produces little more than the auto-exoticization that threatens *the bone people*: “Irish restores them to dignity and elegance. So she thinks, happily abandoning her own name in English, Orla Crilly, and calling herself Órla Nic Giolla Chrollaigh. That nobody, not even she herself, can pronounce it correctly does not bother her” (36).²⁸

So where then does Ní Dhuibhne’s text leave me with regard to issues of cultural inheritance? Two points of comparison with Hulme’s text are helpful here. For starters, the kaumatua and the nameless figure in *the bone people* find a counterpart in Orla’s Aunt Annie. Like the kaumatua, Aunt Annie is both “out of kilter” (164) with the modern world and the repository of oral culture: Killer Jack records her stories. Like Hulme’s nameless figure, Annie is disfigured, lopsided—features that, as several critical encounters attest, exert the lure of national allegory.²⁹ Ní Dhuibhne’s novel expresses genuine concern about the fate of the Irish language and about repositories of culture, but where Hulme’s text establishes a trajectory whereby the troubled representative of a particular cultural mode (the kaumatua) facilitates and accedes to a new model (the hybrid bone people), Ní Dhuibhne is far less decided. The critical thrust of her book is directed at misfiring strategies of cultural preservation, yet the text displays both restraint and ambivalence when it comes to advocating alternatives, emphasizing instead problems of relevance and materiality.

Where the conclusion of *the bone people* leaves us with two significant and compatible buildings (the refurbished marae at Moerangi—a testimony to community—and the spiral shell house, signifying interconnectedness and rebirth), the conclusion of *The Dancers Dancing* leaves us with two competing ones. There is Aunt Annie’s house, “full of the

history of work and creation” (163) and lived experience. We’re told that the house “is old and awkward, poor, simple and eccentric, like Aunt Annie herself. You could be ashamed of all that, or pleased with it” (262). This resounds as a clear criticism of the Celtic Tiger abhorrence of what was often constructed as the old benighted, impoverished past, and this critique informs the representation of the competing construction: the late 1990s heritage centre (in another Gaeltacht) that closes the text.

Every day, visitors . . . pour through the marble halls . . . learning a little about the community, admiring its resilience and genius: this is an area where Irish has survived and where it sometimes seems to prosper. . . . You can hear Irish spoken in the schoolyard, in the pub, even in some of the shops. . . . It’s the Gaeltacht triumphant—not a bit like Tubber. (276)

Is this Killer Jack’s preservation project writ large, or commodification and exoticization run rampant? The contrast between Annie’s rambling house and the marble halls is notable, especially when we recall the instance earlier in the text when Alison, the soprano, is allowed to sing in English because her voice is so beautiful. Her rendition of “I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls” is co-extensive with a cultural cringe that denigrates the Irish language, just as these closing marble halls, a monument to the rising stock of brand Ireland in the Celtic Tiger era, are a direct counter to Annie’s “warm and comfortable” house (262). The comment that Irish “seems to prosper” ascribes a superficiality to this revival and indicates unease at the attendant ratio of regional commercial success to the profile (visibility/audibility) of the language.³⁰

Yet, however preferable, Aunt Annie’s house and the attention paid her by Killer Jack and Orla’s beau Micheál are not actively endorsed as instructive models. While Orla acknowledges the pleasant surprise of her aunt’s environment and rethinks, if not renounces, her earlier position of shamed avoidance, she does not (unlike Killer Jack and Micheál) stay to listen to her aunt’s recitation, and the text neither condones nor condemns this action. This moment, with Killer Jack and his tape recorder, within a house predicated on lived experience, is ripe for the

transmission of memory; but Aunt Annie and her knowledge are simply, in the pragmatic scheme of the text, of limited relevance to Orla at that time (which is not the same as denying any intrinsic value). The text's concern with strategies of preservation is thus bound up with a recurring issue of inheritance and relevance, and this returns us to questions of framing and Irish postcoloniality.

In its ostensible diversion from the famine narrative but residual emphasis on the porousness of past and present in the sections treating the skulls and Orla's dream, *The Dancers Dancing* concerns itself with the question of relevant inheritance for the generation of young women on whom it focuses. For Orla and her peers from the South, the burdensome inheritance derives from the nationalist alliance between Church and State and the role of woman therein ("A working mother, no matter what she works at, is a bit of an abomination" [91]). While the text nods at various points (20, "The workhouse") to the historical development of these restrictive forces as a response to English hegemony, it resists endorsing an encompassing rationale for Irish society. The postcolonial is avoided as (or escapes being explicitly reduced to) an economy of blame; but questions also arise regarding the helpfulness of postcoloniality as an interpretative matrix for the evolution of Irish experience.

Orla's instinctual recognition of the skulls and her ensuing dream are less a psychic inheritance than psychic manifestations of a *material* legacy that is emphasized by the materiality of the skulls. This emphasis on materiality raises questions regarding how far back we should trace the antecedents of a primary inheritance. Is it—or should it be—relevant to Orla's understanding of what she has personally inherited (the more mundane 1970s incarnations of the repressive social strictures that produced the skulls close to a century before [in the case of Nuala Crilly] and would continue to produce, albeit on a diminishing scale, such skulls into the 1980s and beyond)³¹ that there was a colonial stimulus in the development of those progenitive social strictures in earlier times? To what extent do we helpfully inscribe the demise of those remaining strictures (and their vestiges in 2012 abortion law) in the interim of the novel's two "present"s within a framework of decolonization and postcoloniality? Is this question a curious querying of a self-evident truth? Or

is it the case that such an inscription risks a scenario where the “vantage point” offered by the “post” in “postcolonial” (Lloyd 17) is a zoom setting so wide as to counter the capacity of the postcolonial to meaningfully contextualize complicated, intricate mess? I recall here the aerial mapmaker’s view in the opening pages of *The Dancers Dancing*, which “can’t see,” or ultimately obscures, the crucial “mess” on the ground (3).

Alternatives to this undeniably deterministic conception of the “postcolonial” include Eóin Flannery’s 2009 assertion that “postcolonial studies [is] committed to critiquing, and exposing the exploitative economic, social and cultural imprints and legacies . . . of modernisation and prosperity” (230). Yet, is such a broad but nevertheless vital project most helpfully conceived of, in its engagement with twenty-first century Ireland, as “postcolonial”?³² In finishing with its brief portrait of the Celtic Tiger Gaeltacht, the novel foregrounds the issue of shifting inheritances and extends a platform from which to engage with the question of contemporary Irish postcoloniality. What, for instance, is the inheritance that impacts on the children Orla has produced by the closing episode titled “Now” (276)? In 2004, Kevin Whelan wrote:

In the 1990s, there was an audible collective exhalation of the national breath: with the advent of the Celtic Tiger, the IRA cessation, the public disclosure of long-hidden abuses within the political system and the Catholic Church, there was a palpable sense that modern Ireland was at last shucking off a baleful historical inheritance. (“The Revisionist Debate” 179)

Undoubtedly dramatic in its cumulative effect, this emergence from the nightmare of history is inseparable from persistent and accelerating shifts in the second half of the twentieth century in the burdens exercised by the past on the present and conveyed from one generation to the next [the result of the “mixed fortunes” of the social and economic modernization drives that have prevailed since the 1960s (Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune* 13–14)]. Geraldine Moane, despite propounding the maintenance of “psychological patterns . . . across time” (113), warned in 2002 of an ever-widening “generation gap”: “It is unlikely that younger generations will identify with narratives of trauma, oppres-

sion and dispossession (when indeed they themselves are being deprived of access to housing [a reference to the notorious unaffordability of the Dublin housing market pre 2008])” (123).³³

For citizens born in Ireland in the early 1990s (as we can assume is the case with Orla’s children), the most relevant inheritance,³⁴ and that which seems set to dictate Ireland’s course for some decades, is that bequeathed by the multivalent Celtic Tiger period (the 1990s social as well as economic transformations, the legacy of both massive inequality and multiculturalism) and the economic collapse. Fintan O’Toole’s 1996 exhalation of breath involved the question “What do we do now that we [will, in the event that it all goes wrong,] have no one to blame but ourselves?” (“Emerald Tiger” C1). While this statement was intended as a jibe at postcolonial commentary and an alleged victim complex (i.e., MOPE syndrome), O’Toole’s own response to this question fourteen years later reinscribed the very paradigms of psycho-cultural inheritance the original statement sought to subvert. The eventuation of the IMF bailout at the end of 2010 was sufficiently apocalyptic in terms of the Irish self-image that it prompted O’Toole to temporarily recast the collective responsibility espoused in the earlier piece as a resurgence of Fanon-style shame and “colonial self-loathing” (“Fear, Rage, Despair” B1): “the sense of having returned to the status of a subject people . . . is palpable . . . What colonial overlords tell their subject peoples is: ‘you’re not fit to govern yourselves’. That taunt is deeply embedded in our historical consciousness” (B1). O’Toole’s awareness, at the same time, of this account as “a gross simplification of our plight” was striking (B1).

The extension of the language of colonialism to European measures to curb the debt crisis (e.g., “Ireland [is] not a colony” [Fine Gael finance spokesman Michael Noonan, qtd. in Dan O’Brien 10]) also asserted a default to familiar, overly available paradigms that risked eliding the situation. Materialist critique of postcolonial studies highlights the “uproot[ing]” of “the imperial project” from “its material ground” “within the determining instance of capitalism’s global trajectory” and its “resituat[ion]” “as a cultural phenomenon” (Parry 8). This populist Irish drift presented a further disruption (this time an inversion) of that original relation whereby an overly elasticized rubric of colonialism sub-

sumed the determining instance of capitalism. Popular constructions of historical and psychological continuity (typified by O'Toole's and Noonan's statements)³⁵ were countered in May 2011 by the overwhelmingly positive public response to the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the Republic of Ireland (the first by a British monarch since 1911). Her reception was a mass enactment and validation "of being able to bow to the past without being bound by it" (Elizabeth II), and of the evolution of cultural inheritance.³⁶

While Pakeha New Zealand has largely resolved its identity politics with regard to Mother England (an example of a particular postcoloniality expiring), its relationship with Maori, whose presence unsettles Pakeha (and subsequent arrivals') settledness, remains within the purview of the postcolonial. Even if we do not purchase Tariana Turia's argument wholesale, Turia at least has the rationale of mid-late twentieth-century abuses on her side for her diagnosis of a material PCTSD, as well as the ongoing under-representation of Maori in third-level institutions and over-representation in prisons. As Alex Calder recently wrote of New Zealand, "the foundational problems, injustices and consequences of European settlement of this country will not disappear—though those problems can and often have been forgotten, underestimated or wished away" (x). At this time, the obligation towards the material inheritance of Maori requires that the "postcolonial" transcend the oxymoron explicit in the configuration of a multicultural majority in relation to a Maori minority. That is the price of settlement for Pakeha New Zealand and the "price of citizenship" for multicultural New Zealand (Ngata).

Obviously, Ireland comprises multiple generations and diverse regions with their own historical compositions, but to what extent does the term "postcolonial" retain referential power in relation to a contemporary Ireland (and those for whom recent Ireland constitutes the dominant experience) ubiquitously, albeit not uniformly, impacted by the Celtic Tiger and its collapse, by multiculturalism, and by what Joe Cleary has termed "a transformation in the technology of subject production as dramatic and far-reaching as that inaugurated in the nineteenth-century after the Famine" ("Toward a Materialist-Formalist History" 231)? Is Ireland increasingly contiguous with the vertiginous realm of the "post-

postcolonial”? Is such a term even viable? We could conceive of the first “post” as both enshrining postcoloniality as the definitive cultural experience and designating a period where the principle burdens or challenges of both the state and daily cultural life therein are engineered by factors other than the legacy of colonialism and decolonization. The paradox of this “post-postcolonial” is that, bereft of an active commission in the present, its self-styling risks perpetuating the problems of a postcoloniality that approaches its expiration date, while, if such a commission exists, why the need for the first “post” in “post-postcolonial” at all? Ní Dhuibhne’s extended parallel between Orla’s identity quandaries and Pauline’s “special inheritance” (123) (as the Northern Irish hybrid product of a Catholic mother and Protestant father) leaves unresolved questions regarding the appropriateness of the analogy between their respective situations, which we might take up in relation to the paradox of the “post-postcolonial.”

In Northern Ireland, postcoloniality remains a material legacy; prime challenges faced by the state and its various communities are currently a direct consequence of its settler status. However, we might hope for a future for Northern Ireland where cross-community co-operation reaches such default status that the passage of time and change in circumstance extends use of the term “postcolonial” to the point that it either loses referential power or, conversely, threatens to restrict forward movement from what former President Mary McAleese deemed “the past we are determined to escape from” (n.p). In such a case, “post-postcolonial” might, paradoxically (thereby negating the original paradox of the term), serve as a reminder of a shared, layered past that cannot, in an express commitment to a markedly different present (explicit in the first “post”), afford to be forgotten. For Northern Ireland, then, the term “post-postcolonial” might, in some projected time, function as a constructively cumbersome imposition.

The question mark in the title of this essay signals my current uncertainty regarding the respective material relevance and constructiveness of the terms “postcolonial” and “post-postcolonial” in relation to the contemporary Republic of Ireland. The problematic proliferation of “post”’s reminds me, however, of an alternative layering within lan-

guage posited by Ní Dhuibhne's text. If language is the repository of lived experience and if there are layers within language as within the earth, then, rather than incubating psychic wounds, could we not cede the burden(s) of the past/past burdens to language? Releasing and entrusting history to layered and living language is not the same as the elision of history implicit in *the bone people*. In the model derivable from Ní Dhuibhne's text, history is present and actively asserted not in the hyper-extension of postcolonial status but in the blended language that testifies indisputably to the experience of colonialism, the language that has and will become increasingly blended through global exchange and multiculturalism: a linguistic scape that may diversify further through surges in the Irish language that are more a response to those same forces of globalization and multiculturalism than to post-coloniality per se.³⁷

The Dancers Dancing suggests that the relevant past can exist in a porous, palimpsestic relationship with the present, while further layers gradually solidify (at different rates for different individuals/generational groups) as their relevance diminishes. Excavation of solidified layers would therefore involve an outward-oriented expression/remembrance—respect for the experiences of historical others and a deployment of that respect as an enjoinder to sympathy and action in relation to present calamities elsewhere³⁸—rather than an increasingly disingenuous identification with or internalization of experience as porously present or repressed. Ultimately, the Republic of Ireland has the luxury of allowing language to carry the burdens of the past for it. Conversely, Northern Ireland and New Zealand require that language impose the burdens of social and political obligation on citizens in the form of their presentist invocation of the term “postcolonial” and perhaps, at some future point, through recourse to the suitably burdensome term “post-postcolonial.”

Notes

- 1 The revisionists revised nationalist accounts of Irish history and were often seen as apologists for empire. For a more detailed account of the revisionist and post-colonial positions, see Cleary “‘Misplaced Ideas?’”

- 2 “This is a theory of development that was promulgated in the academic social sciences in the United States after the Second World War by Clark Kerr and others, and was the intellectual analogue in the Republic of Ireland of the opening-up of the economy in the wake of the Lemass/Whitaker liberalisation begun in 1959” (McCarthy 14).
- 3 This has led to the caricaturing of postcolonialists as traditionalists.
- 4 In 2009, Flannery, justly critiquing the deterministic conception of postcolonial studies in a 2003 article by Peillon, maintained that “[t]he irony of many of the polemical interventions against postcolonial studies is that their critiques are couched in archaic critical idioms. Instancing such a practice, Peillon notes, ‘the postcolonial model . . . contends that colonialism proves most effective “in colonizing the mind”’” (232). While Flannery capitalizes on Peillon’s recourse to a 1995 Kiberd example, Kiberd also wrote in 2001 that “the presence of black Africans in the streets of Dublin is a reminder of a colonial past of shame and shared humiliations which some might prefer to ignore. . . . [T]he new immigrants are . . . reconnecting people with their own buried feelings” (“Strangers in their own country” 72). Gibbons (“The Global Cure?”) and Moane (114) went on to assert the psychological inheritance of colonialism in 2002.
- 5 Calls by Parry and Lazarus for greater materiality in postcolonial studies were largely endorsed by Flannery in 2009.
- 6 For an account of the “protean” nature of Irish postcolonial studies, see Cleary, “Amongst Empires” 39–42.
- 7 **As Flannery declares, “Cleary’s postcolonial criticism is at the forefront of materialist critique within Irish studies”** (234).
- 8 I suspect Ní Dhuibhne was not entirely unsympathetic to Ní Dhomhnaill’s 1996 sentiment: “This postcolonial thing is getting out of hand and anyway it seems too easy: everyone is doing it” (19).
- 9 These contexts were rife with questions about the state of culture and the role of the past in the conception of the present.
- 10 See Keown 122–23.
- 11 We have the non-perils of Pauline, the Derry schoolgirl Ní Dhuibhne several times feigns placing in jeopardy, the inconsequential possible abandonment of the injured Aunt Annie, and the irrelevant tragedy at a neighbouring Irish college.
- 12 E.g., Shieff 53–54.
- 13 Multiple internet blogs testify to readers’ frustration and to their sense of textual material being withheld. E.g., see Chapati.
- 14 **Debate over Ní Dhuibhne’s use of Irish usually centres on whether she is “bridging” cultures or dealing a blow to the integrity of the Irish language** (Pelan 12).
- 15 While reading Ní Dhuibhne’s Irish language fiction would obviously require more than the shards of memory of National School Irish, my point here is related to that made by Ó Siadhail: “one senses that Ní Dhuibhne’s success is

due, not just to filling a gap in the Irish language market with books that are readable and enjoyable as works of fiction, but also because her work *Dúnmharú sa Daingean*, in particular, does not tax the limited linguistic resources of much of her readership" (217).

- 16 This requirement was repealed in 1974.
- 17 This kind of investment has made the work of Andalzúa an attractive reference point for scholars of Ní Dhuibhne's work (e.g., Pelan 14; Perez 297).
- 18 Ní Dhuibhne said to Moloney, "We have a legacy of a rigid, illiberal, punishing society which kept women and children down and was frightened of every sexual impulse and of writing. One of the legacies is constant reaction and constant change. Stability can't happen in any society, but it's impossible for a postcolonial society to have cultural stability. Many reactions have to occur before Ireland is a place where a constant, stable identity can be established" ("Moloney" 115).
- 19 Éamon de Valera was Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland from 1937–48, 1951–54, 1957–59, and President of Ireland from 1959–73. "De Valera's Ireland" is a byword for conservative, Catholic, mid-twentieth century Ireland.
- 20 See Fanon (170) on the colonial origins of this trope; for a more recent embrace of the trope see Adichie (301).
- 21 For accounts of the controversy surrounding representation of the famine, see Whelan's "The Revisionist Debate" and Kinealy's "The Great Irish Famine."
- 22 Mention of a prison-based execution and of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in Orla's dream situates the dream's events sometime between the Capital Punishment Amendment Act of 1868, which restricted the location of executions to prisons, and the disbandment of the RIC in 1922.
- 23 In his 1984 revision (introduction 8), Larkin allows for a greater achievement of the devotional revolution pre-famine than in the original 1972 research. However, he then counters this revision in his 2006 work.
- 24 For an account of the text's recourse to the "flotsam and jetsam of literature that had been washed up on New Zealand shores from everywhere imaginable," see Williams (86).
- 25 For Williams, Hulme is desirous of "an organic link between language and lived realities" (93).
- 26 E.g., the choice of "three [Maori] versions of what happens . . . after death" detailed by the kaumatua to Joe (354) and the liberal ethos of regeneration and self-authorship that informs the text more generally.
- 27 Shieff, drawing on other aspects of the text, advances a version of this argument (47, 56–59).
- 28 This commitment to lived language obviously diverges from Ngūgĩ's singular dedication to indigenous language (in his case, Gĩkũyũ) but shares Ngūgĩ's conviction that "[l]anguage as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history" (15).

- 29 Kiberd sees Annie as emblematic of both the condition of the Irish language and the Republic's neglect of the North ("Declan Kiberd" 296). For McGovern, Aunt Annie is "a crippling metaphor [representing the "tradition of personifying Ireland as female"] from which Orla must save herself" (255).
- 30 See also St. Peter 35.
- 31 **The Kerry babies saga, which involved the discovery of two infant corpses, unfolded in 1984, focusing national attention on infanticide and state treatment of women.**
- 32 Materialist postcolonial critics hold that imperialism is engendered by capitalism and that attention to (the legacy of) the former necessarily involves attention to the trajectory of the latter (see p. 81). It does not follow, however, that critique of modernization and prosperity necessarily involves the "postcolonial."
- 33 **Note how it is the materiality of the economic challenges as well as of the economic success wrought by the Celtic Tiger that impacts on the "postcolonial" inheritance.**
- 34 I use "inheritance" here not simply in the inter-generational sense but also with regard to contemporary circumstances as inherited from special interest groups (see Kenny's "National Address": "you are not responsible for the crisis").
- 35 See also *Irish Times* coverage by Carl O'Brien.
- 36 See *Irish Times* articles by McAleese ("My personal thanks to Ireland"), Roche ("Inclusive commemorations urged"), and Sheridan.
- 37 This is not to deny that imperialism, globalization and multiculturalism have "determining instance[s]" in "capitalism's global trajectory" (Parry 8) but to inhibit their mutual collapse into (Irish) postcoloniality.
- 38 This is a modification of the outward gaze promoted by both Gibbons ("The Global Cure?") and Robinson's "Keynote Address" on the commemoration of the famine. In both those cases, the outward gaze extends an inward gaze that is "a way in" (Gibbons 104) to "self-awareness" (Robinson) from which empathy can ensue.

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