# Epiphylogenetic Memory as Disorientation in Eimear McBride's
## *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*

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## Abstract

This article investigates Eimear McBride's novel *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* in the light of Bernard Stiegler's concept of disorientation. As a technical development, disorientation manifests itself in the girl's non-syntactic language and the gradual evolving linguistic repertoire as she matures. The article argues that McBride's usage of the idiomatic language and stream of consciousness is part of the narrator's tertiary memory or *epiphylogenetic* memory. The young protagonist-narrator cannot reach a state of equilibrium between her developing consciousness as an Irish girl and her "technic" of writing herself as the epiphylogenetic memory, hence her disorientation. The technics in the Irish context can include not only the Irish English, but also the theological and political technics which engulf the subject to form her or him to their image. Technics is a technical term used by Bernard Stiegler as the horizon of human existence. Technics, often used as a singular noun, is juxtaposed with episteme in order to highlight the ignorance of Western philosophy about the significant role it plays in the human evolution and consciousness.

## 1. Eimear McBride's Position as a Contemporary Irish Novelist

Eimear McBride (b. 1976) published her debut novel *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* in 2013. She belongs to a generation of Irish authors who emerged in the 2010s and have shown both their affiliation and disaffection with the past. The past here refers to both the Irish past and its heritage, and also to previous Irish writers who have built the Irish literary tradition. In a very recent interview with *The Guardian* in January 2020, McBride sees her first novel *A Girl* as dealing with "the much feared 'Irish' themes of sex, death, family, guilt and religion" (McBride, "Women are really angry"). The literary critic James Wood sees *A Girl* as "written in a dense, interrupted, shattered

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language, blooming with neologisms, compounds, stretched senses, old words put to new uses" (Wood, "*A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*").

Patricia Coughlan sees this transformation in the Irish women's perspective after about 1970. Some of these changes were the "fall of the Catholic Church from its position of unquestionable authority in the minds of the Irish people" (176). According to Coughlan, there was a debate on the appropriate "model of modernization" in "Ireland's late-twentieth-century history" (177). The reason that modernization is highlighted in the formation of Irish feminine identity is significant because this process worked both as orientation and emancipation of women and as disorientation of the subject, in particular the female subject. However, as Coughlan claims, "the Irish women's movement drew on traditional strengths as well as on international influence and urban, bourgeois, and obviously 'modern' individuals and groups" (177). Basing herself on a Habermasian maxim, Coughlan believes that "in Irish postmodernity women's liberation is an incomplete project" (177) and this in a way is related to Bernard Stiegler's concept of disorientation. One of the significant factors regarding modernization and the modern is "the rationalizing language" (177). Even though the language of the modern stresses the autonomy of the subject, it "ignores personal ties and emotional connectedness" (177), and this avoidance establishes "new forms of regulation perhaps as dominating as the rural, Catholic, communal-familial system of the past, though differently" (177). Thus postmodernity, with its emphasis on the "lightness and freedom" (Coughlan 178) of the subject and as "the dominant model of selfhood" (178), suppresses the subject just as the old grand narratives. One of the new obligations which Coughlan meticulously points at is "the obligation to achieve pleasure" in the "isolated subject" (178). This article argues that the "obligation to achieve pleasure" in the subject results from the subject's disorientation due to modernity's or industrial age's wrong turn at one point in history, hence the lost, bewildered subject that will be discussed in terms of Stiegler's concept.

We should see McBride in the context of social changes and the process of modernization which took place in Ireland. The post-Celtic Tiger era has seen a variety of changes in Irish politics and society in the 2010s such as: the bailout in order to solve the country's financial crisis, the ever-increasing number of homeless people over the decade, marriage equality and the LGBTQ rights, changes in abortion laws and recognition of mothers' rights whose lives are in danger, water charges protests, climate changes, etc. McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* as an epitome of a post-Celtic Tiger era deals with these issues to a great extent. *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* features an anonymous girl who commences her narration from the age of two to her adulthood and to her final suicidal demise. The choice of the 1980s setting in a rural

suburban Ireland is not without reasons from the side of the author. Ireland in the 1980s was on the cusp of modernization and political and social changes which reached its full bloom in the Celtic and post-Celtic Tiger eras. Quest for sexual and non-Catholic identity, flouting the repressive and conservative tradition, underage non-consensual sex, all contribute to the fragmented language of *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*. "Irish feminists", as Coughlan understands, "have been especially skeptical about modernization narratives, noting their occlusion of women's experiences and agency in Irish twentieth- century history" ("Irish Literature and Feminism" 178). Irish feminism, Claire Connolly observes, has been different from other feminist movements in the world "in keeping communication open with the world beyond the island of Ireland, and in drawing strength from women's movements abroad" (3). The contemporary Irish female women writers "revalorize[ing] positive elements in traditional Irish society without forsaking the fundamental liberationist impulse which unites feminisms" (Coughlan 181).

## 2. *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*: A Background

The critiques revolving around *A Girl* focus particularly on the themes of feminine identity formation, language, the female body and identity crisis. Téllez believes that rape and existing, traditional discourses lead to the nameless girl's fragmentation. In addition, Leszek Drong sees *A Girl* as "a prime specimen of post-Joycean heteroglossia in Irish fiction. The novel exhibits a programmatic dialogical/intertextual orientation orchestrated with its own parodic and ironic modes, which makes McBride's work uniquely capable of re-energizing Irish cultural tradition" (1). In analyzing *A Girl*, Pete Walsh considers the formation of the anonymous, narrator girl as a "social object" which subverts "the phallocratic grand narrative of Western history that limits the space of women in society" (78-94.). Walsh maintains that the Western culture has created the notion of the "ideal woman" which "women must seek to imitate and mime in order to be accepted into society. Those aspects of self which are incongruous with this ideal must then be abjected by women in order to achieve mimesis" and hence "to maintain social harmony" (78-94.). A. W. Sell considers *A Girl* stylistically as an emergent modernist text in the twenty-first century, particularly due to the Celtic Tiger fiscal collapse. According to Sell, *A Girl* manifests a late capitalist crisis through a fragmented language reminiscent of a Joycean style. *A Girl* depicts "sexual trauma" and "Joycean, pre-linguistic prose" that is published in "the Tiger's collapse" ("Half-Formed Modernism" 7) and familiar themes of "Sex, death, family, guilt, and religion do, indeed, provide the narrative backbone of *Girl*" ("Half-Formed Modernism" 8). L. Harrison also sees *A Girl* as a "late style" which is "an alternative means of navigating

McBride's engagement with modernist legacies" (Harrison, "Post-Millennial Modernism?"). By the phrase "late style," Harrison means "an anticipatory and posthumous narrative persistence – an expectancy of a late arrival, as well as the voices of the lately departed" (Harrison, "Post-Millennial Modernism?"). In addition, in Fogarty's opinion, "The troubling dyadic figure of the traumatized child and pathological adolescent has become a prominent motif in recent Irish fictions" (13-26).

Furthermore, Susan Cahill locates *A Girl* (and other novels concerning adolescent girl's identity formation and subjectivity) in Ireland's post-Tiger recessionary climate. In her analysis, Cahill observes that "The figure of the girl has a long history of carrying and symbolizing social anxiety, particularly when that anxiety circulates around questions of consumerism, modernity, and sexuality – and this figuration becomes especially potent when these anxieties intersect" (154-5), or, as Catherine Driscoll states, "the emergence of feminine adolescence is historically coincident with a move from industrial to commodity capitalism" (Driscoll 108). McBride's *A Girl*, according to Cahill, reveals both "the consciousness, and rather, the pre-consciousness of an unnamed teenage narrator" (Cahill 158). Cahill believes that the use of the stream of consciousness style favours the readers' engagement in a linguistic formation "before articulation" (159), and this makes it easy for us to enter the girl's consciousness as "her process of articulation is always already vulnerable to invasion" (Cahill 159). Thus, the girl has no way to take revenge from a restrictive, suppressive patriarchal religious Ireland but to destroy "the language and self" (Cahill 160). In an interview, McBride says that she wanted to capture the essence of the girl's consciousness "on the moment just before language before it becomes formatted thought" (McBride, "Interview with Eimear McBride"). Yet we will see later that the destruction of the language and the self is part of a greater process of disorientation inherent in the industrial and technological age which affects both memory and identity.

### 3. Disorientation: A Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

According to Bernard Stiegler in *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*, technics caused the reversal of categories in the nineteenth century and onwards. In his view, civilizations are to be looked at as "historical," "mortal," and "that process is everything" (Stiegler 1). Stiegler defines technics as "apprehended as the horizon of all possibility to come and of all possibility of a future" (ix). One of the things that has lost its meaning to all humans, i.e., "Occidental as well as Oriental", is the concept of "progress", which is related to the advent of modernity. Progress, in people's *weltanschauung*, "leads to nowhere – when it is not a nightmare ... such is contemporary disorientation" (Stiegler 1). The first thing Stiegler sees as

"contemporary disorientation" is this sense of disbelief in the project of modernity whether in the Occident or the Orient. Progress is no longer the bearer of the future, since it leads nowhere, hence disorientation. As Stiegler points out: "socio-genesis recapitulates techno-genesis. Techno-genesis is structurally prior to socio-genesis – technics is invention, and invention is innovation – and the adjustment between technical evolution and social tradition always encounters moments of resistance, since technical change, to a greater or lesser extent, disrupts the familiar reference points of which all culture consists" (2).

Technics in a way opposes human civilization, yet the interconnectedness of technics and human life is "transductive"[1] (qtd. in Stiegler 2). However, this relation is also a "metastable equilibrium spanning an irreducible tension, a tension that is time itself: technics's advance initiates temporal extension as such" (Stiegler 2). In Stiegler's view, what causes humans to be disoriented is the existence and "extension" of temporality, which makes the situation tense and of course this temporality itself originates from this "originary disorientation" (2). Accordingly, this disorientation through "positing of directions and their adjustments ... opens a space of difference, between here and there, public and private, profane and sacred, strange and familiar, and so on" (Stiegler 3). The reason Stiegler provides as some other philosophers before him also stated and worried about is that the required "cardinal orientation is not successfully occurring today; we are thus suffering from *disorientation as such*" (Stiegler 3; italics in the original). The cardinal orientation might be the grand narratives of religion, then modernity in the name of progress, and hence disorientation. The gap between "technical systems and social organizations" has apparently increased since the Industrial Revolution.

According to Stiegler, the media have a leading and fundamental role in determining the horizon of "global memory" which then has to be absorbed into "industrialization directly affecting our psychic processes and collective identifications and differentiations; that is, individuation itself" (3). The subject's individuation is thus affected by the industrialized global memory, and one of the main vectors of technology is speed. Borrowing from Jacques Derrida's *of Grammatology* the concept of the *supplement*, Stiegler considers the industrialization of memory as life's programmatics which is "in dialogue with death ("the human" (*l'homme*))" (3) and this process frees memory. "Memory-freeing" is "an exteriorizing of the living being's programmatics into the artificial programs constituting an originary supplementarity

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[1] Transductive is Gilbert Simondon's concept and it means "a relationship whose elements are constituted such that one cannot exist without the other – where the elements are co-constituents" (Stiegler 2).

of this form of life" (Stiegler 3-4). In *The Fault of Epimetheus*, we see that the supplement has material entity "as if it were phonic matter, as ephemeral as it can appear" (Stiegler 4) which is based on "the *différantial* logic of already-formed matter: a logic preceding the opposition of form and matter" (4), that is "techno-logic." What is significant here is that this logic of the supplement which is techno-logic "takes on the appearance of the living organism of which it is the originary supplement" (Stiegler 4).

After delineating two forms of memory which determine the human being, i.e., "somatic memory of the *epigenetic* and the germinal memory of the *genetic*, which in principle do not communicate with each other" (Stiegler 4), Stiegler posits a tertiary memory which he calls *epiphylogenetic,* which results from the "rupture in the history of life" (4) caused by exteriorization. Stiegler postulates that:

> Epiphylogenetic memory, essential to the living human being, is technics: inscribed in the non-living body. It is a break with the "law of life" in that, considering the hermetic separation between somatic and germinal, the epigenetic experience of an animal is lost to the species when the animal dies, while in a life proceeding by means other than life, the being's experience, registered in the tool (in the object), becomes transmissible and cumulative: thus arises the possibility of a heritage. (4)

Stiegler suffices to Heidegger's definition of heritage in his magnum opus *Being and Time,* and then relates it to his concept of memory as such that the past that *Dasein* has not lived but inherits it is "an existential characteristic of its originary temporality (essential to its existence)" (4). In order for *Dasein* to experience the non-lived past, *Dasein* has to render the past to "become one's own. Without this past, this *Dasein* is nothing" (Stiegler 5) and this chuting into the past is possible through a material medium which is technic. Stiegler then distinguishes his concept of memory from Husserl's "exclusion of the *Weltgeschichtlichkeit*" (world-historiality) (6). He names this "consciousness of image" as "tertiary memory" which is "the ground of epiphylogenesis, a witnessing of the dead's past" (6). This is, according to Stiegler, what a temporal object (*Zeit-objekt*) needs to exist. And this kind of memory, i.e. consciousness of image or tertiary memory, is rejected by Heidegger. However, Stiegler thinks that by including this possibility of the non-lived past, *Dasein*'s future is in a way molded and "this future, *in extremis*, is *Dasein*'s death" (6; italics in the original) which causes "indetermination, which originarily disorients *Dasein* and leaves it isolated and without clear and sufficient markings by which to identify itself, is what *Dasein* can attempt to determine" (6).

Stiegler demonstrates that technics not only causes the indeterminate but also the Orient emerges in this "prosthetic" technical experience. Materialization of the

technical tendency causes suspension or *epoché*[1] in the "behavioral programming" (7). Human society is founded on this programming, and that is why, it tries to resist this suspension. In order to make balance and adjustment, the human subject which Stiegler calls the *who* seizes the "effectivity of this suspension (i.e., of programmatic indetermination) for itself" (7). Then it finally gives birth to "a new programmatics." This new programmatics individuates the humans both individually and collectively and thus as Stiegler points out "Contemporary disorientation is the experience of an incapacity to achieve epochal redoubling" which is related to "a politics of memory" as such and "why current prosthetics acts as an obstacle to intensification" (7).

Supplementary *mnemo*-technics and, consequently, "the history of being" commenced with the advent of language since it was language which provided access to a past and made life historical. This being so, our collective memory is founded on supplementarity. However, this "new supplementarity destroys" the "foundation of belief" based on "the religions of the Book" (Stiegler 8). Because the *who*'s memory is limited or has a "retentional finitude," hence his failure in remembering or forgetfulness (Epimetheus's fault or "primary trait"), then the *who* must be supported by other means of "self-conservation," i.e., by using "orthographic writing" (Stiegler 8). Nonetheless, this orthographic writing removes the *who* out of the context or in a way displaces the *who*. Then "disorientation being precisely this decontextualization, this disappearance of place, which has actually been occurring since epiphylogenesis's origin—and which thus also, paradoxically, gives place" (Stiegler 8). Therefore, in Stiegler's analysis, "all territorialization (all conquest of space) is initially *de*territorialization, all communitization *de*communitization, all epochal orientation *dis*orientation" (8-9).

Memory, in Stiegler's perspective, is political, that is, "it selects the events to be retained" (9). Then contemporary technics disrupt the communication of orthographic writing and give rise to the politics of memory because industrialization selects *per se* and that: "the cognitive sciences that previously put informatic prosthetics at the very heart of their heuristic can actually conceptualize nothing of retentional finitude, and yet simultaneously also misunderstand the very Husserlian intentionality to which they refer, and which is only revealed in analysis of the temporal object" (Stiegler 9). Based on Stiegler's scrutiny, on the one hand, Heideggerian analysis cannot explain the contemporary technics because of its not analyzing retentional finitude. On the other hand, Husserl's analysis of "the temporality of synthesis in transcendental consciousness" does not take into account the rupture of the "industrialization of

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[1] ἐποχή epokhē, "suspension" is an ancient Greek term typically translated as "suspension of judgment."

memory" for industrialization of memory must be "thought of simultaneously as part of the philosophic question of synthesis and as a rupture with what, within that question, cannot think the synthesis that is already prosthesis as tertiary memory" (Stiegler 10). In the end, Stiegler sees the role of speed in the "current experience of disorientation" (11). He also considers its role in the constitution of exteriorization which then constitutes "'the absolute past' of all present: that past that was never present to the temporality of 'conscious life itself'" (11).

## 4. *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* as Disoriented Epiphylogenetic Memory

### 4.1. Nascent Stream of Consciousness as Orthographic Prosthetics

Part I of *A Girl* is intentionally called "Lambs" is narrated from the point of view of a two-year-old girl who has just begun to speak, clearly, without observing syntactic rules. The overall structure and the linguistic technique evolve in the six sections of Part I as the narrator girl's consciousness develops and then is ruptured and gets disoriented in the process. The girl's struggle to speak is at the beginning of alphabetic writing or as "an orthographics, that liberates a new possibility of access to the past, configures properly historical temporality" (Stiegler 12):

> For you. You'll soon. You'll give her name. In the stitches of her skin she'll wear your say. Mammy me? Yes you. Bounce the bed, I'd say. I'd say that's what you did. Then lay you down. They cut you round. Wait and hour and day. (McBride 3)

The two-year-old girl is not just a little girl in the conventional sense of this phrase. Rather she is an historical human subject or *Dasein,* or ethnocentrically an Irish subject who has to "abandon the primordially phonologic understanding of alphabetic writing in order to privilege its orthographic character" (Stiegler 13). By "orthographic character" Stiegler has Heidegger's *aletheia* in mind, that is, to direct or guide the soul to truth it must be orthographic, i.e., it should be correct (from Greek *orthos* meaning "correct, exact"). And this guidance transpires in the subject or the *who* of the narrator through the techno-logy of writing herself in the stream of consciousness style, partly inherited and imitated from the novelist's predecessors and partly from the idiomatic and particular style that she has developed epigenetically and genetically as an Irish woman. No matter how the narrator girl attempts to speak up and make communication possible, still she flutters around the inverted syntax and non-punctuation. Exactitude of writing does not occur. According to Stiegler, "[t]he essential characteristic of orthographic (called phono-logic) writing is the exactitude of the recording of the voice: it is a matter of recording rather than voice" (13) and here it is the recording of the voice of the girl that is significant.

The narrator girl is not interested in only giving us the details of her family and how she has been repressed and crushed by her mother, the religious tradition, and the patriarchal system. When her grandfather, the symbol of tradition and dogmatic religion, visits their home, she does not care whether she describes the grandfather as accurately as possible but to record her voice as a "memory's orthothetic substructure (*support*)" (Stiegler 13):

> Ah desperate for him in his nice tweeds with his nice cane. Seven sons to carry his coffin. Seven daughters to follow and cry and one extra to make him martyr—surely toddlers die but she would have been the best. Sons for breaking chairs on the backs of. Daughters to shoo from the bath for a wee. Rich-ish husbands or they got a crack in the jaw. Chaste-ish wives or the boys got more. Goodfornothinglumpofshitgodforgiveyou. (McBride 14-15)

Even though the girl flows in her stream of consciousness style, we already know that she and her world are not present to us and we must relive it in our imagination in order to make it present and alive. It is like a phantom, a spirit or the "banshee" of their house which cannot be seen. Stiegler wonderfully observes, "[i]t is at once the specter, the return of the dead, the spectacle, and specularity" (16). It is this photographic narration in a distorted manner that constantly reminds us of not only non-presence but also catastrophe since "all narcissism is a thanatology" (Stiegler 17) and the girl's narcissistic self-indulgent recording or writing forebodes her final demise into a new Irish girl's history. The reason she bears no name has its roots in the unpredictable and indeterminate situation she is in as a new form of identity which is precarious in regard to a rigid Irish tradition that does not allow any single trace of a woman's emancipation and achievement of a feminine identity of her own. The girl's way of writing herself ineluctably resists the current flow of Irish conventionality. She is unnamable so as to encompass all repressed Irish women of her age as Stiegler states "The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance" (19) and this disturbance is real. Unlike her ill brother, the girl is considered an outsider, an outcast or an alien by her mother, someone who has to be repeatedly abused and punished.

The whole text the girl writes is an act of meant to delay and defer her beloved brother's imminent death. And since "it works as différance" (Stiegler 19) it pierces into us as readers as "a wound in the spectator" (19). For Stiegler, the technique of deferred narration is a process of mourning, and the narrator here is employing the same tool to prolong her mourning for her dead brother. And this constitutes the girl's "true memory" as a true "mirror" (Stiegler 20). When the girl's true memory acts as a mirror, it also changes the orientation to become disorientation. This is immanent in all memories and questions the very "ortho-thesis," the exactness or the correctness of

memory to provide us with the truth. The girl is getting older in every part of the novel. Yet her ageing is already-there, taking place as if she were already at the end. She is a being-toward-death. As Stiegler scrupulously observes:

> life sees itself dead; youth and age are only possible for one who will be old, who was young, who is walking toward the end. Death gives life its time, its passage, its difference (the difference between past, present, and future, and difference between those who differentiate the truth from time)—and here [in this scene], that is what can be seen. (21)

By recounting her past, her present which is also already past, and her future, which is already her present, the anonymous narrator participates in the collective memory of a generation that has lived and relived the past, the present, and the future. The girl's narration in stream of consciousness technique can be compared to Stiegler's orthographic "presentation-memorization of current events, of 'reality'" (25). The girl's narration as recording of her repressed voice, a voice which stands for all the Irish girls and women of the preceding, the current, and the succeeding generations, is like the "banshees" (McBride 11), or the ghosts of the already dead. This connection is in Stiegler's terms "inaugurates a narcissism without figure nor precedent—a connection to the end" (25). Because the girl's self-image is distorted, the specular image which is reflection is not accurate but tends to be deformed and disoriented. Nevertheless, as Stiegler states once again "[t]he issue, then, is to orient oneself, despite everything, in the unthought: to identify and to specify this prostheticity and the orthopedics that it produces when it becomes ortho-thetic, and to do so as techno-logic affect" (27).

The girl's unfolding of the events in her life, particularly in Part I, provides the ground for her past which is dark and needs light to see through it:

> A little choke. Her eyelids flicker in the night. All such usual things to me and good to sleep against. She that always keep me safe. Our nylon nighties static cling. Tiny ribbons on the neck and hands. Matching roses. My sunshine. Only. But Mammy leave the hall light on. I need to see it through the dark (McBride 35).

The girl's light to "see it through the dark" is her developmental stream of consciousness writing, which acts as the "literal prosthetics of orthographic writing" (Stiegler 8). This technic lays the groundwork for the politics of memory by "providing access to a past that thus becomes properly historical" (Stiegler 8). The girl by her technique of writing herself provides the foundation for collective memory, while simultaneously, by appropriating this supplementary technic, she also destroys the very foundations she has already founded. Nonetheless, her default, according to Stiegler, is originary because "the *who* is defined by its *retentional finitude*: its memory being limited, essentially failing, radically forgetful (Epimetheus's primary trait)" (8; italics in the original). The girl, just like Epimetheus, fails but her failure is

compensated for and supported by means of "e-laboration," (Stiegler 8), by working her out through orthographic writing which "wrenches" her "out of context": "that intensifies memory's industrialization still further (disorientation being precisely this decontextualization, this disappearance of place), which has actually been occurring since epiphylogenesis's origin—and which thus also, paradoxically, gives place" (Stiegler 8).

## 4.2. Neoteny as the Origin of Disorientation

In Part II of the novel, called "A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing," the girl is thirteen and she is beginning to feel different as she reaches puberty. However, what strikes her as a turning point of crisis in her short-lived life is her pre-maturation, or what in biology is called neoteny (also called progenesis or paedogenesis), a process whereby sexual maturity is accelerated and expedited. Since her first inception or birth as a being, the girl reflects a "being-for-death through the phenomenon of pre-maturation" (Stiegler 27) as the narrator of *A Girl* says, "Not for death or any other violent thing that I could do to myself. I am here this hour for. Storage I think. Cleaning and cold storage. I will gush myself out between my legs" (McBride 62). The girl's neoteny is especially facilitated when she feels her father's absence and encounters the Uncle, her maternal aunt's husband, a sexual predator whom she has sex with.

In Stiegler's opinion, the *who* cannot be self-sufficient in its biological imprint but needs technological supplementarity as well. Even the girl's body is a technic: "Prematuration is *promē̄theia* and, as mirror stage, its tain sends back the phenomenal image of Epimetheus, constituting the *who* within the *what*" (Stiegler 28). I would rather consider the text that the girl is writing as a "memorization technology" (Stiegler 28), and according to Stiegler, it (the text) is also an "orthothetic memory," which suggests it should convey something exact or right. However, in Heidegger's perspective, this "*orthotē̄s* (exactitude), is memory's disaster" (28). The girl has to undergo this disastrous sexual awakening so that she can save her memory. It is "the supplement of orthographic writing" (Stiegler 28). Nevertheless, the writing, as Derrida scrupulously notes, is not logocentric but ethnocentric, or in other words it obeys the rules of "*logocentrism* […] which was fundamentally […] nothing but the most original and powerful ethnocentrism" (Derrida 3). This provides the foundation for the girl's Irishness as an inheritor of a long tradition of literary writing in Ireland that has mastered and perfected the stream of consciousness narrative techniques.

The girl's ethnocentric orthographic writing as feminine memory in a way subverts and disrupts the logocentric, patriarchal, masculine tradition that does not allow feminine potential to unleash. No wonder the girl's evolving writing is to coincide with

her noeteny and the sexual affair. Since her orthothetic/orthographic writing, which originally has a default or flaw, entails disaster, thus, her bodily prematuration and sexual encounter with the Uncle doubles the disastrous event for the girl and suspends the true, exact, right, correct, orientation. It is her "*epokhal* redoubling" (Stiegler 11). This *epokhal* redoubling is already there as prosthetics and also as failure. *Epoché* is caused by technical development. Redoubling is caused in the *what* by the *who*. The *who* induces or effects dynamism in the *what* in order to exploit it effectively. Now if the human cannot adapt or adjust himself or herself with the ever-increasing speed of technics, then he or she is afflicted with disorientation. In Stiegler's view, sometimes the contemporary prosthetics act like an obstacle, that is, the human cannot transfer his or her dynamism or social dynamism to the technical object and hence disorientation. Therefore, *epokhal* redoubling means that the human is not able to make (inter)connection or link between the self and the technics when there is disruption or breaking off or "rupture".

If dynamic interconnection is not achieved, then it is resulted in disorientation. This essential Epimetheus's default intensifies in the girl's orthographic self-writing. Her identity has already been fixated in this default, once as a girl (potential woman), then as a neotenic woman, and thirdly as a sexually conscious and (dis)oriented woman. It is this sexual consciousness that has been awakened in her:

> Turn from that and turn away. The eye go in. What? How much secret pleasure to stare at uncle in my mind's eye. Think of him come across the room. I have him. Scrutinize. I am smiling. It is from. What are you laughing at? as we climb off the slime bus. At nothing why what's wrong with you! I let you walk ahead. I don't know. Let you just. What's in me? There's something twist. Must move or shake him. Uncle. Think. I must give him some surprise. (McBride 56-57)

The girl weaves herself into "textuality" to "present itself as a deferred time—an *epimḗtheia*" (Stiegler 57). This texuality continues up to the end of the novel to her death. It is through *différance* that

> constitutes [her] citizenship: the citizen is one who decides on the textualized law's meaning, and who in the same gesture self-affirms as this particular citizen, exposing the to-come of that particularity relative to the community as endlessly altering itself and thus affirming itself as différant from all others—including that reader in any past guise. (Stiegler 58)

By attaining her citizenship, i.e., by authorially deciding the textualized law and the canon, the girl asserts herself as an Irish becoming-woman for the new generation. In order to determine her very existence, she has to undergo death, to kill herself because only death is both certain and indefinite. By writing herself as memory, she achieves *epokhal* suspending. *Epokhé* suspends "all forms of a heritage that is itself

programmatic but as such does not appear to be, and which, in suspension, pro-grams another vestige of the past, of anticipation, and consequently of a present conceived as presence" (Stiegler 61). *Epokhal* redoubling of différance, which I would like to term *epokhérance,* throws the narrator girl into crisis and makes her in Stiegler's terms "idiotic," because like Epimetheus she has a default which is manifestly textual that once more Stiegler terms this text as "*idiotext*" where "memory has been woven" (64) into its texture. It is through this extreme *epokhérance* that the girl decontextualizes herself hence her anonymity of the subjects, the place, and the time since "Spatiotemporalization, as exteriorization (as 'conquest of space and time'), is always already also detemporalization and deterritorialization. But this process, experienced as disorientation, has today reached its limit" (Stiegler 65).

Having had a sexual affair with the Uncle, the girl ruptures the boundaries of the Irish spatiotemporalization, i.e. the exteriorized Irish tradition and the Catholic religion. For the girl, her "ethnic memory is an already-there. Though constrained by it, the individual can develop a profound indeterminacy within ethnic memory by adapting it, and in this sense is 'released' and 'innovated' by it" (Stiegler 66). She goes to extremes in having sex with the boys at school because this "already-there" in her memory causes her extreme individuality and indetermination that portends her brother's and her final demise. The girl addresses her brother with a "you" pronoun to release herself as an individual "I," yet by "I" and "you" she becomes the collective "we" that according to Stiegler increases indeterminacy. As she prides on her open sexual affairs with other boys, she unwittingly develops an extreme sexual habit which is insatiable. The girl's habit is a kind of memory, a program in the Steiglerian sense, which destroys the ethnicity's "elementary operational and behavioral chains, and thus destroying ethnic unity, as territorially constituted" (Stiegler 67-68), it complements the "technical tendency" of the ethnic group as a memory which is technical *per se*. Indeed, it is the girl's epiphylogenesis that engenders her decontextualization and suspends the already established ethnic program to form her own novel consciousness. The *who* of the girl, i.e. the girl's *dasein,* is transformed into the *what* that is epiphylogenetic. When the girl becomes the *what*, that is, she becomes sexually objectified, she needs hypomnesic aid to preserve herself and that is her orthographic/bodily writing even though "Ethnic memory determines the automatic practices that regulate the individual's 'operatory behavior'" (Stiegler 73) and evidences the fact that it is her *epokhérance* that the girl strives to keep.

## 4.3. Retentional Finitude as the Irish Girl's Politics of Memory

Part III "Land Under the Wave" and Part IV "Extreme Unction" of *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* continue the anonymous narrator girl's journey and evolution in her preservation of memory. Her sexual objectification as a kind of technical synthesis is deconstruction of the *who*, her subjectivity. In the city, by acquainting herself with an urban girl, the anonymous girl finds herself sinking into an abyss of debauchery where an extreme form of objectification as *epokhal redoubling* takes place. First, premature sex as a reification of tendency is *epochal*, i.e., it disrupts the girl's smooth transition to womanhood, and then the girl has to adjust herself through *redoubling* in order to survive and retain her dynamism as the subject. By *redoubling*, by appropriating the effectivity of the sexual act for herself, she would be able to adjust herself with her present turmoil. However, she would not succeed. It lays the groundwork for a tertiary memory of epiphylogenesis. For the girl, her very temporalization as the *who* determines her retentional finitude and as she negotiates her genetic and epigenetic memory through "industrial investment in memory" (Stiegler 99) with the Irish technical tendency, she necessarily produces technically "new différant identities" (Stiegler 100). No wonder the girl feels this "temporal ecstasy" (Stiegler 100) as epiphany as she aligns herself more with this new technical life of hers as sheer disintegration: "Wash my body on or off and think I'll be some new a disgrace. Slap in this alley with no doubt rats I am leaving. Epiphany. I am leaving home. I've picked up and left. Fresh. I'm already gone" (McBride 98). The girl's memory relies on "selection" of the events to be inscribed in her memory. However, we should note that her "memory's criteria of selection" (Stiegler 100) is actualized through "the technical tendency's determining the prosthetic possibilities of access and orientation" (100) that for the girl occurs when she is undetermined. Her indetermination is seen in her decisions to confront her mother, the Uncle, and negotiate with her brother to reach rapport.

In addition, her indetermination also generates the possibilities in which a new technical tendency can emerge. Stiegler observes that such tendency is "investing the already-there" (100). Yet because she has already developed and engendered "différant identities" (100), no matter how much she attempts to determine her indetermination, it would not dissolve since it is necessary for her very existence. And with her immanent indeterminism, the Irish politics of memory for a third millennium is inaugurated. The girl's writing is thus her memory and this form of feminine writing of memory brings about new programmatics of future societies, language, knowledge, and power, as Stiegler believes that "(a written society becomes political in the strongest sense of "isonomia" and public law). Writing, whose science is grammar,

thus also gives rise to rules of memory, which had been based on conditions of functioning, and nonetheless, by the sole fact of finding itself explicit and "exteriorized," is constructed relative to the entirely different parameters of a next synchrony and a new diachrony of language" (Stiegler 110).

The girl performs herself in writing as memory. The significance of her writing as memory is about the power relations in Irish society as such. To disrupt "the hierarchy of power" (Stiegler 110) is to "affect the social structure" (110). By hearing that her brother is going to die, the girl experiences another epileptic fit of her logorrhea that intensifies her *epokhal redoubling* in the rupture she has done in form of the so-called religious sin. The bits and pieces that she has thrown away are family, tradition, religion, even her very individuality. Derrida sees this rupture with normality as follows: "The future can only be anticipated in the form of absolute danger. This is what produces the absolute break with constituted normality and can thus be announced, presented, only as a monstrosity" (Derrida 5).

The absolute and imminent danger for the girl is her brother's death. This is how her future is anticipated "as a monstrosity." The girl's solution, however, for this future, is to transform time in order to *derealize* it, that is what she has already done since the beginning. Through *derealization*, the girl as the *who*/the *what* arrives at decontextualization "from retentional finitude, whose spatial dimension is deterritorialization, tearing the *who* away from its ethnic markers, and whose temporal dimension is real time" (Stiegler 143). In order to preserve the memory of her brother and herself, she has to transcend her body by obliterating herself *via* death and anonymity to somehow achieve a new identity:

> We search for "the new," the Bergsonian name for the improbable. We want to keep it. Yet, at the same time, claiming that "being what we are in ourselves," we are tempted to exclude it. Technics, so difficult to identify from the beginning, is a formidable acceleration in the production of the new. What frightens us in this "new" that we also want to maintain? The disappearance of the human, and with it, of the new. (Stiegler 160)

Therefore, by performing her body as a sexual objectification and then going beyond her body, the girl reaches *epokhérance,* i.e., her "idiomatic difference and its inscription in a shibboleth totally coincide, at the horizon of a technical memory marked in the body—and elsewhere" (Stiegler 161). Her existence can only be articulated through language albeit not in the Irish language but in Irish English which bears the idiomaticity of that place to rupture the pure colonial English. Therefore, her linguistic idiomaticity or "shibboleth" is her prowess so as to "insist, resist, consist of existing" (Stiegler 162). In this case, her idiomatic language as orthographic writing

can be considered as technics, and her idiom as "supplementarity" that "(re)constitutes" (162) the *who*, her Irish subjectivity, then to become the *what*, her sexualization as objectification.

No matter how much the girl tries to unite with her brother, she fails because of her indetermination as Stiegler notes, "Indeterminacy is placed in proximity to the panic question appearing to it, as a *one* who cannot succeed in being a *we*—as madness" (184). Still, she could overcome her indetermination to program herself through her own death. By providing a very selective description of her life, the girl (the author) unwittingly outlines an Irish politics of memory because in effect she selects which events to retain and due to her retentional finitude under the effect of orthographic writing which is subjected to a specific criteriology of space and time, "the somatic and the germinal" (9) of her feminine identity are linked and therefore transform the "the structure of the event in all its forms" (9). It is here that one gets suspicious of the Irish nationalist memory in general because its politics of memory has always already selected particular events to be memorialized and persevered for the future generations.

### 4.4. Anonymous Irish Girl as Epimetheus: A Disoriented Epiphylogenetic Memory

Part V "The Stolen Child" is the last part of the novel which details the last moments of the girl's brother's life and finally her union with him through suicide. I have already discussed that the *who* as manifested in the girl constitutes her memory through orthographic writing. I have also argued that in order for the girl to fulfill this task, she would have to undergo a transition from the *who* to the *what*, i.e., from the subject to the object. However, because one of the vectors postulated by Stiegler that has a role in disorientation is speed, I would rather change the subject/object relationship with the concept of flux based on Stiegler's analysis that "Flux is a unity closed on itself that nevertheless finds therein 'eidetic horizons' projecting unity outside itself" (194-5). Granted, the girl, while obliterating her body through sexualized objectification, does not see her body as part of her corporeal subjectivity, and she even doubts it:

> This wrong doubtful body should not have been mine. Mine was. Not this. Was perfect. Once. Drag the. I will and sit and drown and drown if the. Come water. Over land. Swallow up. Swallow me down. Drag me in the gullies. In the pipes please and the drains. (McBride 181)

The girl develops into a fluid consciousness. Stiegler terms this form of consciousness as "flux of consciousness" (Stiegler 195) which at once endows her with a fluid character. Fluidity reifies her movement toward death. The girl's consciousness is aware of incoming death as a temporal flux. The girl's retentional finitude or "the finitude of consciousness" compels her to inscribe her "living memory" onto "a dead

memory" i.e., forgetting her past or perhaps unlearning it to rise again like a phoenix from the ashes of life-long forgotten history of repressed Irish women: "New days. Sometime. I'm. Forgotten what's the past" (McBride 202). In that case, the girl through her flux of consciousness that is taken place *via* a vertiginous death reconstitutes not only herself but also a generation of women to attain freedom.

The girl's orthographic writing as memory is thus an Epimetheus's default, her idiocy as is written and named as "idiotext." (Stiegler 242). Then her flux in consciousness becomes a "memoryflux" that is "always already constituted through reconstitutivity's imposing its retentional finitude on it. (Stiegler 242). For the girl, it is, in fact, this idiotext that provides a haven, a home for her and her brother to take rest and become peaceful: "The idiotext attempts to think *place*, the (re)constitution of place, and giving-place as such: the opening of a spatiality in the event's temporal having-place" (Stiegler 242). By achieving decontextualization, the girl arrives at a reconstitution of her Irish community albeit in her own idiomatic way.

## 5. Conclusion

The girl's and her brother's duality, just like Epimetheus's and Prometheus's duality acts as a (re)double who has made mistake or default and who has sinned and been considered guilty. This redoubling makes room for *epokhal redoubling* or intensification or as I termed earlier *epokhérance* which is realized through *epokhal redoubling* and *différance*. Then speed is introduced as a technic of which the girl is unable to comprehend and digest as a being and leads to her death. "Infinite retentionality" belongs only to God as an absolute logos and Language. The girl can only face "the finitude of failings" (Stiegler 11). Still her vertiginous death comes at the last part where her *epokhal redoubling* intensifies and sees reunion with the deceased brother once again. Not only does she rejoin her brother but also the environment, nature as such, to complete the process of her disorientation. Her *idiotext* as memory which is a kind of postmemory yet in a disoriented form is fulfilled only in absolute obliteration of the name, the very ground of identity. However, her identity is reconstituted as an originary epiphylogenetic memory orthographically written as "My name is gone" (McBride 229).

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