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'The IFSC as a Way of Organizing Nature': Neoliberal Ecology and Irish Literature

The emergence of environmental humanities in Ireland coincides with the intensification of technocratic approaches to funding of environmental research. While calling for 'transdisciplinary' projects in which humanities researchers are involved in project design rather than tacked on as 'added value,' the EU Horizon 2020 scheme seems more oriented towards producing bankable technological "solutions" to the "problems" of climate crisis, energy sovereignty, and food security confronting contemporary Europe. This forecloses the possibilities of investigating alternative organizations of nature-society or interrogating the ecological consequences of imposing new technological lifeworlds. Similarly, Irish national schemes have emphasized the degree to which technocratic solutions should be monetized, part of the ongoing drive to bolster a 'knowledge economy' and to convert universities into patent factories, where intellectual property can be enclosed and converted into alienable commodities.

Tellingly, the national Food Harvest 2020 conception of environment revolves around the desire to 'greenwash' the agri-industry. The report opens by declaring, "Ireland's historic association with the colour green is linked to our unspoilt agricultural landscape and our temperate climate. The modern use of 'green' to identify concern for the natural environment has, for some time, been recognised as representing a natural marketing opportunity for Irish agri-food to build on". This cynical appropriation of 'green' strips the word not only of its ethical and political connotations, but also represses the history of ecological imperialism implicit in the transformation of Ireland into an 'emerald isle': whether the mass deforestations of early Plantation, or the violence of what Marx called the 'clearing of the estate of Ireland,' which enabled the nineteenth-century conversion to grazier monoculture, via 'new' technologies of cattle ranching (Slater 2013: 29).

Given the ongoing marketization of the Irish university and the unprecedented commoditization of new ecological commons under neoliberal capitalism, environmental humanities approaches which bridge the ‘two cultures,’ historicize conceptions of environment, and attempt to form emancipatory configurations of knowledge seem all the more vital. Humanistic approaches challenge the functional economic calculus of profit and loss which broach ecological issues only in terms of cost-benefit analyses or hazard rather than ethics and politics, and encourage the sciences to incorporate historicized analysis of the complexity of social and cultural factors, into conceptions of earth systems and evolving technologies. Conversely, natural sciences and social sciences bring essential knowledge into the arts, which often neglect scientific and technological literacy in their concentration on the human. In order to counter the politics of neoliberal knowledge production, which intensifies the creation of specialized ‘silos,’ faculties of knowledge need to be “epistemologically reunified” (Wallerstein 1999). Environmental historian Jason W. Moore argues that a postdisciplinary knowledge movement should also seek to transcend the limits of modernist ontologies based on dualist abstractions of “man” vs. “nature” in favour of a broad sense of ecology as the fundamental interpenetration of human nature with the rest of nature, and in order to critique the ways in which capitalist world-ecology has historically emerged through a succession of “ecological regimes” which organize socio-ecological relations to maximize a dialectic of plunder and productivity, reliant upon the exploitation of human labour and the appropriation of the so-called “free gifts” of extra-human nature. Moore’s world-historical perspective of the capitalist world-economy as also a world-ecology has the potential to introduce new comparative horizons to left ecology, enabling the investigation of environmental problems at different temporal and geographical scales, and bringing an understanding of how geopolitical formations across multiple territories affect the teleconnection of local ecosystems and the larger world-ecology.

In the specific case of Irish cultural analysis, such a world-ecological approach entails not merely examining representations of ‘green poetics,’ nature writing, or pastoral genres in relation to Ireland’s history as colony and economic semi-periphery, but rather analyzing how texts and artifacts across all genres and medias register the socio-ecological relations

pertinent to the organization of nature-society at different points of Ireland's historical ecological regimes, whether these be urban environments or cattle ranches, fishing littorals or salmon farms, sewage plants or bogs. As Lucy Collins remarks, much transdisciplinary research in Ireland in areas such as built environments, migrant studies, heritage studies, social justice, or gender and queer studies is already inherently 'ecological,' but is not always consciously recognized as such (Collins 2014: 18). More expansive, dialectical understandings of 'ecology' as comprising the whole of nature-society relations within the capitalist world-ecology—from farming to pharma to financialization—are crucial to forming configurations of knowledge able not only to take account of past environmental changes but to respond to the crises of the neoliberal present. In this talk, I want to focus on the contemporary, briefly outlining in part 1 what might be called "neoliberal ecology with Irish characteristics." In part 2, I will turn to ways in which literary criticism might begin to investigate how the structure of feeling corresponding to the financialization of everyday life under neoliberal nature-society are mediated in contemporary Irish fiction before and after the 'Boom,' both as thematic content and as form.

Part I: Neoliberal Ecology with Irish Characteristics

In Jason Moore's formulation, neoliberalism is understood not merely in terms of political economy, but rather as an "ecological regime" that is constituted through the bundling of particular patterns of socio-ecological relations (including class structure, gender, race, and sexuality), technological innovations and epistemes, appropriations of extra-human natures and animal labour, and development of productive forces. The neoliberal regime is distinguished by the large-scale penetration of finance capital into the global reproduction of human and extra-human natures. The geographer Neil Smith was one of the first to critique the invention of "nature banking." The development of "ecological commodities" and the manufacture of scarcity of "allowable natural destruction" created new markets in ecological 'goods' and 'bads', bundling and separating nature into "tradable bits of capital," from biodiversity credits, wetland, bog and fishery credits, air and water pollution credits, to carbon credits. These could be traded on environmental derivatives markets to financiers speculating on increased prices as ecological crisis accelerated (Smith 2007). If previous

forms of commodification emphasized the transformation of ecological surpluses into use-values for capitalist production—oil into energy or grains into bread—Smith argued that the ecological commodities of so-called “green capitalism” were not intended for production, but rather for marketization. Nature was reconceived as financial accumulation strategy, driven by neoliberal insistence that private market economic measurements and mitigation banking should substitute social responsibility and environmental politics, transferring stewardship of the commons to private business interests and bringing all of nature under the control of the markets.

Yet, neoliberal financialization extends beyond ecological derivatives to the entirety of nature-society. As Moore puts it,

“Wall Street...becomes a way of organizing all of nature, characterized by the financialization of any income-generating activity” (Moore 2012a: 2). [...] “From the agro-food sector to working class households that depend on credit cards to pay groceries and medical bills, global nature has become dependent on a circuit of capital premised on accumulation by financial means rather than industrial and agricultural production. Finance capital in the neoliberal era has penetrated everyday life as never before, and in do so doing, has sought to remake human and extra-human nature in its own image.” (2011:43-4)

The neoliberal regime has been distinguished by the transition from stakeholder to shareholder capitalism, the expansion of profit-maximization strategies rather than the unprecedented expansion across space which marked earlier accumulation regimes, and the pioneering of new extractive strategies across economic sectors, accompanied by socio-ecological asset-stripping—the rapid subsumption and exhaustion of previously uncommodified human and extra-human natures. Neoliberalism is distinctive for the “impatience” and short-term scope of its profit-making strategies.

The temporal hegemony of finance capital over the accumulation process can clearly be seen in the context of the Irish semi-periphery. Within the capitalist world-system, semi-peripheries act as ‘transistor’ spaces where “two different segments of a commodity chain become articulated and receive their first pricing,” acting as a “contact zone” that “makes it possible for the core and periphery to transmit value to each other, especially as both the rural dispossessed of the hinterlands and the factors of the core’s jobbing interests congregate there, one to commodify their labor and the other to finance and insure the material apparatuses that will consume this labor-power” (Shapiro 37). The Irish semiperiphery has acted as a transistor zone *par excellence* for the negotiation of new forms of financialization and speculative entrepreneurialship. Here, the neoliberal regime has been characterized by peripheral dependency on foreign capital, the tendency towards financialization and housing speculation rather than industrial production, the intensification of earlier monocultures formed under colonialism (such as the beef and dairy economies), the formation of new monocultures organized around new commodity frontiers in biocommodities, and the enclosure of remaining commons (as in water and gas). Ireland’s boom was preconditioned by what Peadar Kirby and Michael Cronin describe as its “subservient integration” into market fundamentalism (Kirby et al. 2002: 2) and its orientation to American and West European capital. “Tigerhood” was dependent on offering financial services to the multinational corporates it courted, transforming the country into a tax haven and secrecy jurisdiction zone, and concentrating urban employment in low-paid service jobs. The advent of informational capitalism and the development of special tax breaks and financial services via the new Irish Financial Services Centre positioned Ireland as an “export platform” for foreign capital in the electronics and IT industries, with nearly every high-profile transnational with an IT portfolio establishing an European base in Ireland. As such, we could adapt Jason W. Moore’s argument that “Wall St is a Way of Organizing Nature” to say that the “IFSC is a way of organizing nature,” but in subordinate relation to Wall St. and Frankfurt.

Wryly asking why the Boom was dominated by financial and property speculation rather than indigenous exports or national industries in fisheries and gas—which had hitherto been systemically underdeveloped in Ireland, Conor McCabe observes that

“The type of business activities which dominated the Irish economy in the twentieth century—cattle exports to Britain and financial investment in London; the development of green-field sites and the construction of factories and office buildings to facilitate foreign industrial and commercial investment; the birth of the suburbs and subsequent housing booms predicated on an expanding urban workforce—saw the development of an indigenous moneyed class based around cattle, construction and banking” (McCabe 2011: 10).

This triad is characteristic of the nation’s semi-peripheral status. Ireland’s “green” rural countryside should not be understood as the product of temporal “backwardness,” innately pastoral and environmentally neutral, but rather as the structural product of semi-peripheral modernity, characterized by uneven and combined development of some sectors to the exclusion of others in the favour of particular class interests, in this case, the overdevelopment of the conveyor-belt agro-export—economy. The dairy and grazier monocultures are tartly described in one Kevin Barry short story as emitting a general “sensation of slurry.” The phrase is evocative of the dependence of the agro-food sector on petrochemical fertilizers, the imported oil and GM-fodder which underlies the production of cheap food, as well as the immense carbon emissions produced by methane-expelling livestock, and the pollution of Irish watersheds by faecal coliforms and nitrate runoffs. The Emerald Tiger is in these terms, more brown than green, contrary to the government’s greenwashed vision of ‘unspoilt’ agricultural landscape.

Outside of the agro-industry, Ireland has followed a similar path to other semi-peripheries such as Mexico in becoming what Robert Allen calls a “pollution haven” for the processing wings of chemical and pharmaceutical corporations fleeing environmental regulation and seeking to exploit Ireland’s cheap groundwater resources. From the 1970s onwards, giants of the global chemical industry set up shop in Ireland, including SmithKline, Pfizer, Merck, Schering Plough and Roche, which accounted for nearly 70 percent of pharmaceutical

industry output worldwide (Allen 2004: 4). Neoliberal financial markets have consistently orchestrated decisions as to which forms of pollution are produced and which eradicated, as in the infamous statement by Lawrence Summers that Africa was ‘underpolluted’ because “the environmentally induced loss of life in more developed countries was more expensive to the world economy compared with the cheapness of life (lost wages) in Africa” (Smith 2007). In the Irish context, the state set out to attract ‘industries of hazard,’ colluding with the powerful chemical lobby to soften EU environmental regulations. The EPA’s main focus became “managing” environmental policy in to ensure economic performance, rather than “protecting” ecosystems, a shift which George Taylor describes as “the complicated process of organizing consent around new definitions of the *extent to which pollution can be justified*” (Taylor 2001: 5).

Post-bust, this “politics of pollution” has been intensified in the development of new financial mechanisms, as captured in the absurd semantics of the new plan for a “Green IFSC” that will belatedly embrace nature as financial accumulation strategy:

“We have the natural resources, the talent and the Government commitment necessary to become a hub for green enterprise. [...]The planned Green Irish Financial Services Centre will build on the success of the IFSC and become a leading player in the global carbon market and promote Ireland as a centre of excellence in the management of carbon.”

Besides providing new financial services in ecological commodities trading, the ‘greening’ of the IFSC seems to consist largely of adding the word green to its title, while using accelerating climate crisis to force through new forms of finance capital extraction. Since the collapse of the Tiger, the Irish government’s answer to the flight of multinational capital has been new rounds of neoliberalization, seeking to enclose new commons of water, oil, and natural gas via water privatization, fish-farming, fracking, and sale of offshore petroleum exploration licenses to transnational oil companies. This has involved asset-stripping the public sector, intensifying the “knowledge economy,” flexibilizing

labour and restructuring higher education to prioritize entrepreneurial ‘smart’ technologies, and opening up new commodity frontiers via bioprospecting, frantically scouring the natural world for sub-atomic commodities and patentable genetic material that can be transformed into laboratory-manufactured genes. In her prescient 1996 discussion of DuPont’s OncoMouse, Donna Haraway observed that “biology—life itself” has become “a capital accumulation strategy” (Haraway 1996). In the neoliberal regime, eco-systems and microbiomes are being “unbundled” on unprecedented levels in order to enable privatization of their constituent parts, forging new commodities for what Kaushik Sunder Rajan calls biocapitalism. Within Ireland, biocommoditization has been largely organized around pre-existing monocultures in pharma, agriculture, and energy—whether in the form of genetic tests to identify thoroughbred horses with the greatest genetic potential for racecourse success; or research by university life sciences departments intended to identify molecular mechanisms of chronic diseases so that transnational biopharma funders such as Glaxo-Smith Kline can manufacture novel diagnostic solutions and therapies; or the trials of transgenic, allegedly “blight-resistant” potatoes conducted by Ireland’s agricultural agency Teagasc, or the development of biomass plantations to replace the turf-based energy regime in the now-exhausted peat bogs which Bord na Móna has strip-mined.

Jason Moore argues that biotech is a “short-term fix” that has not yet provided a productivity revolution sufficient to resolve the current decline of cheap food and energy inputs (Moore, 2012a: 15). It is a version of neoliberalism 2.0 with diminishing returns. The socio-ecological violence of this eked-out regime is pervasive in the reconstitution of human subjectivity as post-genomic and the reshaping of the rules of reproduction, which are accompanied by the intensification of forms of state discipline, austerity, and biopolitical control, especially of the bodies of the poor, dispossessed, minority, and marginalized. Since 2010, 8 out of 10 biopharma giants have been based in Ireland, exploiting tax avoidance laws (IDA). Ireland is integral to the production of what Beatriz Preciado calls “pharmaco-pornographic capitalism,” manufacturing up to 6 of the so-called “blockbuster drugs” that annually earn more than 1 billion dollars (IDA). Many of these are psychotropics, which Preciado argues reconstitute subjectivities through “micro-prosthetic mechanisms of control” (Preciado 2008: 107). As such, there is a dialectical relation to be

uncovered in the Irish pharma complex between the mass manufacture of SSRIS and SNRI's export commodities for transnational corporations availing of tax and pollution havens; the stark social violence produced by neoliberal austerity, labor precarity, and biopolitical control enforced by state apparatuses; and the local population's consumption of prescription drugs to alleviate individualized pain.

Given the prevalence of cattle and construction, pharma and financialization within the Irish neoliberal ecology, we might ask how cultural production mediates and represents the particular organizations of nature-society corresponding to each, "weav[ing]together the ethereal valences of finance capital and the prosaic routines of everyday life in new crystallizations of power and profit, pivoting on the commodity" (Moore 2011: 110-111). The semi-periphery is a transitor zone not only for capital commodities, but for geocultural calibration, the space where "where political economy receives its greatest cultural inflection and amplification.... where the experience of trauma by peripheral peoples and the speculative entrepreneurialship of the core collide to produce new forms of representation, especially as it receives both the oral, folk beliefs of the periphery and the core's printed matter and institutionally consecrated notations, objects, and behavioral performances" (Shapiro 37-38). While some critics during the Tiger bemoaned the absence of literature reckoning with the excess of the Boom, in retrospect, Irish literature of the period appears saturated with the transformative violence of the neoliberal regime and its subsequent crisis. In some texts, this is only at the level of the political unconscious. In others, it is more explicit and visible, particularly in those texts whose hybridized aesthetics combine realism with satire, speculative, or science fictional aesthetics to express critique of a reality that seems unreal or unrepresentable. Michael Niblett has argued that the periodic exhaustion of ecological regimes might correspond to upswings in gothic, irrealist, and supernatural tropes that register the conjuncture of fading and emergent regimes, and the corresponding dissolution and reconstitution of social realities. In the second part of this talk, I will finish by suggesting how Irish literary criticism might take up the call of environmental humanities and world-ecological criticism, searching out not so much 'green' representations of landscapes or other forms of 'nature,' but rather seeking to discern how contemporary texts mediate the 'financialization of everyday life' and embody

the affects corresponding to neoliberal nature-society, whether the delirium of the housing-bubble or the anxiety of the post-genomic.

Part II: Pharma, Farming, & Finance: Neoliberal Ecology in Irish Literature

Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz* (2011) is narrated from a post-Boom perspective, looking back on the hysteria of the housing bubble in 2007, the eve of the crash. While the novel is firmly rooted in lyrical realism and confined to a middle-class perspective whose solipsism is represented by unreliable first person narration, its form and aesthetics are nonetheless marked by socio-ecological crisis, punctuated by irrealist, eco-gothic imagery. The narrator and her first partner have jobs metonymic of the IT revolution which transformed Ireland into a reticular, net-worked "knowledge economy," the world centre for the translation of the computer material, the largest exporter of pc-based software in Europe." Conor is a "happening geek" mastering in multimedia, while she works for "Rathlin Communications," a company which translates European companies for the "English-language web" (Enright 49). Together, they apply for a subprime mortgage and buy a small house at the height of the bubble, experiencing the inflation of housing prices and the ascendancy of fictitious capital—money appearing seemingly from nowhere—as a kind of uncanny growth, as if the house itself were alive:

'Listen to the money.' The place was going up by seventy-five euro a day, he said, which was—he did the calculations under flickering eyelids—about five cents a minute. [...] You could almost feel it, a pushing in the walls; the toaster would pop out fivers, the wood of the new-laid floors would squeeze out paper money and start to flower. (Enright 14-15)

The irrealist tropes of this passage clearly capture the uncanny socio-ecological transformation of the built environment. The false euphoria of financialization penetrates the household and their very subjectivities, inflating their own desire for each other: "Six months, nine—I don't know how long that phase lasted. Mortgage love. Shagging at 5.3

per cent. Until one day we decided to take out a couple of car loans and get married on the money instead.” (Enright 15). This is marriage on credit, love as debt-based spending. Under the dead hand of their mortgage, however, the narrator soon finds her desire waning, and begins a delirious affair with Sean, a married investment consultant, entering in a new phase of intoxication. The marriage and affair thus present a psychosexual correlative to financialization and the restless circulation of capital in the housing bubble.

In the second part of the novel, when the crash occurs, the narrative sense of urgent intoxication correspondingly deflates, formally mirroring the evacuation of capital and the collapse of existing relations, registered once more in ecological terms: “If you listened to the car radio, all the money in the country has just evaporated, you could almost see it, rising off the rooftops like steam” (Enright 207). When Sean leaves his wife for the narrator, they are trapped together in the house of her dead mother, originally listed on the market as 2.5 million euros, but now a dead asset, frozen and unsellable, like the bankrupt developer’s properties held by NAMA: “No one will buy it, so that’s how much it is worth. Nothing. Despite which, we will owe tax based on that ‘two and a bit’. For a house that is currently worth whistling for. I can’t figure out the fake money from the real” (Enright 148). Trapped in the zombie house, “this magic box, this trap,” their personal relationship is hollowed out, subjected to quantification as she calculates the price of their love “at so much per kiss” (147). As their relation becomes increasingly zombified, the novel’s realism is punctuated by gothic tropes: their shoes leave “bloody footprints” in the supermarket; Sean bites her lip when he kisses her; she hallucinates that she is being transformed into his “zombie” wife” (Enright 157).

Eco-gothic erupts even more powerfully in Kevin Barry’s comically apocalyptic short story, the “Fjord of Killary” (2010) from his collection, *Dark is the Island* (2012). In the story, a middle-aged Dubliner buys a hotel on a fjord in a rain-cursed town on the western periphery of Ireland, and is forced to weather a storm that drowns the town. His sensation of soul-sickness and physical decay derives from mid-life crisis, but can also be read as registering socio-ecological exhaustion of the larger accumulation regime: “On turning forty, the previous year, I had sensed exhaustion rising up in me, like rot.” He becomes

“feverish with the notion of a westward flight” into countryside: a false expectation of pastoral return to an authentic past in search of solace from the exhausted present. Far from a rural paradise, he encounters “end-of-the-fucking-world stuff”: an apocalyptic flood heralding the larger menace of rising sea levels under global climate change, and a collapsing ecology in which both human and extra-human nature seem to be devouring each other. The novel offers a parade of imagery of vampiric draining and extraction: his bar staff—imported, flexible labour—wear “love bites on their necks,” “feasting delightedly on one another.” A black-backed gull in a tree outside the hotel prises the head off its mate and starts to eat it. Upon learning that her husband has conducted an affair with her sister, a woman bites a chunk out of his neck, drawing blood in “great, angry spurts.”

The story’s conclusion captures the fatalistic response of many middle-class Dubliners to the crash and the greater crisis of the neoliberal regime on the horizon. The bar-owner holds a disco as the floodwaters rise, pouring booze down the throats of his clients and fostering their grim hilarity—while relinquishing himself to masochistic resignation: “The world opened out to its grim beyonds and I realized that, at forty, one must learn the rigors of acceptance.” Barry viciously satirizes the bourgeois structure of feeling that submits to austerity and the troika’s discipline without protest, drowning its sorrows in drink. That the story’s apocalypse is only partial, confined to the local, flooding Killary while “the rest of the country was going about its humdrum Monday-night business,” is a joke on rural stereotypes, but also suggests the uneven impact of ecological crisis, where the peripheries bear the brunt of ecological degradation and capital flight. It is in these sites where the future impact of climate crisis will be gravest, experienced not as total apocalypse, but rather as progressive erosions of the web of life. Meanwhile, in enclaves of privilege the effects are less visible, cushioned by the appropriation of land, capital and resources. The concluding lines gesture back to the earlier regime of plantation in Ireland, noting that “1648 was a year shy of Cromwell’s landing in Ireland, and already the inn at Killary fjord was in business—it would see out this disaster, too.” The story foregrounds the uneven distribution of power, resources, and infrastructure between Dublin’s core and “the country’s” internal peripheries which is a legacy of the colonial export-based grazier economy and that was only intensified during neoliberalization. In Barry’s collection, as in

his recent apocalyptic novel, *City of Bohane*, set in a post-oil, dystopian Ireland, we can thus interpret the eruption of eco-gothic tropes and irrealism as “shock aesthetics” which register ecological exhaustion, energy crisis, and the “shock doctrine” policies of austerity. One of the most explicit registrations of financialization, property development and privatization at the height of the boom is offered in Julian Gough’s *Jude: Level 1* (2007), written on the cusp of the collapse. In contrast to the careful formal structure of Enright’s novel or Barry’s contained stories, Gough’s manic narrative is wildly peripatetic and seemingly unstructured. It melds picaresque and science-fictional elements into a satire whose temporal breathlessness and phantasmagorical excess mirror the social sensorium of radical space-time commensuration and fetishized speed within the Tiger’s dromocratic revolution, where information and fictitious capital circulated at dizzying rates. Jude encounters an entrepreneur in Galway who imagines the total commoditization of knowledge via a smartphone-like device, exulting:

“Our Algorithm knows where you are, thanks to the Global Positioning System. It knows who you are, thanks to the information you provided when you set up your account. And it knows what your Problem is likely to be... [...] Each time, the sea of information by which you are surrounded is desalinated, distilled, filtered into a drop of Wisdom to....slake your thirst [...] Owning a Salmon of Knowledge will soon make... ‘All the Sense in the World.TM’” (Gough 2007: 36-7)

The potential for biopolitical surveillance is obscured beneath the chummy appropriation of the national myth of Fionn mac Cumhaill. The novel’s satire of the Tiger regime directly invokes the links between informational economy and biocapitalism when Jude’s body is reconstructed after an explosion by means of “a revolutionary hi-tech material, developed here in Ireland by the Westcom corporation...” (Gough, 2007: 76). The nasal-phallic tumescences Jude subsequently endures absurdly capture the burgeoning of body-modification technologies under the neoliberal regime with their potential for both disciplinary control and subversion of imposed norms.

An earlier Tiger-era novel, Anne Haverty's *One Day As a Tiger* (1998), similarly addresses concerns of biocapitalism and genetic modification, this time in the realm of agriculture. Haverty brilliantly satirizes Ireland's 'green revolution' and turn towards biotechnology via its story of a Tipperary farmer's troubled love for a GM sheep with human genes, offering Missy the lamb as the ovine counterpart to Haraway's OncoMouse and Scotland's Dolly. When the protagonist first locks eyes with the lamb, her presence undermines his initial perception of her as an agricultural commodity: "Her eyes were fixed on me, glittering and unfathomable, but with a look of hope and pathos. It was a look I had seen in no lamb's eyes before. [...] Almost at once I knew I had to have her. Not for any farmer's purpose, not for meat or to breed form, but to watch and understand" (Haverty 1997: 24-25). The transgenic lamb is anthropomorphized in propertarian terms as a romantic object by the protagonist, but also operates as troubling signifier of the alterity of animal ontology. Missy disrupts the fundamental dualism of human vs. animal that underlies a grazier monoculture dependent on exploiting and modifying animal nature for the human animal's consumption.

This speculative premise is cleverly interwoven with a stylistic parody of Irish pastoral romance that refuses the romanticization of rural life, thus mingling irrealist and realism elements in its aesthetics. The novel's description of the agricultural research institute explodes idealized conceptions of the 'unspoilt' Irish countryside:

"The Institute was...an industrial-looking place...out on the County Louth border. ...[Pens] housed the animals reared with intensive and experimental methods. Beyond them was what looked like a mile of hi-tech pens, some containing melees of species, emitting the odd subdued bleat or bellow or moo; others empty with hose-down concrete steaming faintly in the afternoon sun. This was Missy's birthplace. Progressive, tidy, scientific, more attractive to humans than to animals. Devoted to life certainly, rather than death, in the short term at least, still it reminded me of a progressive concentration camp in some pastoral

spot, like Poland. The only honest-to-God agricultural thing about it was the smell of silage.” (Haverty 1997: 22)

In emphasizing the industrial modernity of factory-farming, the passage underscores the violence of the agri-food complex and anxiously invokes the prospect of racist eugenics in relation to biotech.

The other factories shaping everyday life during the Boom—the transnational pharmaceutical plants—are depicted in Molly McCloskey’s *Protection* (2005), which in similar fashion to Haverty, interweaves realist and speculative aesthetics, interleaving a banal adultery plot in the frame narrative with a cross-genre exploration of the supplanting of ‘organic’ memory with ‘synthetic’ commodities. The main protagonist becomes addicted to Diaxadril, a fictional drug intended to treat “Mild Cognitive Impairment,” which allows her to relive old memories. A shill for the drug compares it to the psychotropic revolution in serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, arguing, “Everybody wants to be sharper. Diax will reach the tipping point and *bang* suddenly half the people you know are on it, and the other half have been on it, or are about to go on it. [...] Like Prozac in the nineties” (McCloskey 191). The difference, however, is that while “antidepressants mute you,” “Diaxadril wakes you up,” providing a libidinal kick that refashions consumers’ desires so that they can become better functioning neoliberal subjects (191-2).

As a pharmaceutical prosthesis, Diax enables the protagonist to keep up with the dizzying pace of immaterial labour in Tiger Ireland and soothes the constant draining of her emotional energies: “She had begun to feel a new mental energy, an excitement, really like the kind she used to feel when she was energized by a new idea or project, except now the excitement was there all day and didn’t depend on any physical stimulus. She felt plugged in, attentive” (231). But the commoditization of her memories inevitably results in deeper alienation, as not only her surplus labour is appropriated, but the internal stuff of her subjectivity: “As strange raggedness attached itself to those fantasies, as though she had literally torn herself away from her life” (McCloskey 240). The Diax thus functions on multiple symbolic levels, figuring the intensification of cognitive reflexivity in Ireland’s

knowledge economy, and acting as an objective correlative to the surreal inflations of fictitious capital during the financial bubble. But it also registers the biopharma complex, the mining of vertical frontiers in life and the commoditization of human nature on a molecular scale.

In an interview, novelist Mike McCormack describes being inspired by his temporary employment at a pharmaceutical company in Westport, where he became fascinated by how “people's bodies acquired economic and political value” (Nolan 2012: 2). McCormack's Tiger-era novel, *Notes from a Coma* (2005) investigates the conjunction of bio-commodification with the intensification of biopolitical control. Realistic aesthetics combine with a speculative plotline imagining the use of Tiger Ireland as a laboratory for EU testing of new disciplinary apparatuses. As described by a government booster, prisoners will no longer be incarcerated in jails but permanently sedated on off-shore “coma ships”:

"[The Somnos] project will be carried out before the eyes of the world, a gallery of expectant nations looking on, fingers crossed that...souls can be racked and stacked in prison ICUS, atoning at half the price of five-star hotel accommodation. [...] What Kevin wants to show is that we've moved on from the days of the Celtic Tiger. We're not just a nation of mobile-phone salesmen or telesales spooks or production-line ops. [...] We're out there now with a shiny piece of R & D all our own." (McCormack 2005: loc. 1974)

Crucially, the project is not only a penal experiment generating political capital, but entrepreneurial, designed to profit from the global expansion of prison and securitization industries by turning Ireland, already an offshore tax haven, into an offshore prison. McCormack's post-Boom collection, *Forensic Songs* (2012), continues in this vein, representing the intensification of disciplinary technologies in conjunction with the imposition of neoliberal austerity after the bailout. The stories chronicle the increase of

‘soft power,’ imagining forms of “voluntary compliance” in which “the self [is] the first object of suspicion—each man responsible for his own surveillance” and dole-claimants are forced to write misery-lit memoirs (McCormack 12). They also imagine the acceleration of apparatuses of ‘hard power,’ where the night skies of Mayo are ‘crossed with planes, satellites, [and] unmanned drones...’ or where incarcerated prisoners are forced to work as unpaid labour for the transnational gaming industry (McCormack 21).

McCormack’s fiction powerfully captures the double dynamic of neoliberal governmentality, which deregulates markets while simultaneously intensifying its regulation and radical subordination of all forms of life. The literatures of the Irish Boom and Bust often seem only to provide negative critique of this dynamic, couched in irrealist or satirical aesthetics as if to admit the difficulty of calling new political imaginaries and alternative nature-society organizations into living reality. Given this tendency, it is all the more important to interrogate the possibilities for political transformation in the social sphere. Ireland’s decades of community protests against environmental issues ranging from the nuclear industry, to waste collection and toxic waste incineration, to Monsanto and GMO food, to the Corrib pipeline, to the recent campaigns against housing taxes, fracking, water privatization, the Dalkey Harbour oil refinery all offer evidence of the persistence of organisational forms which reject the neoliberal regime’s configuration of nature-society. Tasks for future scholarship might be then not only to excavate these histories and read them in juxtaposition with our current conjuncture, but to draw on scientific discoveries and humanistic inquiries in order to imagine the ways in which nature-society can be reconfigured to be emancipatory and renewing of the dialectical interrelations between humans and the rest of nature.

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