

# Reimagining Modernity: Derealized Hinterlands in Patrick McCabe's New Gothic Fiction

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*The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space,  
no doubt a great deal more than with time.*<sup>1</sup>

**A**CKNOWLEDGING THE legitimacy of Michel Foucault's assessment that the present is an epoch of space, in which the cumulative layers of historicity exist in parataxic simultaneity,<sup>2</sup> this paper examines the trope of hinterlands in *Winterwood* (2006), one of Patrick McCabe's new Gothic or "Bog Gothic" fictions,<sup>3</sup> with a view to revealing the process of reimagining, in contemporaneity, the Irish sense or "*sensing of place*" described by Seamus Heaney in an essay included in the collection *Preoccupations*.<sup>4</sup>

A poet who shares with McCabe a fascination with that prototypical Irish terrain, "bog," that peat-accruing wetland imagined as a sort of archival, many-layered space that preserves eons of ancestral memory,<sup>5</sup> Heaney speaks about two distinct, yet interlaced ways ("lived, illiterate and unconscious" vs. "learned, literate and conscious") through which place can generate sense in the mythic imaginary of communities.<sup>6</sup> The role of place in shaping artistic imagination is not peculiar to the Irish, of course, for any writer's anchorage in place may provide imaginative sustenance to the literary mappings of that writer's geographies of the mind. As Heaney asserts, "this nourishment which springs from knowing and belonging to a certain place and a certain mode of life is not . . . a particularly Irish phenomenon."<sup>7</sup> However, as evinced by both the traditionalist writers of the Celtic Twilight, who championed aesthetic rootedness in the "locale with its common language" and sought to forge emplaced national or tribal mythologies by agonistically resisting the displacements triggered by modernization, and the cosmopolitan modernist authors who extolled exilic severance and detachment from the "language of the tribe"<sup>8</sup> and the motherland,<sup>9</sup> as means of securing connectedness to the modernity of Europe's trans-national artistic movements, place has played a markedly relevant role in shaping the Irish literary imagination. As Heaney explains, by either soldering or unsoldering the contours of the "geographical country" and the outlines of the "country of the mind," the Irish sense of place has become a crucial gateway towards imagining Ireland into or out of existence and towards constructing or deconstructing place-related mythologies of Irishness, "because of the peculiar fractures in our history,

north and south, and because of the way that possession of the land and possession of different languages have rendered the question particularly urgent.”<sup>10</sup>

Elaborating on Heaney’s distinction between connectedness to place as a means of forging a collective, national psychogeography of the homeland (the case of Yeats) and disconnectedness from place as a way of ensuring interconnectedness between the individual consciousness of the writer and the wider, European or global world (the case of Joyce), Richard Kearney shows the importance for postnationalist writers to reactivate “a genuine social imaginary open to universal horizons” by discerning the “authentic and inauthentic uses of myth” and using place as a means of “reimagin[ing] our past in a way which challenges the present status quo and opens up alternative possibilities of thinking.”<sup>11</sup>

With its imaginary projections of real or phantasmal Irish places, *Winterwood* renders Patrick McCabe as the descendant of this twofold, disjunctive lineage of the writers who, as Kearney shows, in the early 20th century, at the time of modernity’s advent, either imagined Ireland’s topography as a reservoir of communal mythologies, designed to instill a sense of belonging to the motherland by transcending historical timeframes and immersing themselves in place (seen as the sacred archive of the mnemonic traces of mythical time or the sacred time of origins), or, on the contrary, refused to be affixed in place and espouse this compensatory illusion that obliterated the divisions and dispossessions afflicting the present, a present that was irreparably out of kilter with the past and in which the sole solution for the individual writer was to embrace a sense of non-belonging to the “birth-place” and of belonging to an “elsewhere” or, more radically, to a “nowhere,” whence he could rally himself to a modernist stream of self-interrogation and self-reflection.<sup>12</sup>

Redmond Hatch, the narrator of *Winterwood*, literalizes this trope of the writer who imagines the sense of place into discourse, for he starts off from the position of a journalist who has sought validation, with questionable degrees of success, in the more cosmopolitan centers of Dublin and London and who is assigned the publicly (nationally) oriented task of producing an article about Slievenageeha, his “old mountain home.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, in postnationalist times, the task ahead of Redmond is to reinvent the mythical imaginary of a place deemed to be one of the last stations of “originary” Irishness, for his compatriots who are equally estranged from such native places, being condemned to the dire condition of placelessness:

*if I had become debilitatingly civilized and grown apart from my people and background, then at least I wasn’t alone, for everyone in the valley was doing exactly that — if the gaudy identikit housing was anything to go by, not to mention the transatlantic accents and the sprawling housing developments, with names more appropriate to Surrey than Slievenageeha: ‘Meadow Vale’, ‘Primrose Demesne’, ‘The Chantryes.’<sup>14</sup>*

Once the homebound journey is initiated and the local archive of stories is activated,<sup>15</sup> the trajectory of Redmond Hatch clearly suggests the impossibility of retrieving a healing sense of at-homeness. Consequent to displacement, reimplacement is well-nigh impossible, for the native place becomes laden with that terrifying *unhomeliness* which “is the

condition of extraterritorial and cross-cultural initiations. To be unhomed is not to be homeless. . . . The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow.<sup>16</sup> Revealing himself, over the course of a tortuous, meandering narrative, to be the victim *and* the perpetrator of tribal violence (he was sexually assaulted, in his childhood, by Uncle Florian and he murdered his own daughter, Immy) in Slievenageeha, referred to, with Joycean echoes, as “Incest Mountain,”<sup>17</sup> Redmond Hatch interlocks his destiny with that of his spectral counterpart, Ned Strange. The latter is a “home-ly/unhome-ly” fiddler/story-teller turned child molester and infanticide who returns, from beyond the brink of death, to haunt the narrator during progressively intimate encounters that suggest the possibility of his being Red’s alter ego or the shadowy other of his dark self.

In Slievenageeha, McCabe’s deranged and delusional protagonist parodically fulfills the Yeatsian project of sublimating the violent conflicts of contemporaneity into the timeless “salvific myth of a ‘terrible beauty,’”<sup>18</sup> for as he merges with Ned, he also becomes one with the landscape: “In a way, I suppose it was as if he himself were some kind of noble, immovable, magisterial mountain, which seemed to have existed, literally, for centuries. Long before progress of any kind began.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time, in titling his novel *Winterwood*, after the fantasy land Redmond’s mind concocts as a fairy-tale shorthand for the realm of death he rushes Imogen to, McCabe parodically cites the concluding paragraph in James Joyce’s last story in the collection *Dubliners*, “The Dead,” in which the living cannot escape a sense of world-derealization and self-dissolution, in which the immersion of an individual consciousness in rites of passage for paying homage to the departed fails to retrieve their vibrant presence into memory, trapping the survivor in senseless iterative gestures of remembrance that simply lack the force to energize the present.<sup>20</sup> The reference to Conroy’s “journey westward,” presentified in the title of McCabe’s very first chapter (“One: My Journey Westward, My Old Mountain Home”) and, above all, the hibernal imagery that freezes the entire topography of Joyce’s short story in Hibernian paralysis (“snow was general all over Ireland”), rendering both the living and the dead prone to the same ontological inconsistency,<sup>21</sup> are resumed in the liminal imagery of McCabe’s novel, more specifically in the ominous leitmotif recited to Red by an eternally recurrent revenant of the past, Ned: “Till Slievenageeha Mountain crumbled to the sea, till the winter snow whitened the high hills of hell.”<sup>22</sup>

Thus, McCabe’s half-real, half-imaginary Slievenageeha, the realm that is concurrently mythologized and demythologized in *Winterwood*, citationally invokes both the Yeatsian mode of communion with the native landscape that fosters deeply entrenched associations with the mythicized past or, as Heaney would put it, “with a something other than themselves, a something to which we ourselves still feel we might belong,”<sup>23</sup> and the Joycean mode of disinvestment in the mythologies of at-homeness. In McCabe’s narrative, confinement within the narrow gravitational scope of a native place with which the protagonist/narrator has lost all organic connections generates a sense of Durkheimian anomie, of a certain discoherent and mechanical form of trans-personal solidarity that creates psychopathic dispositions not only in himself but in most individuals who dwell in Slievenageeha (and, unquestionably, in all of his doppelgänger-type replicants).<sup>24</sup> They fall prey to feelings of carceral entrapment in endless patterns of repetitions, cement-

ing themselves in repetitive cycles of past atrocities and perpetually disjoining themselves from the realities of the present, with the consequence that they become incapable of accessing the potentialities of a future “elsewhere.”

The descriptive label “Bog Gothic” appended to McCabe’s work certainly makes sense in *Winterwood* not as regards the actual consistency of the terrain, for the mountainous landscape of Slievenageeha has the figural, rather than the literal viscosity of a wetland, compressing, in suspended indefiniteness, the poly-stratified layers of the populace’s collective memory—much like in Heaney’s own poem “Bogland,” from 1969, dedicated to the vestigial, sacramental landscape of Ireland, which is detectible, as the poet states in “The Sense of Place,” beyond the visible realities of the present-day topographies.<sup>25</sup> The chemical metaphor is, I believe, appropriate here, for just like a suspension maintains in free-floating indeterminacy a heterogeneous blend of solids and fluids that can only reach provisional equilibrium through sedimentation if left undisturbed, Slievenageeha functions as a place of the mind both by condensing a body of old legendry and folk superstitions that chart it as a sort of mythological *axis mundi* connecting the mundane world to a demoniacal underworld and by undercutting the generically sacramental purpose of such places, for in connecting the past and the present, the spectral and the substantial, the dead and the living, *thanatos* and *bios*, the real and the imaginary or the religious with the irreligious, it fails to propel these extremes into cohesive integrity. This creates rifts of utter disarray in the imagination of those who, like Redmond Hatch, McCabe’s utterly unreliable and confused narrator, and who, like the Joycean blooming artist, sought legitimation elsewhere, but return to an uncannily defamiliarized or derealized at-homeness and endeavor to become reacquainted with a mythical time and the tribal language. “Bog Gothic” aptly describes, in fact, the derailing psychosocial effects of this re-emplacement in the birthplace, the place of origins—a desired, but insufficiently imagined ensconcement in and comprehension of the spirit of the place.

Moreover, the hinterland of Slievenageeha, the remote Irish mountain valley, encapsulates the anxieties attendant on the passage from a traditionalist resistance to modernity to a zombified acquiescence to (post)modernity, by recording a shift from locally inflected cultural specificity to an erosion of cultural differences under the impact of the universalizing paradigm of modernity, or, most recently, as a result of englobing ideologies and the dispersive consumerist trends of society. Literally meaning “windy mountain” or “mountain of the wind” (*Sliabh na Gaoithe*), Slievenageeha translates a crisis of imaginary signification in postnationalist Ireland, accompanying the transition from provincial localism, with its compensatory mythologies, to global a-localism. Slievenageeha’s windy hinterlands are derealized, in the sense of being released from the strictures of geophysical peripherality, in relation to various centers, and phantasmally projected as heterotopias, those sites interlacing order and disorder, in Foucauldian acceptance.

As a heterotopian “other space,” the hinterland is, along the lines set by Foucault in his seminal analysis “Of Other Spaces,” a relational counter-site.<sup>26</sup> In his discussion of the heterogeneous spaces of modernity, defined as sites positioned in parataxic relation to other sites within networks of spatiality, Foucault distinguishes between two types of space that are liminally connected to, but that undermine or contradict all other spaces. The first is utopia, a “fundamentally unreal” space placed in inverted, antagonistic rela-

tion with actual space. The second is heterotopia, a type of counter-site straddling the boundary between real and unreal, a place of otherness situated outside “all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.”<sup>27</sup> In his analysis of modernity’s social ordering practices through the construction of entwined utopian and heterotopian models of space, Kevin Hetherington also considers that heterotopias arise in the “neutral” clefts between eu-topia, the blueprint of a perfect social space that modernity’s grand project envisaged, and ou-topia, the no-place that is to be translated into a stable, ordered socius.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, heterotopias unsettle the margin-center opposition, collapsing both into an “unbounded and blurred space between” them.<sup>29</sup>

In McCabe’s novel, Slievenageeha is featured as the dynamic topography of such an unsettling or “paradoxical space.”<sup>30</sup> Because it represents both a real locale and a spectral, derealized space of the imagination, it can be seen as a heterotopian counter-site or, in Foucault’s words, as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which . . . all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”<sup>31</sup> More specifically, it is, in Foucauldian terms, a heterotopia of compensation, one of those “absolutely perfect other places” associated in the colonial imagination, as the French theorist maintains, with successful “civilizational” efforts targeted at the regulatory standardization of spatial layouts.<sup>32</sup> I would argue, however, that just like Ireland served as a heterotopia of negative compensation for the British colonial mindset,<sup>33</sup> which depicted it as an uncivilized outpost populated by barbarous ruffians and atavistic brutes, by contradistinction with the empire’s rationalist and progressive civility, Slievenageeha is, in the postcolonial, postnationalist conscience, a compensatory heterotopia, which preserves the legendary contours of Ireland as an agrestic realm of sublime majesty and impenetrable mystery, still impervious to the regulatory drive of modernization.

As regards the Irish hinterland in both pre- and post-Independence representations,<sup>34</sup> its otherness is predicated on the contestation and inversion of the real places it exists in relation to, London, as the former center of colonial power, or the gradually modernized and globally connected urban Irish geographies. In Patrick McCabe’s “Bog Gothic” novels, the Irish hinterland is always troped as a concurrently celebratory and contestatory site, which both catalyzes and hinders passageways between the chronological tiers of the present and the past. Speaking about the “either-or” polarity of psychogeographic constructs in the colonial imaginary, Declan Kiberd has shown that for the metropolitan center, Ireland served as a self-validating *pollution container* of England’s Other, being defined as a hinterland that encapsulated the detritus of Celtic unruliness, wildness and backwardness and was outlined as “a fantasy land in which to meet fairies and monsters.”<sup>35</sup> Against this divisionist mindscape, the Irish revivalist writers from the turn of the twentieth century took heed of Ireland’s hybrid, “multiple selfhood” and its “modern authenticity,” grounding their work of “cultural resistance” and the task of “reinventing” the homeland in a pluralist, “inclusive philosophy of interpenetrating opposites,” which, as Kiberd suggests, continues to shape literary mappings of Irishness in the twenty-first century.<sup>36</sup> Released from the shackles of what Brian Graham calls “sectarian iconography,” contemporary representations of Ireland’s psychogeographies are predicated on “inclusiveness” and “open-endedness,” emphasizing “the diversity of Irish place and society and the fluidity of Irish identity.”<sup>37</sup>

Ostensibly spanning a quarter of a century, Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* captures a sense of the flattening of historical time by conceiving the space of his narrative as a seamless serialization of seventeen chapters. These sequentially marked chapters, instead of systematically advancing the storyline, bog down the reader's comprehension through numerous voice overlays and perspectival shifts going back and forth in time. Listed in numerical order and steering the progress of the story from a first-person account of "My Journey Westward, My Old Mountain Home" to a third-person reflection on "Little Red, the Outland Rose," the chapters diagram the regressive overlaps of identity between Redmond ("Red") Hatch, the journalist who sets out to write an article about the dynamics of cultural changeability-immutability brought about by modernization in the remote Irish rural region of Slievenageeha, and his doppelgänger Edmund ("Ned") Strange, the irrepressible story-teller turned ghost, who condenses the impenetrable, intractable nature of this simultaneously real and mythical place. Despite appearing to mark out, with greater or lesser accuracy, the chronological linearity of the plot (the chapters are grouped into sections of varying length under the umbrella of the "Eighties," "1990," "1991," "Mid-Nineties," "Late Nineties," "2001," "2002," "2006"), these descriptive labels create further confusion by plunging the last two chapters into an indeterminate "Present" and, respectively, into "Eternity," suggesting a spatialization of time and the relativization of all the polar dichotomies that appeared to hold the center of the narrative in place: present/past, rural/urban, civilized/agrestic, sane/pathological, living/dead and so on. In other words, the arborescent, vertical structure of the narrative is collapsed into a sprawling horizontal site, a grid in which the data provided by the narrating self, with increasing unreliability as the story unfolds, are randomly distributed and stored.

Populated by menfolk with "great big beards and red curly heads," forming a "close-knit tribe" whose historically attested solidarity in the face of colonial atrocity is paradoxically invoked in the image of a collective dissipation of guilt,<sup>38</sup> the mountain valley of Slievenageeha is accessed through a twofold portal: that of a legitimizing narrative ruse (Redmond Hatch is asked by the newspaper for which he works, the *Leinster News*, to write an article about the fading away of folklore traditions and "the changing ways in Ireland")<sup>39</sup> and of a relocation of the protagonist in the uncanny zone of unhomely at-homeness, in a barely recognizable native place from which he has become so alienated that his descent in the valley mimics the visit of a colonizer in a remote hinterland. Invited to Ned's house, Red recounts that:

*It took us nearly half an hour to get there, winding our way up a rugged hilly track, pushing our way through a plantation of firs, through tangled copsewood and green depths of fern. Eventually arriving at a tumbledown shack, evidently constructed from any materials that happened to be at hand. Random tufts of grass sprouted wildly from its roof.*<sup>40</sup>

Despite its peripheral location, Slievenageeha—initially articulated as the cultural heartland of mystic Ireland, a truly heterotopian *other* space,<sup>41</sup> simultaneously emplaced and phantasmatic—is eventually bereft of its heterological potential by being turned into a disciplined space of sameness. In the very recent past bordering on the present that the

narrative explores, Slievenageeha is “Gothic Ireland” itself, a place of untarnished beauty and pristine wilderness (reminiscent of Burkean apprehensions of the sublime in nature)<sup>42</sup> which nonetheless corresponded, in the colonial project, to a “zone of weirdness,” a hinterland condensing abnormal, pathological phenomena,<sup>43</sup> tending to be disinvested, in the postcolonial mindset, from any injurious associations and becoming the valuable repository of national traditions and heritage. Thus, at the beginning of his account, Redmond Hatch equivocally notes that for his fellow Irishmen and, in particular, for the communities emplaced in Slievenageeha, a region that is redolent with mysticism and the oral traditions of story-telling and singing, this place represents, in late modernity, one of the last utopian outposts that preserve, unsullied, the essence of an “Ireland that was fast disappearing—if not, indeed, practically vanished already,”<sup>44</sup> a snapshot of the country’s past provisionally entrenched in a continuously encroaching present. In fact, one of the first cautionary wisdoms imparted upon Red concerns the profusion of changes that have affected the place, now that it is “entering the modern world.”<sup>45</sup>

Contrasted with this accelerated pace of modernization is the resistance of the mountain itself to the transformations that threaten to tame the landscape, for, as Ned says, “The mountain doesn’t go away.”<sup>46</sup> Slievenageeha is, to use the words of Seamus Heaney, a “landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it.”<sup>47</sup> The primeval forest of pine trees which serves as the backdrop of the first story of spectral encounters imparted to Red is also a repository of unappeased memories that will not fade away, the memories of past, unresolved trauma that will last, as Ned’s song claims, “Till the winter snow whitens the high hills of hell”<sup>48</sup> and that expose the survivors to the presence of terrifying ghosts. Although over the course of the narrative Red becomes the target of Ned’s haunting visitations, entwining their felonious identities to the point of an uncanny overlap, the story of the old woman (possibly an archetypal rendition of the mythical motherland trope) who encounters, in her homestead, a ghoulish revenant of the past suggests that underlying the aberrant—sexually deviant and criminal—present behavior of the two men are ancient wounds that have not healed across generations:

*She saw its shadow first, you see, then slowly looked up and saw it standing before her. Standing right there before her—staring down. Looking at her with these two dead eyes. There was no feeling in them, Redmond. They were dead, them eyes. You know what they were like? Two black holes. Like two black holes bore right into its skull. It wasn’t a human being, Redmond. It was a creature. A thing that had come creeping around there at night. Them was hard times, Redmond. That’s how it was in these rural places—and you know it. Them memories, they don’t just up and walk away. . . . They last as long as them fucking pine trees. Till there’s frost in hell, Redmond.*<sup>49</sup>

Such references to the memory of places that witnessed the atrocities of colonial history, a memory that resurfaces, at a phantasmal level, with the destabilizing energies of a demoniacal force, also appear in other of Patrick McCabe’s Bog Gothic fictions.<sup>50</sup> In *Winterwood*, the ever-accumulating past cannot be transmuted into a salvific atemporal present, but is demythicized in the protagonist’s psychopathologized responses to the unhomeliness of at-homeness and in the spectralization of place itself:

*Slievenageeha is the name of the new retail center in the town and Liebhraus is the construction company. The American microchip plant Intel employs in excess of 2,000 people with plans for further expansion already well advanced, towards what is predicted will be a mini-!?' Californian-style silicon valley. A spaghetti junction swirls way beyond the mountain. To accommodate the high-powered eighteen-wheeler diesel trucks, honking along the five-lane motorways, belching great clouds of thick smoky dust.*<sup>51</sup>

McCabe's Bog Gothic fiction ultimately demonstrates that literary representations of the Heaneyan "sense of place" reflect and reinforce the spatiality of the world, generating new lenses for conceptualizing or envisioning cultural geographies.<sup>52</sup> By the end of the narrative, Slievenageeha is no longer a "marginal site from which a counter-hegemonic position emerges," but an index of the pervasive effects of globalization, with its emphasis on perpetual mutability,<sup>53</sup> even though the previously inviolable topography of the inaccessible mountains becomes vulnerable to infractions not of a supernatural or spectral order (see the numerous instances of ghostly apparitions in this zone), but to the infinite mutability of simulacra.



## Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics* 16/1 (1986), 23.
2. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 22.
3. John O'Mahony, "King of Bog Gothic," *The Guardian*, 30 August 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/aug/30/fiction.patrickmccabe>, accessed 17 April 2016.
4. Seamus Heaney, "The Sense of Place," *Preoccupations. Selected Prose 1968-1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 132.
5. See my analysis of *bog* as an overarching metaphor of poetic imagination and representational vision in the works of the two Irish writers in Carmen-Veronica Borbely, *Mapping the (Post) Gothic. Essays on Irish Contemporary Fiction and Film* (Cluj: Presa Universitara Clujeana, 2014), 139–143.
6. Heaney, "The Sense of Place," 131.
7. Heaney, "The Sense of Place," 136.
8. Heaney, "The Sense of Place," 136, 135.
9. In the words of Stephen Dedalus, "Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow," in James Joyce, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1916]), 171.
10. Heaney, "The Sense of Place," 132, 136.
11. Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland. Politic, Culture, Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 97.
12. Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland*, 91-93.
13. Patrick McCabe, *Winterwood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 11.
14. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 15.
15. "After that, I began to visit the valley regularly, . . . , looking forward to Ned's stories about life in the valley and the days of long ago. There'd be no end to his tales, each one wilder than the next," in McCabe, *Winterwood*, 12.



16. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.
17. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 228.
18. See Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland*, 92.
19. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 13.
20. In Joyce's story, Gabriel Conroy's "soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling," in James Joyce, *Dubliners* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993 [1914]), 160.
21. Snow falls upon "the dark central plain," "the treeless hills," "the Bog of Allen" and "the dark mutinous Shannon waves," Joyce, *Dubliners*, 160.
22. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 62.
23. Heaney, "The Sense of Place," 132.
24. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (London and New York: Routledge, 1952), 49.
25. Seamus Heaney, "Bogland," in *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 41. Heaney, "The Sense of Place," 133.
26. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 23–24.
27. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 24.
28. Hetherington is interested in the processual dynamics that assisted modernity in restructuring and reordering space not via the antithetic logic of utopian realization or dystopian derealization, but through the conjunctive logic of heterotopian de- and reterritorialisation, or what he calls the "ordering of modernity within this in-between space that I call heterotopia," Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity. Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), viii–ix.
29. Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity*, 28.
30. Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity*, 27.
31. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 22.
32. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27.
33. See Gerry Smith's analysis of "Ireland as an 'illusionary' and/or 'other' space of the British heterotopic imagination," in Gerry Smith, *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 7.
34. As regards the shaping of the trope of Gothic Ireland in the Anglican imagination as a site of otherness or as a "space of monstrous drives and apparitions which plague the Self," see Jarlath Killeen, *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Portland, Or.: Four Courts Press, 2005), 20.
35. Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 1.
36. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 6–7.
37. Brian Graham, "Preface," in *In Search of Ireland. A Cultural Geography*, ed. Brian Graham (London: Routledge, 1997), xii.
38. As Ned Strange informs Red Hatch during their very first encounter, referring to the quasi-identical appearance of red-bearded Irishmen, "Some say that we does it on purpose, take refuge behind our close-knit tribe so nobody can ever get blamed—for the wicked things we get up to sometimes," McCabe, *Winterwood*, 6.
39. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 3.
40. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 6.
41. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 24.

42. The sublime, Burke says, “comes upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness,” in Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 60–61.
43. Killeen, *The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction. History, Origins, Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 2.
44. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 12.
45. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 7.
46. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 7.
47. Seamus Heaney, “Feeling into Words,” in *Preoccupations. Selected Prose 1968-1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 54.
48. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 9.
49. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 8.
50. See, for instance, his 2010 novel *The Stray Sod Country*, in which the muffled transgenerational tensions of the border community of Cullymore keep adding up and shaping an unappeased memory of the past. The stray sod land of the title is territorially charted as a heterotopian enclave, a phantasmal no-man’s land without bearings, overlapping the real terrain of the village. Within the fluctuating geometries of this heterotopian space, there is a devilish resurgence of destructive energies, which shatter the flimsy balance of forces and haunt an oblivious community that has not paid the Zizekian symbolic debt to the victims of past violence. For an analysis of this spatial trope, see Borbely, *Mapping the (Post)Gothic*, 134.
51. McCabe, *Winterwood*, 225.
52. Petronia Petrar, *Spatial Representations in the Contemporary British Fiction* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitara Clujeana, 2012), 1.
53. “Social order is never an order but an ordering that is itself continually changing, fixing and unfixing itself,” cf. Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity*, 28.

### **Abstract**

#### Reimagining Modernity: Derealized Hinterlands in Patrick McCabe’s New Gothic Fiction

This paper examines the trope of hinterlands in *Winterwood* (2006), one of Patrick McCabe’s new Gothic or “Bog Gothic” fictions, with a view to revealing the process of reimagining, in contemporaneity, the Irish sense or “sensing of place” described by Seamus Heaney in an essay included in the collection *Preoccupations*. The term *hinterland*—or *outland*, as it appears in McCabe’s *Winterwood*—essentially carries the twofold connotations of margin *and* that which lies beyond the margin. In other words, the hinterland means both the back country (rural, barren wilderness) located outside the frames of civilized (urban, metropolitan) space and the very fringes that define the contours of this space and grant legitimacy to its pre-eminence in the cultural imaginary. McCabe’s Bog Gothic fiction demonstrates that literary representations of the Heaneyan “sense of place” can generate new lenses for envisioning the cultural geographies of Irishness.

### **Keywords**

Patrick McCabe, *Winterwood*, hinterland, heterotopia, Bog Gothic