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On Development, Waste and Ghosts

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1.

Ecocriticism has changed dramatically over the past few decades, shifting to encompass a range of arenas and becoming more global in its outlook. Only twenty years ago, if not even more recently, 'ecocriticism' indicated an area of study that evoked images of hippies and resulted in ecocritics being referred to as tree-huggers. To be deemed an ecocritic in today's terms is very different: one might still be a tree-hugger, but is also just as likely to be considered an activist or cultural commentator on issues that are of enormous import – questions of environmental racism, developmental justice, ecological legacies of colonialism, global crises of climate change, food security, biodiversity and so on. Amid the sophistication and immediate political import of the new work being done in this field, some of what was embodied by the 'old' ecocriticism remains with us. In what follows I would like to consider the ways in which earlier notions attached to ecocriticism can be re-read, as such, and re-energised through this new work, offering us new ways of looking at powerfully long-lasting notions of what it means to develop land, not only in Ireland, but in a range of geographical spaces all touched, through centuries, by colonialism.

Movements in ecocriticism that call for links to be made with postcolonialism challenge us, here in Ireland and outside of it, to do work that has not come naturally. As critics like Rob Nixon have pointed out, ecocriticism and postcolonialism were, in fact, often at odds with each other as the fields arose, operating at a disconnect. The

political work of postcolonialism seemed quite different to that performed by ecocriticism: it seemed as though there were two sets of delegates, in other words, lobbying intellectuals and activists for their attention. Ursula Heise has cannily summarized some of the early divergences of the fields noted by critics. Of particular interest for my purposes are two of these: first, the fact that ecocritics in the past tended to be concerned with one national space, while postcolonial critics were necessarily concerned with at least two and often more cultural realms. The second divergence of relevance to my talk today is the fact that ecocritics have tended, as Heise puts it, to be 'deeply interested in ties to place, while postcolonialists foreground displacement' (Heise 253). In what follows today I will focus on three national spaces, and will be concerned with the ways in which 'deep ties to place' that we associate with national pride draw on colonial notions of land development, and so also always 'foreground displacement'.

Today, following the lead of critics such as Nixon and Heise, and bearing in mind Moretti's notion of 'distant reading', I want to look at colonial notions of land development, comparing the ways in which a series of colonial commentaries – on what are now the United States, Australia and Ireland – offers the opportunity to trace attitudes towards landscape and place that in fact function as canny assessments of land-as-commodity. What I am concerned with considering here is how initial colonial declarations about landscape might have lasting effect in a particular space. Since we can track these attitudes over time and in a range of places and texts, it becomes possible to consider how initial colonial attitudes impact upon and create long-lasting attitudes towards landscape and development. In the American case, it would seem that the wilderness tradition, so influential in terms of ecocriticism, is definitively drawn from colonialist ideologies (which suggests that ecocriticism itself,

in earlier incarnations, takes some of its positions from colonial rhetoric). In Australia, a similar concern with wilderness is evident in lasting notions of national cultural memory – again, I would argue, the result of early colonial attitudes towards land and development. Finally, I will turn to the Irish case, which is quite different in some ways, and will argue that a different attitude towards land and development persists here. The kind of exploratory comparative work that I am doing here asks us, I suggest, to reconsider our earlier readings of any of these spaces individually, and I'll close by considering some particular implications for Ireland and its relationship to its environment.

2. Wilderness-development: the American example

Early ecocritical theory is informed – overly informed I would suggest – by the significance granted to the wilderness in American thought. The wilderness tradition in literature frequently emphasizes the experience of the individual in nature. This is an experience that, by the time we move beyond the Puritans' anxiety about being exiled in the 'howling' wilderness to the realm of the transcendentalists two hundred years later, is marked by a simultaneous commitment to the sublime, which can be seen a submission to that Puritan anxiety and an appreciation of it. At the foundation of this tradition, then, we receive the perspective of the most often male gaze assessing and interpreting landscape for development – or, later, pointed containment from development in spaces like national parks, which interact with the developed landscape beyond the way that Disney World reflects and refracts the consumer ideologies beyond its perimeter, an idea to which I will return. This perspective and that inclination to assess land as potential value and for the services it potentially provides is one that crosses cultural boundaries and timeframes, obviously,

but for the moment I will stay with the powerfully influential American version of the wilderness because of its centrality to early ecocriticism.

The so-called wilderness tradition is specific, historically and culturally, to the United States and its early colonial situation: it draws on colonists' sense of the individual as necessarily self-reliant, and emphasizes that individual's self-reliance as taking place in a 'new world' of abundance and bounty that could potentially respond to hard work.

This wilderness tradition has long been emphasized to American school children in the teaching of songs such as 'America the Beautiful'[1], which famously praises the landscape in profoundly pastoral terms and forcefully demonstrates the reach of wilderness in American cultural memory: 'Oh beautiful for spacious skies/ for amber waves of grain; for purple mountain majesties/ above the fruited plain.' It is seen in other songs less sung now, perhaps, like Woody Guthrie's 'This land is your land', but which remain present in the American imagination of generations:[2] 'from the Redwood forests/ to the Gulf Stream waters/ this land was made for you and me'. This popular sense of the landscape as bounteous, productive, graced by a god's goodwill and 'made for you and me' is amazingly close to and reflects the rhetoric deployed by countless American thinkers and writers, and shows how cultural memory can adhere over time. And yet this is not a specifically American ideology; this belief system is replicated and redeployed in other circumstances and continues to be deployed today as colonial rhetoric.

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[1] The lyrics of the song were composed as a poem by Katherine Lee Bates in 1893 and published in 1895 originally; the poem was combined with music by Samuel A. Ward in 1910.

[2] Curiously, Guthrie's lyrics included a stanza (and variants) as follows: 'Was a high wall there that tried to stop me/ A sign was painted said: Private Property/ But on the back side it didn't say nothing'. Another stanza commenting on the hungry asked 'Is this land made for you and me?'.

In the American context, we see the ethic of the wilderness tradition emerge powerfully in classics of the American environmental tradition, in authors like Emerson and Thoreau. Emerson articulates an American perspective of self, the I – first person singular – and eye – a primary organ with which we observe and experience the world – determining a selfhood rooted in nature. Thoreau, spring-boarding from Emerson's philosophical position, decides, famously, to live it: to become self-reliant, to live in nature, to truly awaken each day – to be the 'I'/'eye' shaping both the perspective and the environment. *Walden* retains its position as a foundational text in both the American and environmental literary canons, and for good reason. It captures not merely an American mood and movement, but also manages to describe far more generally the sense that part of being modern was a move away from nature, a sentiment which Thoreau deplored. And Thoreau realized, cannily, that to grow your own vegetables, to refuse to *purchase*, was a radical form of protest not only in environmental terms, but in a host of political ones.

Thoreau's *Walden* is a testament not only to the powerful pull of solitary experience in nature, but also, however, to the ways in which the colonial mindset maintained itself in nascent American cultural memory: there is a sense in which Thoreau, like countless other colonial and early Americans, had a strong sense of entitlement to be able to live as he did, in the woods. The fact that such self-sufficiency relied upon land use is not always directly discussed – while *Walden* is scathing about land ownership (Walden pond itself was on land owned by Emerson), Thoreau was enthusiastic about western expansion and does not pay a great deal of attention to the implications of this expansion for indigenous Americans. His attitudes and expressions, so long at the heart of American environmentalism, are also, I would suggest, intensely problematic because of this sort of conflict – and as such reflect

inherited colonial attitudes. Over two hundred and fifty years before Thoreau's time, after explorers began to arrive in North America from England, so-called 'promotional' literature for colonial settlement began to be circulated outlining various inducements to move across the Atlantic. Prime among the draws, of course, was the landscape itself, which, by virtue of seeming 'undeveloped' and 'wild', to use Thoreau's preferred term, was there for the taking: the soil was promising, and the new territory offered the opportunity for successful plantations.

Richard Hakluyt's writings on the North American colonies are among the best and most influential examples of Elizabethan treatises directed at government, since they formulate and theorize the idea of the colony and its land in a fashion so rigorous as to surpass what had gone before. *A Particuler Discourse Concerninge the Greate Necessitie and Manifolde Commodyties That Are Like to Growe to This Realme of Englande by the Westerne Discoueries Lately Attempted, Written in the Yere 1584* – which deserves, I think, to have its full title spoken aloud – was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I and had been written under commission to Walter Raleigh, who was aware that the queen needed further convincing of the desirability of colonizing areas of America. Hakluyt's language is remarkably direct for us, used as we are to contemporary language that attempts to veil or deny colonizing aims: the colonies offer to England the potential of 'manifold commodities' at a moment when the commodities in Ireland were likely to have *seemed* diminished by the ongoing difficulties of the Munster Plantation and were in fact diminishing in real terms, since the Irish forests were being felled at a furious pace to fuel the English navy.

Hakluyt's *A Discourse Concerning Western Planting Written in the Year 1584*, another armchair treatise – for he never did visit the new world himself – offered more specific advice about the American colonies. The soil recommended itself to the

production of all manner of valuable ‘commodities’, with emphasis on those products that English merchants were forced to rely on European trade in the Mediterranean for, particularly olives, so valued for their oil. Beyond the potential for these particular items, the hope was expressed of avoiding any ‘frontier wars’ – no doubt a possibility on the queen’s mind as relations deteriorated in Ireland.

Haykluyt spends time carefully outlining the potential realms to be planted, including the Caribbean: ‘All those iles conteyne above two thousande leagues of lande, and are all dispeopled and laid waste’ (Hakluyt 1877, 74). We see here what will become a common assertion for British colonialism broadly speaking, and what is for Hakluyt a stock phrase: ‘dispeoopled’ lands evidently abound, as does ‘waste’ land. To conclude his arguments, Hakluyt summarizes ‘A Brief collection of certaine reasons to induce her Majestie and the state to take in hande the westerne voyadge and the planting there’ (XX) where he repeats many of these phrases:

> 1. The soyle yieldeth, and may be made to yelde, all the severall commodities of Europe, and of all kingdomes, domynions, and territories that England trades with… (152) 6. This enterprise may staye the Spanish king from flowinge over all the face of that waste firme of America, if wee seate and plante there in tyme… (154) 17. If frontier warres there chaunce to aryse, and if thereupon wee shall fortifie, it will occasion the trayninge uup of our youthe in the discipline of war...’ (158) 22. The frye of the wandringe beggars of England, that growe upp ydly, and hurtefull and burdenous to this realme, may there be unladen, better bredd upp, and may people waste

> contries to the home and forreine benefite, and to their owne more happy state. (Hakluyt 1877, 160-1)

The phrasing here is fascinating: the land is not merely productive, but can be *made to be* productive, so that the force evident in the note on potential frontier wars is also to be brought to be bear on the land itself. Haykluyt also makes the explicit claim for America as waste-ground, though he does not claim it to be 'dispeopled' like the Caribbean – the fact that it is undeveloped, though, implies that whatever unnamed 'natives' the colonists might encounter and war with simply do not count or concern him: what is of far more concern is attaching England to the land as a commodity space before the Spanish foothold is stronger. And finally Hakluyt points out the potential for those extra folks in England 'who grow up oddly' to be 'unladen' to these 'waste' countries, a theme that will recur in other colonial ventures.

The result of the view of the 'new world' as a space of 'waste ground' that could be commodified, indeed *was* a commodity, was to have a profound impact not only on the American environment, but on other colonial spaces that followed. Timothy Sweet notes that 'Promising new possibilities for commodity in the most general sense, the American environment invited the English to develop a new mode of political economy, one that theorized economics in terms of environmental capacity in a way that the then-dominant mode, agrarianism, had not yet done. This economic theorizing was a primary concern of the promotional literature of the late sixteenth century (and beyond), significantly shaping its generic conventions and motivating its cultural work' (Sweet 400). The American colonization project was thus explicitly an economic one that relied on natural resources and, significantly, had the effect of putting a new theorization of the economy of environment into place. This shift, from the realm of the relatively simple economics of generally small

homesteading farms to the realm of more corporate considerations of what landscape offered in terms of production, marked a turn that would have profound impact on subsequent colonization projects.

However, it was not merely the perceived need for these 'manifold commodities' that drove the American project (and note Hakluyt's title phrase: 'greate necessitie' urges colonization forward) – it was also, crucially, the fact that the environment was perceived as being underused, even *un*used. The justification for the 'cultural work' of colonization was the notion that the landscape was being *wasted*; the word appears repeatedly in Hakluyt and others, including his contemporary Spenser, as we will see. The idea of wasteland was hardly new; the ancient Greeks had regularly sailed abroad and settled land that they perceived to be uninhabited. In the context of colonization projects of this era, we see a plain articulation of the idea of waste ground in Thomas More's *Utopia*, first published in Latin in 1516. For all of the various critiques that the text contains and for all its satire, one section stands out in considerations of the environmental impact of colonialism, and will sound familiar from Hakluyt's tract, published approximately 70 years later:

> [Utopians] … *draw out a number of their citizens out of the several towns, and send them over to the neighboring continen*t; where, if they find that the inhabitants have more soil than they can well cultivate, *they fix a colony*, taking the inhabitants into their society, if they are willing to live with them; … *But if the natives refuse to conform themselves to their laws, they drive them out of those bounds which they mark out for themselves, and use force if they resist. For they account it a very just cause of war, for a nation to hinder others from*

> *possessing a part of that soil of which they make no use, but which is suffered to lie idle and uncultivated; since every man has by the law of nature a right to such a waste portion of the earth as is necessary for his subsistence*. (Book II: Of their traffic *Utopia* , 3rd paragraph, my emphasis)

More describes, of course, the historical realities of many cultures for millennia – there has always been opportunistic raiding and crossing of borders, however tenuous. *Utopia* describes a specific process, though: 'excess' citizens going abroad – those we might describe as being 'wasted' in their original society – and, on deciding that there is 'more soil' (again, an excess) than the natives are capable of cultivating, taking over. Force can be used if the indigenous population objects because there is a 'natural' law that deems it immoral to let cultivatable ground lie 'idle'. Utopians retain, however, a staunch loyalty to their original homeland and will return to aid it if necessary – what More describes here is an idealized perspective, one that the British imperial government wished all of its citizens and planters to adopt. Underpinning the ideology and the sense of loyalty to the motherland, making it all possible, is the perceived availability of land-as-commodity. Colonial justification relies on a precise logic that follows from this: the imposition of a set of cultural rules for land management which, if not followed, results in the indigenous population being moved 'out of bounds'. This mentality towards land is in application in the American colonies, clearly enough: and the landscape of the American colonial imagination – perhaps even the Amreican imagination over centuries – is wilderness.

Wilderness, by definition, is landscape that has not been touched by human occupation, which is *undeveloped*. It is, in other words, terra nullius: unclaimed,

unbuilt upon, dispeopled, in Hakluyt's term. Of course there are indigenous people, but they have gone – have been moved and driven off, more precisely – elsewhere. The 'elsewhere' doesn't matter in imaginative terms, because it does not register in the mindset of those moving into those now empty landscapes; 'elsewhere', or 'out of bounds' in More's terms, or 'beyond the Pale' in terms closer to home, accommodates a host of indigenous peoples, from North America to Australia to India to Africa, who are moved off of their land, robbed of it, because of the belief in what was called in the American context 'manifest destiny' but which was echoed in other colonialist ideologies and enactments around the world. The recognition of a space as *undeveloped* seemed to be all that was required to make indigenous populations invisible, and to pave the way for the idea of terra nullius.

The American colonies were not officially declared terra nullius, but the landscape was treated as though it was unclaimed, and not only in promotional literature like Hakluyt's that described what it had not yet seen and still insisted was waste land; it was also treated as unclaimed in practice. Colonists and planters were given portions of land to tend, to cultivate, to transform from waste into production. Terms were often formalized, with planters and farmers having tax suspended for a stretch of time; by the 1800s, following independence, frontiersmen could claim ownership of the land after cultivating it for a specified period.

3. Terra Nullius: the Australian example

Both the ideology and the practice of land claiming would be carried with the English in a more evolved, legalistic and official sense, as they sought lands further afield after the American Revolution. When Watkin Tench and the first fleet arrived in 'Botany Bay' in 1788, in a hurry to compensate England for the commodity loss of

the American colonies and particularly the cotton industry that had gone with them, what they called 'New South Wales' was declared terra nullius and claimed for the king in an official ceremony. Just as described in *Utopia*, the colonists take the excess people (in this case convicts quite literally considered 'waste' and often criminally condemned as having 'wasted' their God-given lives) from England and remove them to New South Wales where, Cook's accounts had assured them, the land was unclaimed.

The voyage to New South Wales from England as Tench describes it is itself a fascinating account of the ways in which, by the 1780s, the globe was marked by the processual spread of colonial commodification of land and its products. The First Fleet's route takes them past the Canary Islands (then held by the Spanish, whose faith in this particular colony had been tested by volcanic eruptions) to St Sebastian in Brazil, where Tench notes that 'Until the year 1770, all the flour in the settlement was brought from Europe; but since that time the inhabitants have made so rapid a progress in raising grain, as to be able to supply themselves with it abundantly' (2006a, 14). The old world no longer has to supply the colony with resources, in other words, and after a mere decade or two it is now self-sufficient: the land is productive enough for independence and, indeed, for the exportation of *excess* production: nothing will go to waste.

So successful a colony is it that, he remarks, their ships, depleted of fresh supplies, are able to purchase bananas and coconuts, but also commodities that reflect more directly the pillaging of the natural environment by colonial occupants: 'Besides the inducements to lay out money already mentioned, the naturalist may add to his collection by an almost endless variety of beautiful birds and curious insects, which are to be bought at a reasonable price, well preserved, and neatly assorted' (2006a,

16). The formal museumification of the colonial environment was well underway: exotic flora and fauna, all part of the environment of the colonized space, are treated as trophies and commodities at once, indicative of the status of the colonizer in 'managing' the land even down to the smallest beetle, which can be killed, preserved, and pinned in a box for display and visual consumption back in the motherland or on the walls of to-be-built museums, state buildings and homes of the colonial settlers. It is the age-old sign of control: the evidence of nature's defeat at human hands on clear view. Only now, of course, it was also a sign of the superiority of the colonial master.

From the colonies of South America the fleet continues to follow prevailing trade winds and currents towards South Africa, where they make purchases from the 'Dutch governor', another marker of the global colonialization market, before embarking on the final leg of their trip. The text glorifies the bravery of the 'explorers' in doing, for England, what must be done – though it is never explicitly stated as in Hakluyt two centuries earlier, the English once again have a 'great necessitie' for 'manifold commodities', but also a place to put the excess convicts – America, now independent, is refusing to take any more.

Even on this final leg, though, in the remote waters between South Africa and Australia, we are reminded of the globality of the colonial enterprise in seeking commodities: the Fleet encounters a ship 'under American colours, bound from Boston, from whence she had sailed one hundred and forty days, on a trading voyage to the East Indies… The master, who appeared to be a man of some information, on being told the destination of our fleet, gave it as his opinion, that if a reception could be secured, emigrations would take place to New South Wales, not only from the old continent, but the new one, where the spirit of adventure and thirst for novelty were excessive' (2006a, 19). Several things are striking in this description: first and

foremost, it is notable that the encounter occurs because colonial commodities are at sail around the world, with North American cotton being traded for Indonesian pepper – one of the more mind-boggling food-mile assessments can be calculated here. So it is not simply the fact of gaining or producing commodities in a particular colony, but also a matter of finding a marketplace for them elsewhere in the world, a matter of *realizing their value*. The other notable, indeed remarkable thing, here is the sense that the colonizing/commodifying spirit that results from the staggeringly pervasive networking of European colonials seems contagious, for here the American 'Master' is certain that an American post-colonial spirit of adventure – we are in the era of manifest destiny after all – will lead to a joining in this new colonizing venture.

On arrival, Tench and the first fleet find that things are different to what they expected – and here is where we get something different from Hakluyt, who never made the journey to the Americas himself to make the transition from theory to practice. Tench quickly discovers that the 'Indians were tolerably numerous', contrary to what Cook described, but this does not stop the party from laying claim one month after their arrival. 'Owing to the multiplicity of pressing business necessary to be performed immediately after landing, it was found impossible to read the public commissions and take possession of the colony in form, until the 7th of February,' Tench writes (2006a, 28). That there was a formal taking of possession shows that the *business* of colonization was taken seriously: it was necessary to impose, as quickly as possible, a legal hold on the land that also brought into place English law more broadly. Just as it had not been in Hakluyt's tracts, no anxiety was exhibited over indigenous claim on the land; instead, the claiming of the land using specific longitudinal and latitudinal markers was aimed at avoiding other European claims: 'By this partition it may be fairly presumed, that every source of future litigation

between the Dutch and us will be for ever cut off, as the discoveries of the English navigators alone are comprized in this territory', Tench concludes with some relief after the ceremony (2006a, 28).

Where we see a significant difference between Hakluyt and Tench, then, between the American colonial and Australian colonial period, is in the *legal* treatment of land and people. In the Australian claim, the land was deemed empty, 'null', because it was not marked by the signs of *development* that was recognized, arbitrarily we might say now, as signifying the presence of a culture. If the land was undeveloped, it was unclaimed; if the land was undeveloped, so too were the people; and if the people were undeveloped, they were uncivil, barbaric, savage, and consequently did not exist. This chain of syllogistic reasoning, the colonial argument, deployed in countless settings and times, nullified not only cultural possession of a landscape, but nullified people. Tench had to accede that there was a greater population of indigenous people than he had thought, but this did not prevent him from creating a new logic for the colonial presence: 'I have already hinted, that the country is more populous than it was generally believed to be in Europe at the time of our sailing. But this remark is not meant to be extended to the interior parts of the continent, which there is every reason to conclude from our researches, as well as from the manner of living practised by the natives, to be uninhabited' (2006a, 36).

Like Hakluyt, Tench provides notes for the English government back at home, who await an assessment of the territory: 'If only a receptacle for convicts be intended [as we know it was], this place stands unequalled from the situation, extent, and nature of the country' (2006a, 53). The landscape is so broad that it will accommodate any number of convicts – and, indeed, 160,000 would make their way to New South Wales in the coming years, an act of long duration that only recently has drawn

apologies from both British and Australian governments. Tench is concerned about the colony's commercial prospects, though, and its ability to produce enough food: The turning point in the colonization of New South Wales turns out to be the replacement for the lost American cotton: New Zealand flax, which was found to grow in abundance, would be the commodity that made the venture worthwhile.

In all of this, the people are a by-product (and I use this term deliberately), an afterthought, of the colonial process; relations between indigenous people and the colonizing settlers are noted, particularly when there is an early attack on the governor, but they are clearly waste and irrelevant to the larger aims of the colony. So they are driven off the land, made to leave when development begins to make indigenous food supplies more difficult to come by, attacked by the foreignness of diseases brought with the colonists. And, as a result, the new colony is made to become *terra nullius*.

It would seem that the idea of the empty landscape, the idea of the wilderness, persists in Australian cultural memory just as it does in the American imagination. Like its American counterpart, the Australian national anthem (with lyrics written in 1879) emphasizes the natural bounty of the open landscape: 'We've golden soil and wealth for toil,/ Our home is girt by sea; / Our land abounds in Nature's gifts / Of beauty rich and rare'. The notion of the outback and the independent man in its midst is celebrated in popular songs like the bush ballad 'Waltzing Matilda' (with Banjo Patterson's 1895 lyrics the first) up to the 1980s pop resurgence that saw songs like Goanna's 'Solid Rock' simultaneously celebrate the 'endlessness' and 'sacred ground' of Australia while critiquing 'white man, white law, white gun'. *Australia*, the 2008 movie and the 2nd highest grossing film of all time at the Australian box office, tapped into some mythos of national selfhood in the same way that American westerns do,

with its narrative of the stockman in the outback. And just as Thoreau's *Walden* contributed to a mythos of American independence in nature, so the Australian Henry Lawson penned stories that defined an Australian national character based upon fierce grappling with a nature seemingly void of population. These depopulated landscapes lead to what, in an American context but also in an Australian one, are literatures that value the self in an empty landscape, one from which the threat of the elsewhere people is banished. It is, in a way, an explanation for the enclosure of the national park, which encircles wilderness and disavows people, except for on certain conditions and terms. Admitted to the wilderness, one becomes truly American, truly Australian: at one with a nature that is separate from people, in submission to the sublime. The colonial rhetoric – no matter how much we disavow it – has made its way into certain aspects of cultural memory, and persists in our considerations of American and Australian 'wilderness' as ideal in its depopulated state.

3. The Populated Wild: the Irish example

I wanted to spend some time away from Ireland initially, in part to demonstrate that wilderness traditions are actually a descendant of colonial attitudes towards land, and in part because the Irish case is different from both the American and Australian colonial situations. Unsurprisingly, some of the language we find in tracts about Ireland in the 16th century reflects that in English tracts on colonial America – Richard Hakluyt (1552/3 – 1616) is a contemporary of Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), John Davies (1596-1626), Richard Beacon (ca 1550- 1615) and others. But what I would like to suggest is that the clear concern in Hakluyt and Tench to declare territories 'dispeopled' or terra nullius must derive from the Irish situation. At

the time Hakluyt writes his tracts, Ireland is in the grips of the Desmond rebellions, and the situation is declining; the plantation of Ireland is already underway, and it is all too clear to the English planters, civil servants and officials that the land is occupied. Ireland has frequently been called an early colonial experiment, and I think that this is borne out when we see the striking concern to declare subsequent territories *un*occupied. (The fact that this did not happen in India, where the beginnings of colonization were linked to companies suggests that the commodification and annexation of the land followed directly from the commercial beginnings of the British presence there; no attempt was made to declare India terra nullius.)

The justifications for settling in Ireland were, again, common to those we have already seen were deployed in various arenas over time: the Irish were not using their land properly. Sir John Davies argues that 'though the Irishry. . . *possessed a land abounding with all the things necessary for the civil life of man*, yet, which is strange to be related, they did never build any houses of brick or stone. . . Neither did any of them in all this time *plant any gardens or orchards, enclose or improve their lands*, … (Davies 291-2) (italics mine). On discovering the presence of a greater number of indigenous people than expected, Tench will fall back on this rhetoric, which is the same as in More. And the same force that Hakluyt describes that will be brought to bear on the land and the people in the American colonies is echoed in Irish tracts of the period, in common Elizabethan metaphors.

Edmund Spenser, as one of the most infamous commentators on the Irish of the period, is often quoted on the potential of the land, the Irish people's failure to use it properly, and on how to deal with the issue: 'Where no other remedie may bee devised, nor hope of recovery had, there must needes this violent meanes bee used'

*(*Spenser 93*)*, Irenius tells Eudoxus in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. Irenius further recommends that garrisons of soldiers drive Irish rebels out of the woods, by destroying the food supply. To ensure that the Irish would not be able to retreat back into the woods for shelter, Irenius recommends 'that order were taken for the cutting and opening of all places through woods' *(*Spenser 156*)*, thus ensuring, too, the safety of English travelers as well as the ongoing servicing of the English navy. It is worthwhile rehearsing these kinds of quotations and reminding ourselves of Spenser's position not to add to the damnations he continues to garner in Irish contexts, but because they demonstrate so vividly the problems of indigenous people in the colonial landscape, which was desired to be empty but was clearly not.

Spenser's time in Ireland saw, of course, the attempt at imposing laws that would change the ways in which land was managed permanently and contributed to crises of land ownership across the country. Legal ownership was established under the crown, but was at odds with more traditional ways of considering land. Indicative of this problem, Spenser, among many others, was 'given' land in Cork. In the Fiants of Queen Elizabeth we see that Spenser was granted land as follows: 'Grant (English) to Edmund Spenser, gentleman, of the manor, castle and lands of Kylcolman, Co. Cork … amounting by measure to 3028 English acres; . . . To hold for ever, in fee farm, by the name of "Hap Hazard" by fealty, in common socage. . . . Also 1/2d. for each acre of waste land enclosed. … Power to impark 151 acres (Oct.) xxxii., 1590' (Fiant 5473 (6536), in White 264). There is a consciousness here in the parenthetical 'English' that there is another set of cultural codes at operation with regard to Irish land; this is the first difficulty with colonizing a peopled space. The specificity of the grant is remarkable: I've left out a lot of the detail about rents that would be owed to Spenser by various tenants here, but have included the notation about the enclosure of

waste land, which would bring Spenser more money from the crown, as well as the note about his entitlement to 'impark' an additional space as forest land.

Spenser's work and the work of his contemporaries on Ireland make it plain: colonised landscapes, if they are not already and immediately declared empty, need to be emptied. In tracts of 16th and 17th century Ireland, there is a strong sense that it is not the landscape that is the problem; it is the people. Ireland's difficulty is that it is *not* depopulated; Spenser concludes in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* that the land itself is 'as sweet a countrey as any under heaven' (Spenser 27). If one can drive the population west or to death as he outlines, 'Ireland' would not be a problem. And so this colonial mindset requires a twofold belief: one, that the landscape has not been properly developed and so claimed (is terra nullius in legal terms), and two, that the landscape is in fact thus depopulated already by virtue of this fact (the people do not count, somehow, if they have not staked claim in the same legal way as the colonizer).

This would seem to be why the 'elsewhere' that indigenous people must move towards does not initially trouble the imagination of an America concerned with manifest destiny; the people are simply *not valued as people* populating a landscape. Indigenous peoples do not go away, of course, and 'elsewhere' begins to feel threateningly close – so that indigenous people trouble the fringes of the colonial and settler imagination, whether in 19th century America, 18th century Australia, or 17th century Ireland: those elsewhere people are what cause restless cowboys in Colorado and New Mexico to sling guns and put up the puffed chest that matches the false fronts of the mainstreet, which, in a bit of bravado, look for all the world like a completed town but which in reality mask the urge of the place to slide into desertion out of fear. Those elsewhere people see convicts turned good in New South Wales

row hard up bright rivers with their knives drawn and glinting in seething sun. Those elsewhere people are what cause Edmund Spenser to write of the Irish forests as if they were armies surrounding him, alert to the chance of capture. The indigenous populations in the space of 'elsewhere' become, I suggest, ghosted populations, functioning, as cultural critics of many spaces have noted, as the repressed, the darkness in the unconscious.

If both the United States and Australian contexts continue to idealize a tradition of wilderness, embodied in numerous cultural spaces and mediations, from Thoreau to the American cowboy and the now dead Marlboro Man, from Watkin Tench to Crocodile Dundee and the also dead Steve Irwin, the Irish situation is different, clearly. Many commentators have noted Ireland's function as an early colonial laboratory, and that status is important here: the *populated* nature of Ireland proved endlessly problematic, so that, when it came time to establish further colonies, it was vital to have indigenous populations declared void and the landscape wasted. Undoubtedly the sheer scale of the landscapes at stake is a factor, too; but, curiously, the idea of wilderness does not persist in an Irish context.

Instead, perhaps because this small island was quite overrun by the colonial project in a way that was not possible in Australia or the Americas, we seem consumed by the idea of development in a way that colonial commentators were themselves. Even in May of this year (14th), Enda Kenny and the coalition government announced plans to create 60,000 jobs in the construction sector in order to revive it and put people back to work. We groan at this reminder of what development has lead to in an Irish context: a property bubble, economic collapse, NAMA, the bailout. But, in an odd twist, our urge for development has, in fact,

brought us face to face with wilderness, with terra nullius, and with spaces populated only by ghosts. I gesture, of course, to our plethora of ghost estates.

I want to return to the idea of national parks now, to the idea of them as ring-fenced wilderness, spaces in which we attempt to return to the sublime, that Romantic experience of nature-as-overwhelming, as breathtaking and humbling. In both the American and Australian cases, that space of the countryside was envisioned as *empty*. This is, perhaps, why the space of the national park does not strike us as – in fact – *un*natural. Baudrillard argued that the space of Disneyland 'is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation' (Baudrillard 25); we might argue that spaces like national parks and enclosed wildernesses are similarly hyperreal, in the way that they refract that which is external to them, with no referent. The 'wilderness', as such, as a space *without people*, never did exist in these now-nation spaces; so its enclosure stands as a marker for and legacy of colonial ideology in ways that our enthusiasm for environmental protection have perhaps overlooked.

In an Irish context, however, it is different. What was enclosed here were the great estates; one has only to follow the hundreds of miles of stone walls around County Wickow, for instance, to get a sense of how people were being shut out, not from preserved wilderness areas, but from areas that were demarcated, on the contrary, as civilization. Empty landscapes in an Irish context, while deployed in some tourist and Romantic imagery, tend to function as signifiers of the sorrows and horrors of the past: the ravaged Famine landscape, the village deserted by emigrants. It makes me wonder whether, as part of our own particular colonial hangover, we have developed a fetish for development: this is our 'imperial debris', as Ann Laura

Stoler has put it. The opposite of wilderness is development, but we have an odd turn about now whereby the development itself is a wilderness, depopulated and unpeopled except by 'ghosts'. Ghost estates are both our new national parks and a vestige of colonial ruination.

Stoler writes that 'To speak of colonial ruination is to trace the fragile and durable substance and signs, the visible and visceral senses in which the effects of empire are reactiviated and remain. But ruination is more than a process. It is also a political project that lays waste to certain peoples and places, relations, and things. To think with ruins of empire is to emphasize less the artifacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their reappropriations and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present. To focus on ruins is to broach the protracted quality of decimation in people's lives, to track the production of new exposures and enduring damage' (Stoler 4).

Ghost estates, I suggest, are productively read in this way: they are, in many ways, not simply signs of a contemporary rage for development in Ireland, but a long duree marker of the urgency attached to development as a sign of civilization under colonial policy, a response to the emptied landscape of the 19th century and the tumbledown of centuries' old stone cottages. Perhaps the ruination that we now witness in countless towns and villages in Ireland speaks not only to policies of the Irish governments in the 1990s and 2000s, not only to cultural memorial impulses to rebuild that which was destroyed during the Famine – perhaps it speaks just as much to More and Hakluyt, Spenser and Tench.

Before I close I want to return to the Woody Guthrie song that I sang in school, because I was shocked to learn, while researching this paper, that there are many other verses to the song which are more than often left out, including this one:

‘Was a high wall there that tried to stop me/ A sign was painted said: Private Property/ But on the back side it didn't say nothing’. Another stanza commenting on the hungry asked ‘Is this land made for you and me?’ The ‘you’ and the ‘me’ are always arbitrary in colonial land assessments, so that depopulation became an inevitability, as was the treatment of the land with the same force applied to the people who did not count as contributing to culture. Perhaps, in the end, the ghost estate is the ultimate colonial marker, private property that is dispeopled, beyond the Pale, out of bounds.

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