**“You Lie, An Ocean to the East:”**

**The Immigrant, the Commuter and the Traveler in Irish-American Poetry**

Abstract for the “Doctor of Philosophy” research by Avshalom Guissin.

**Thesis Statement**

In the second half of the twentieth century, a new pattern began to emerge with some of Ireland’s prominent poets. These poets either emigrated to, or spent a significant time living and writing in, the United States, a move that greatly affected the style and themes of their poetry. Nevertheless, the Irish poetic voice, wrapped up in hundreds of years of history, culture and tradition, remains throughout one of the foundation stones of their work. The combination of Irish and American elements, in terms of both national and cultural influences on the poetry, brings about a discernible shift in their work. The study of this work brings to light new insights pertaining to the understanding of hybrid-identity contemporary poets, and of literary relationships stretching across the ocean between the two countries.

The Irish-American poetic experience, as refracted through the works of Greg Delanty, Paul Muldoon and Derek Mahon, reveals a range of similarities, parallels and cross-references – which follow similar patterns regarding the ways in which the poetry treats Ireland and the United States. Different scholars and readers refer to the term “Irish-American poetry” in different ways, and interpret it as a canon of works, whose contents change according to their definition. In the present research, the most helpful interpretation of the term is one that refers to the content and themes of the poetry itself, and the Irish-American identity that the poetry in turn reflects. For the present study, “Irish-American poetry” refers to poems that contain elements borrowed specifically from both cultures, including the names of places, people, and other literary works; that employ language components unique to the Irish Gaelic language, or to the Irish and American strains of English; and that deal with the poetic meeting-point of Ireland and America. The poems discussed in this dissertation often contain words in the Irish language, and while some of the poets do indeed write poetry entirely in Irish, this dissertation will focus exclusively on poems written in English. While the poets themselves might also be defined as “Irish American” due to their residence, national identity, and so forth, this does not consequently define the entire corpus of their work as “Irish American.” This research uses biographical facts from the life of the poets which might allow them to be classified as Irish American, but the main focus of the study is the poetry itself, with a close look at a subgroup of the full corpus of the poets’ works; this subgroup includes those poems that deal with the meeting of the two cultures (Irish and American) within the work. While such “Irish-American poetry” is written by many different poets, the three poets that form the basis of this research were chosen because each poet adopts a different, and distinct, artistic approach to an inspiration and poetic subject that are common to all three. By defining these approaches, this study characterizes and demarcates three roles, which help clarify and expand the definition of Irish-American poetry, to include the immigrant, the commuter, and the traveler.

**Introduction**

The introduction advances a specific definition of the scope of the study, and with a discussion of its foundational arguments. It then lays out the theory of the three roles in detail, while justifying the theory itself, and characterizing each of the roles in relation to the contexts of the poets and poems discussed in the thesis. As a preliminary discussion, and as a discursive starting-point for each of these roles, I perform a close reading of a poem by each poet that is representative of my argument. This demonstrates the role of Derek Mahon as “traveler,” Paul Muldoon as “commuter,” and Greg Delanty as “immigrant.” Each of these poems presents characteristics pertinent to the allocated role, and a representative sample of the main themes that the chapters of the dissertation explore more fully. Mahon’s relatively early poem “The Globe in North Carolina” reflects sensitively the feelings of the traveler, visiting the United States for a short time, who dearly misses his home and family.[[1]](#footnote-1) The poem presents various elements within American culture, while using (amongst other things) music, art and a fleeting glimpse of the attractions of the West. Paul Muldoon’s poem “Lag” tells the story of Chang and Eng, the Siamese twins after whom the phrase was coined, and who also lived in North Carolina.[[2]](#footnote-2) The poem parallels the story of their life and death with a transatlantic relationship, and therefore offers a first whisper of the voice of the commuter, who is in constant flux between the United States, Ireland, and the British Isles. Finally, Greg Delanty’s poem “Tracks of the Ancestors,” dedicated to another immigrant poet – Irishman Louis de Paor, who emigrated to Australia – describes the experience of immigration by searching for a connection to the local native community, while using geographical elements to characterize the Irish-American connection.[[3]](#footnote-3) At the end of the introductory chapter, I offer a review of the research framework to which this study pertains; this includes monographs and important academic essays that have been crucial to the writing, and upon which this research sheds new light.

**Scholarly Framework – Irish-American Poetics**

The emerging corpus of scholarly work on the writings of contemporary Irish poets in America suggests many new angles into what singles out these writings. Different critical writers have attempted to pin down what constitutes Irish-American poetry. Some do so via the poets –that is, whether or not whoever wrote the poem was Irish and/or American either by birth, by descent, by passport ownership or by any other affiliation; others take the approach of going through the poems themselves, highlighting themes, ideas, words and references that can be read as distinctly Irish, American, or indeed as an amalgamation of the two. Others still prefer to consider Irish-American poetics as a sub-section, or as a microcosm of larger critical frameworks such as transatlantic poetics. Of course, these three approaches are not mutually exclusive.

One of the first critics who attempted to define the field of Irish-American studies was Charles Fanning, in his seminal volume *The Irish Voice in America* (1990), which included “American writers of Irish birth or background” who “have been exploring what it means to be an immigrant or ethnic in America.” [[4]](#footnote-4) As an expansion, and somewhat of a counterpoint to Fanning’s work, Ron Ebest claims in the introduction to his book, *Private Histories: The Writing of Irish Americans, 1900–1935* (2005), that the identity question

is also a question of self-identification: to be Irish American, in other words, is to some degree a matter of choice. That does not mean that Irish-American ethnicity is arbitrary or fictional; not anyone, after all, can be Irish; ancestry, no matter how elastic intermarriage may make the definition, remains the crucial element. What it does mean is that to some degree, for those descendants of Irish Protestants of the eighteenth century, or of Irish Catholics of the famine generation, ethnicity is an expression neither of nationality nor of religion nor of class nor of race. It is an expression of desire. [[5]](#footnote-5)

While Fanning and Ebest focus only on Irish-Americans who were born in the United States, Daniel Tobin’s more recent scholarly essay collection, *Awake in America: On Irish American Poetry* (2011), makes a strong claim to expand the term even further. Tobin claims that he “aims to affirm a creative and critical awareness of the presence and extent of Irish American [sic] poetry within the American literary tradition and also within the tradition of Irish poetry, more broadly considered and conceived.”[[6]](#footnote-6) “Broadly” appears to be the operative word in Tobin’s description, and this can also be seen in his companion anthology, *The Book of Irish American Poetry from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (2007), and its selection of poems and poets which several other readers have referred to as being over-inclusive.[[7]](#footnote-7) While the anthology does contain a few poets whose biography does not suggest any Irish connection whatsoever, the title declares itself to be a collection of Irish-American poetry, rather than of poets, and at that is achieves its goal, and was certainly helpful to the research in this dissertation in offering illustrative examples for discussion.

Other critics take a different tack and consider Irish-American poetry through the prism of the transatlantic. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews focuses his study on Northern Irish poets, and claims that, “Northern Irish poetry occupies the liminal cultural spaces between Ireland and America”. [[8]](#footnote-8) He implies that the “transatlantic” aspect of Northern Irish poetry might be just one story among many that tell how these cultural outputs might interact, both intentionally and unintentionally, with other countries, cultures or historical periods, and at that narrowly avoids having to define exactly what Irish-American poetics signifies for him. Brian Caraher makes a slightly more specific observation, by noting: “transatlantic [Irish-American] poetics may seek to criticize and correct conceptual insularities of Irish studies and conceptual arrogances of postcolonial studies by posing an alternative model for relating the local and the global.” [[9]](#footnote-9) While the rest of his treatise says more about what Irish-American poetry isn’t rather than what it is, he, too, sees its potential to become an important and useful subsection of the transatlantic prism. In her book *American Literature and Irish Culture, 1910–1955: The Politics of Enchantment*,Tara Stubbs further expands the concept of Irish-American writing, presenting it as a unique case study, and emphasizing the importance of text over biography. [[10]](#footnote-10) In a more recent article, she also asserts that “Irish-American Poetics might be employed as an evaluative critical lens through which to regard Irish, American and transnational exchange.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Derek Mahon, in the introduction to the anthology *The Penguin Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry* quoted earlier, has also observed that

[i]ncreasingly the give-and-take between Irish and American poetry is felt, sharing as it does a comparable relationship with the English language, and determined as their countries are by transatlantic neighbourhood.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Neil Corcoran, who quotes some of this introduction in his book *Poets of Modern Ireland: Text, Context, Intertext* (1999), remarks that “the anthologist’s insistence on the wide narrowness of the Atlantic ocean supplies a self-referential rationale for some of his own littoral locations,”[[13]](#footnote-13) and thereby pins the classification of (at least) this specific poet’s work as a responsibility of his own definition, against the wider context of the transatlantic literary space. The state of flux in which this space resides is also reflected in the poet and critic Eamonn Wall’s words, which describe how “Irish culture has become so widely disseminated and influential in the United States, and travel has become so easy” that contemporary American poets have begun to “bypass Irish America and come straight to Ireland.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Wall approaches the matter from the less prevalent point of view of American poets to Ireland, rather than Irish poets in America. In further support of the poets’ part in the classification of Irish-American poetics, Sally Barr-Ebest posits a more romantic approach, saying that “In an increasingly globalised world Irish-American identity might emerge in part as an expression of desire.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Tara Stubbs notes that

in using this phrase, Barr Ebest is alluding consciously to Ron Ebest’s earlier claim that asserting an Irish-American identification is linked to the twinned poles of “desire” and “choice,” positing nevertheless that literature has to assert itself asessentially “Irish-American” in order to embrace Irish-American themes. At the same time, Ebest claims that “not anyone, after all, can be Irish” – but neither, this implies, can they or their writings be “Irish-American.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Such critical voices, and those of the poets themselves, reside on a spectrum of different approaches to what Irish-American poetry is, or should be, with a strong focus on the poets themselves on one end, and a pure view of the poetry on its own merits on the other. This dissertation will tend to lean towards the latter, while keeping some of the biographical elements the specific poets bring to the table under consideration as well.

While grouping together many such voices under a blanket term can produce insightful commentary, there exists a need for a closer granularity through which we can investigate more closely the nuances of the poems themselves. The application of the three role theory of “commuter,” “traveler” and “immigrant,” as this dissertation will show through its four core chapters, each following a different major theme that threads throughout Irish-American poetry, will facilitate such close investigation. This dissertation aims to offer an addition to the existing scholarly work, and to expand upon it, first by allowing for an inclusion into the term “Irish-American poetics” works written by Irish poets working or living in America or commenting on this American experience. This does not mean that the poets become Irish-American, but more that their poetry can be usefully termed “Irish-American” when it deals with these subjects. Secondly, this work will offer a fresh view by elucidating the three roles within these particular poets’ works, and by allowing them to both resound with biographical data and to move away from it, in order to provide a stage for the fiction, ambivalence and ambiguity of the poetry.

**One: Swings, Swans and Simians – Three Short Case Studies**

The first chapter in the main body of the research forms a development of the introduction, and an initial application of the three-role theory. Three writing subjects or themes that often appear in the works of the three poets writing in America are examined through poems that offer a representative description of the three roles (of traveler, commuter and immigrant). The characteristics and aesthetic approaches of the immigrant, commuter and traveler are presented in parallel for each thematic example. First, the theme of America sports is presented through the test case of American baseball, its significance and role in one poem selected from the works of each poet. Following that, the theme of Irish mythology (as a representative of Irish culture as opposed to American) is examined through the way the poets employ the legend of the Children of Lir, which tells the tale of four siblings who were cursed and turned into swans. Finally, an example from the cinematic world is offered in the form of the movie *King Kong*, discussing each poet’s description of the giant Simian’s role as a foreigner who arrives in, or is brought to, New York City. This chapter examines three themes that, while they recur in the works of the three different poets, are not noticeably dominant. Each of the remaining three chapters of the thesis examines three themes that I argue play a more significant and enduring role in contemporary Irish-American poetry.

**Two: Words, Wayfarers and Wild Flowers - The Native Irish American**

For hundreds of years, the political tension between Ireland and Britain has been at the heart of Irish poetry. The attempts of the Irish to wrestle free of British cultural dominance still persist today, and these despite the external facts of national independence (however contested) and Irish membership of the European Union. Ireland always resided in the shadow of its neighboring island, and Irish poetry often channels the embedded resentment that the Irish feel as a consequence of this. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the American ideal of flag-waving independence has often inspired the Irish. The fact that so many ships left the shores of Ireland and sailed west to the United States during the great famine of the 1840’s and early 1850’s can be attributed to much more than maritime convenience and geographical necessity. The Irish have found an idiosyncratic brotherhood with their neighbors to the west, and a commonality in their historical resentment of their neighbors to the east, so that their enmeshment, and the Irish susceptibility to American cultural influence, perhaps come as no surprise. Critics have recently drawn our attention to the ways in which Irish and American cultures in fact enact a constant back-and-forth of enchantment. For example, Mary McGlynn in an essay entitled “New Irish New York” has noted that “a dream of the United States as saving Ireland” is a common feature of contemporary Irish novels, where New York in particular becomes “not an escape from the past so much as a direct line to it.”[[17]](#footnote-17) While the present thesis discusses contemporary poetry rather than novels, this (con)fusion of Irish and American lines of communication, and of the past and present, is pertinent to a study that demonstrates the to-ing and fro-ing of Irish and American influences within the works of Mahon, Muldoon and Delanty.

The second chapter examines in detail the subject of the Native American, and demonstrates how the three Irish poets writing in America find commonalities with Native American cultures. Although Native American cultures are of course complex and vast, what the poets of the present study tend to focus on is the narrative of bloody history and oppression within Native America, due to colonization by white Europeans, and particularly British colonizers, from the fifteenth century onwards. On the one hand, Irish history has been dominated by colonization and occupation under British rule, and therefore the Irish in America can find a commonality with Native Americans who have been similarly colonized. On the other hand, the Irish who arrive in America in the twentieth century have also identified themselves more commonly with the white European; the tension created between these two aspects of Irish-American identity confronts the need and will to belong, and to find a brotherhood in the local community, with the white guilt for the crimes of the pasts exacted on the Native Americans. This double use of the Native American in their poetry offers an alternative viewpoint to the dominant critical narrative of Irish-American experience in America offered by Noel Ignatiev in *How the Irish Became White*.[[18]](#footnote-18) This tension channels itself into many poems written by Delanty and Muldoon. Mahon, who did not settle in the United States but only lived in New York temporarily for several years, doesn’t deal as much with this dilemma in his poetry; but even in his poetry we can find important statements regarding the tension and the consequences of the colonization of Native American land, even if written from an external point of view.

The connections between Irish and Native American cultures, as reflected in the poems of the immigrant (Delanty) and the commuter (Muldoon), are multi-layered. Some of the poems in Greg Delanty’s first poetry collection published after moving to the United States (*American Wake*, 1995), and the collection following (*The Hellbox*, 1998) express an identification with explorers and wayfarers from different cultures who are all searching for what, to them, means “home.” Foremost of these, the story of the Irish St. Brendan of Clonfert, presents a possible (if unlikely) reality, in which the explorers’ ships arrived in America, and Brendan’s crew settled there with the native population, around 1,000 years before Christopher Columbus even arrived. These stories, which might sit more comfortably on the mythology or fantasy shelf, create a framework which gives the immigrant validation for his decision to live in America, and makes him feel that he belongs. Other poems take the path of a geographical argument, according to which the tectonic event in which the supercontinent Pangea separated into the continents we know today began at the point where North America broke off from Europe (and, even more specifically, from County Cork in Ireland where Delanty was born). Finally, the immigrant draws intriguing parallels between words in the Irish Gaelic language and those in various Native American languages – forming a unique hybrid language, which helps crystallize his new Irish-American poetic and linguistic identity.

Paul Muldoon’s poems have drawn greatly on metaphors, images and language from Native American cultures, since his early days as a poet – and long before he moved to the United States. The cultural commute that takes his poems between Ireland and America, then, is a long-lasting element in his writing – from children playing Cowboys and Indians, through making historical comparisons of the British gentleman Sir Walter Raleigh’s exploits in the seventeenth century, both in Ireland and in the first British colonies on the East Coast of America (even though Raleigh never in fact visited North America himself).[[19]](#footnote-19) For the commuter, whose voice is constantly wavering over the ocean, there is an equilibrium between the Irish and American components of the poetry; and as a result of this, the poet/speaker’s personal involvement is often either reduced or neutral. Eventually, the commuter also incorporates elements from Native American cultures into his poems in order to justify his place in his new home; but his dual identity allows for a heightened awareness of the conflict between his will to identify with Native Americans and their pain and the weight of white guilt that springs from the acts of violence that he condemns.

**Three: Sociability, Solitude and Sobriety – Public Houses and Private Spaces**

The third chapter focuses mainly on New York City, which is a port of call of most settlers and visitors to the United States, as well as an important attraction in its own right. As a global cultural center, many poets make the city their home – at least for a time – and those who are the focus of this dissertation are no exception. Drinking culture in Ireland is a significant element of everyday life for most of its citizens, and for the Irish who arrive in New York encounters with pubs and bars away from Ireland can offer an alluring cultural meeting-point. Such encounters become even more attractive when these are “Irish” pubs, as many of them attempt to emulate the style, design and character of pubs in Ireland itself. The significance of the drinking experience is different for each person, and the poetic voices of the immigrant, commuter and traveler each address this experience individually – placing emphasis on the position of the pub and public or private space.

The immigrant, as seen through Greg Delanty’s poetry, treats pubs as a sanctuary, and as an inviting, homely space. The pub is a place where the Irish outside Ireland can meet like-minded immigrants, make friends, and feel at “home.” These drinking partners are often other Irish poets, alive or dead, who make their way into the pubs depicted in the poems. For the immigrant, the drinking experience in America is like a private members’ club, a common public experience within a private circle, which maintains a strong connection to Ireland. Most of the poems in this chapter were also taken from the collection *American Wake* (1995), although the drinking and pub elements recur through Delanty’s poems and throughout his career.

Always in motion, the commuter takes upon himself the role of designated driver, as for him drinking isn’t necessarily the pub’s main attraction. As in many other of the commuter’s poems, he tends to participate in, and connect less with, the pub experience, preferring to be a silent observer. For the commuter, too, the pub is a place that hosts many other poets, either contemporary or from the past – but they are not necessarily Irish, and the commuter tries to find his own place amongst the ranks of poets from both sides of the ocean. The main focus of this section of the chapter is Muldoon’s long poem *The Prince of the Quotidian*, originally published as single volume in 1994, which depicts the experience of the commuter in New York.[[20]](#footnote-20) In this poem, like other commuter poems that concern drinking, the pub itself is often perceived as a portal back to Ireland; however the point of view always remains sober. The commuter’s pub experience is always private, detached, and offers an outlook on the American and global public sphere from the comfort of the quiet table in the corner.

Finally, the traveler, who’s not trying to find a permanent residence in New York, but is only passing through for a few years, associates most of his drinking experiences in the different pubs with Ireland, without trying to connect too much to the local drinking culture. Specifically for Derek Mahon, who has struggled with alcoholism for most of his life – a factor that strongly influenced his family and work lives – drinking forms a significant and complex part of his poems. Even though the traveler’s poems, which revolve around pubs, also communicate with other poets (most of them Irish), the drinking experience itself is one of private solitude. Mahon’s main work discussed in this chapter is *The Hudson Letter*, [[21]](#footnote-21) a long piece composed of eighteen segments (or shorter poems), which describe life in New York and include various pubs and other cultural experiences characteristic of the sojourn of the Irish in America. Furthermore, seeing as the traveler’s place in New York’s pubs is temporary, drinking also connects directly to the plight of the homeless, which assumes a main role in the poem and often addresses real homeless people in New York and in general.

**Four: Songs, Silence and Soundtracks – Popular Music**

The fourth and final chapter presents another subject recurring through the poems of the three Irish poets in America, which is the incorporation of popular music elements into the words of the verse. Songs and poems have forever been inextricably connected, be it in the form of lyrics put to melody, or through songs that filter into the background of poems. The poems of the specific “immigrant” in this study do not address music in a particular or significant way, and his part of the chapter is therefore shorter; but the importance of music, whether as background or even as white noise, as part of the backdrop against which his poetry is presented, is nevertheless meaningful. The commuter and traveler, on the other hand, devote a great deal of attention not only to carefully handpicked music but also to certain details and features of the music that connect to their particular Irish-American experience.

For the traveler, music is a continual learning experience, which is greatly influenced by his long sojourn in America. One of the meta-poetic characteristics of Derek Mahon’s works is his tendency to revisit, constantly update and improve his poetry – so much so that some of the poems in his different volumes of Collected Works are drastically altered from their original version. Two of the things that he tends to go back and update in his different poems are the attitude and references to music. In this chapter, my research shows how the traveler’s American sojourn affected his approach to music, even in poems that he had originally written twenty years prior to arriving in New York. Poems written during his time in the United States, and specifically “The Yaddo Letter”[[22]](#footnote-22) and *The Hudson Letter*, are also filled with music (mostly Irish); this channels a direct connection with the feelings of loneliness, and longing to be with family, that are expressed in the traveler’s poems.

In the commuter’s trunk, in comparison, there is an impressive collection of popular music originating in the United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Music is an integral part of the commuter’s daily life, and many of Paul Muldoon’s poems deal with music, musicians, and popular music culture. He himself also writes songs for the band in which he also plays, and as far as he’s concerned, the borders between poetry and song are blurry if they exist at all. The chapter reviews several of Muldoon’s poems that feature music as a theme – whether it is the subject of the poem, or a tool for the amplification of the experience in a poem about something else. The middle of the chapter revolves around a long poem, *Sleeve Notes*, from the collection *Hay* (1998),[[23]](#footnote-23) which lays out a sort of autobiography through specific albums listened to at points in the poet’s life. The poem is divided into twenty-one segments, with each segment carrying the heading of an album and a musical artist. Just as in other circumstances and contexts, the commuter retains the equilibrium between Irish and American influences and, even in a personal and autobiographical poem such as *Sleeve Notes*, he manages to stay detached but loyal to both countries.

**New Territory: Applying the Three-Role Theory to poems by Eavan Boland**

This inter-chapter applies the theory to a selection of poetry from Eavan Boland, herself a major poet in the Irish-American scene. Boland’s biography presents her as a strong candidate to have her poems read through the role of the immigrant: she was born in Ireland, began her poetic career in Dublin and then moved to the United States where she’s been a professor at Stanford University since 1995. The majority of her poetry, however, is more Irish than Irish American in nature, but the distances stretching both physically between the two countries and temporally between the first half of Boland’s life spent mostly in Ireland and the second where she writes about Ireland from California, make room for some of her poems to be read through an Irish-American lens. The inter-chapter first discusses Boland’s history and friendship with Derek Mahon in their University days at Trinity College Dublin, and reflects on the ways in which Boland as a woman poet fits into what is a predominantly male writing club. It then goes on to close read several Boland poems which, through similar themes presented in the main chapters of this dissertation. Alongside a comparative reading of some of Delanty’s works discussed earlier in the thesis, the discussion fleshes out Boland’s Irish-American poetic voice as one fitting the immigrant role. This test case serves as a demonstration, or proof of concept for the application of the Three Role Theory.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion presents the outcomes of the research, and summarizes the arguments that the thesis has identified, characterized, and demonstrated for each of the three roles (of traveler, commuter and immigrant). For the immigrant, the connection with Ireland is meaningful and strong, but largely nostalgic and comparative. The main motive behind most of Delanty’s poems, in each one of the subjects presented in this dissertation (i.e. mythology, pubs and music), is to find a place in his new home. The voice of the Irish immigrant in America reflects a constant attempt to import the culture in which he grew up into the new framework, while learning the local customs and establishing a new poetic language that constitutes the sum of these parts. The commuter, conversely, retains an ongoing equilibrium between his sources on both sides of the ocean. Forever adopting a neutral point of view, the commuter maintains a careful detachment from the events of his poems. Muldoon’s commute is expressed not only through the geographical and cultural duality of Ireland in America, but also through a variety of other elements in his poetry, moving between double meanings and interpretations, and between languages, artists, and times. Finally, the traveler, in his limited sojourn in the United States, collects certain elements from the local culture, but usually transports more significant Irish baggage. The feeling of longing and homelessness colors the characteristics of his travels. Like the immigrant and the commuter, the traveler also gives a stage in his poems to the voices of other poets; but the context in which they are presented is almost always within a thought of Ireland and home.

The research as a whole, then, articulates the poetic voices of three contemporary Irish poets in America, and their different roles, through an examination of the cultural frameworks the three poets employ in their works, and the specific meanings these frameworks reflect in light of certain subjects. The research demarcates the strength and significance of the effects of physical and cultural distance from what these poets refer to as “home” and, in using these three poets as exemplars, works towards an understanding of the complexity and richness of the Irish poetic voice in America. This dissertation deals with three specific poets, but its wider objective is to present a prototype that will assist future researchers in the examination of the effect of cultural and geographical transposition on the works of any contemporary hybrid Irish/American poet through the application of the three roles. As a final note, and as a first step towards applying this theory more widely, the last part of the conclusion includes a reading of one poem from each of the three poets which is not “Irish American” in its essence, and which has been selected from their more recent works. The readings show how the roles continue to be useful to the understanding and analysis of the poems, even outside the contexts within which they have been defined in this research.

1. Derek Mahon, “The Globe in North Carolina,” *The Hunt by Night,* Wake Forest University Press, 1983, pp.61-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Paul Muldoon, “Lag,” *Poems 1968-1998,* London: Faber and Faber, 2001, pp.408–409. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Greg Delanty, “Tracks of the Ancestors,” *American Wake*, pp.15–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America: Irish-American Fiction from the 1760s to the 1980s,* Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1990, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ron Ebest, *Private Histories: The Writing of Irish Americans, 1900–1935*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Daniel Tobin, *Awake in America: On Irish American Poetry*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011, p.ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. To name one, Tara Stubbs, “Awake in America: on Irish American poetry,” *Irish Studies Review*, 20.4 (2012): 514–516. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Kennedy-Andrews, *Northern Irish Poetry: The American Connection,* p.13. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Brian G. Caraher, “Speaking of Donoghue,” *Ireland and Transatlantic Poetics: Essays in Honor of Denis Donoghue*, Ed. Brian G. Caraher and Robert Mahony, New Jersey: Rosemont, 2007, pp.9–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Stubbs, *American Literature and Irish Culture, 1910–1955: The Politics of Enchantment*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Stubbs, “’Beyond the Lines of Poetry’: Ethnic Traditions and Imaginative Interventions in Irish-American Poetics,” *Oxford Handbooks Online*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2 February 2017, [www.oxfordhandbooks.com](http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com), Accessed 28 April 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mahon, “Introduction,” *The Penguin Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry*, p.xxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Neil Corcoran, *Poets of Modern Ireland: Text, Context, Intertext*, Cardiff: University of Wales, 1999, p.140. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Eamonn Wall, *From the Sin-é Café to the Black Hills: Notes on the New Irish*, Madison, Wisconsin and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999, p.57. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Sally Barr Ebest, *The Banshees: A Literary History of Irish American Women Writers*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013, p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Stubbs, “Beyond the Lines of Poetry.” Here Stubbs cites Ron Ebest, *Private Histories*, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Mary McGlynn, “New Irish New York: Contemporary Irish constructions of New York City,” *Ireland and Transatlantic Poetics*, ed. Brian Caraher and Robert Mahony (New Jersey, 2007), pp.205–221 (218). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Noel Ignatiev, *How The Irish Became White*, New York: Routledge, 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. "Sir Walter Raleigh." Britannica Academic, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11 December 2015, [http://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Sir-Walter-Raleigh/62546](http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4996/levels/collegiate/article/62546), Accessed 20 January 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Muldoon, *The Prince of the Quotidian*, Ireland: The Gallery Press, 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
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