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Animals and Animality in Irish Fiction

> [I]t's not man's nobility that produces art, it's man's animality that produces art.
> Elizabeth Grosz.

The material history of St Ciarán's cow providing vellum for one of Irish literature's oldest surviving manuscripts, *The Book of the Dun Cow* (c.1100) – which records the epic of the Ulster Cycle of mythology and legend, *Cattle Raid of Cooley* (*Táin Bó Cúailnge*) – may be seen as an originary moment of a long tradition that records the place of the "animal" in constructions of Irish cultural identity. Nineteenth-century cartoons of simian Irishmen, the iconic donkey bearing turf in John Hinde's iconic 1950s postcard, John Connell's 2018 memoir, *The Cow Book,* are some of examples of how "Irishness" has been closely associated with rhetorical constructions of the "animal" and "animality". Like all traditional lore, Irish mythology and folklore feature animals, human-nonhuman metamorphoses, and creatures occupying the liminal space between the human and the animal. Animals were not only central to pre-Christian cultural production in Ireland, but also frequently appear in early Christian poetry. In Celtic mythology, as in many world mythologies, birds were emissaries of the gods, and early Christian writing in Ireland continued to associate birds with the divine. In the 9th-century poem, 'The Hermit's Wish' ('*Dúthracar, a Maic Dé bí*'), for example, a hermit wishes to be like a bird, an indication, to Tim Wenzell, of 'spiritual connection' with animals of the wild.[1] The perceived human-nonhuman continuum of Irish legend was not simply an idyllic, prelapsarian fantasy, however, but could be dangerous. The hermit's wish could become a curse, as in 'The Frenzy of Mad Sweeney' ('*Buile Suibhne Geilt*'), the tragedy of a 7th-century mad chieftain who flees civilisation to live as a bird.

[1] Wenzell, 'Ecocriticism', p. 11.

This view of the unassailable connections between human and nonhuman animals, typical of traditional world views, underwent a 'fundamental shift' in the west, when 'animals became significant primarily as the objects of human manipulation […] in large part a consequence of the new methods of acquiring and applying knowledge associated with the Enlightenment'.[2] As Harriet Ritvo explains, these 'developments' were most striking in England, enabling unprecedented expansion and consolidation of the British empire, reaching its peak of power and influence in the mid-19th century. Neel Ahuja points out that such innovations would have consequences for some human animals as well: 'Enlightenment conceptions of animals […] relied on the same objectifying methods used to represent slaves and the poor'.[3] As the divide between the human and the nonhuman hardened, the rhetoric of the derogated animal, irretrievably other and subordinate to the human, came to be imposed 'onto marginalized groups' in order to 'purify western subjectivity and thereby discursively maintain the imperialist power dynamic'.[4] These marginalized groups included the native occupants of Britain's first colony, Ireland (in name part of the United Kingdom since 1801). This chapter will consider the representation of the animal and Irishness in Irish fiction, revealing the political and gendered nature of such discourses. The chapter the 19th century but through this unifying lens also demonstrates the thematic continuities between early modern and contemporary literatures.

An Irish Solution to an Irish Problem.

Reverend Charles Kingsley travelled to Ireland just after the famine. Writing to his wife, he reported being repulsed and unnerved by human 'chimpanzees': 'to see white chimpanzees is

[2] Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, pp 2-3.
[3] Ahuja, 'Postcolonial Critique', p. 556.
[4] Rohman, *Stalking*, p. 29.

dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours'.[5] In this same period, when Darwin's theories first circulated, intense debate was forming around the 'missing link' between the human and the animal, source of one of many 19th-century examples of Irish portrayed as less than human, when, in 1862, *Punch* magazine identified 'The Missing Link': 'a creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro', which 'belongs to a tribe of Irish savages: the lowest species of Irish Yahoo'.[6] 'Yahoo' was coined by Irish writer, Jonathan Swift, in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726-7), a well-known, early instance of the animal in an Irish novel. The word refers to the revolting human creatures Gulliver encounters in the country of Houyhnhnms, a race of attractive, intelligent, and peaceful horses. From there, Gulliver returns to England where re-integrating with fellow Yahoos, whom he now considers 'odious Animals',[7] proves impossible. He purchases horses for companionship, retreating from human society. Significantly, Gulliver concludes his tale by admitting he will not submit a report to British authorities of the lands he has 'discovered' and condemning the imperial project he notes: 'those Countries which I have described do not appear to have any Desire of being conquered and enslaved, murdered or driven out by Colonies'.[8] While Swift, like many Anglo-Irish authors, identified as English and frequently attempted to leave Ireland, he was, nevertheless, a persistent, caustic critic of empire and the consequences of British rule in Ireland, especially the suffering of the poor 'native' Irish. His (in)famous 1729 pamphlet, 'A Modest Proposal', one of his many political broadsides against government policy in Ireland, recommends addressing the seemingly insoluble problem of Irish penury by treating children of the poor like livestock, fattening them to be slaughtered, to make meat and leather for rich English consumers. The satire exploits the animalization of the Irish in colonial discourse and

[5] Quoted in Gibbons, *Transformations,* p. 150.
[6] Quoted in Curtis, p. 100.
[7] Swift, *Gulliver's Travels,* p. 373.
[8] Ibid., p. 378.

practice, referring to an Irish child as being 'dropt from its Dam',[9] whose 'Carcase […] the Skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable Gloves for Ladies and Summer Boots for fine Gentlemen'.[10] The narrator posits a clear equivalence between the Irish poor — especially women and children — and animals: 'Men would become as fond of their Wives, during the Time of their Pregnancy, as they are now of their Mares in Foal, their Cows in Calf, or Sow when they are ready to farrow'.[11] Though Swift applies ironic pressure to the stereotype of Irish bestiality to indict the savagery of their putatively civilized colonial masters, the rhetoric of the animal as implicitly debased and reviled nevertheless obtains an evaluative hierarchy with enduring implications for figuring Irishness.

The Sectarian Animal

The earliest visitors to Ireland to record their impressions, back to Giraldus Cambrensis in the 12th century represented the island (limit of the then-known world) as untamed and exotic, populated by strange creatures. In *The Topography of Ireland* (1188), a text considered *the* authoritative work on Ireland for centuries, Cambrensis describes the natives as 'a rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts'.[12] Because they are 'incorrigibly addicted to the sin of carnal intercourse with beasts',[13] startling creatures were to be encountered, like a woman in Limerick, 'remarkable for two monstrous deformities', a beard 'to her navel, and, also, a crest like a colt […] from the top of her neck down to her backbone'.[14] In Wicklow 'there was seen a man-monster', human except for his 'extremities which were those of an ox'.[15] The civilising influence of the

[9] Swift, 'Modest', p. 124.
[10] Ibid., p. 126.
[11] Ibid., p. 129.
[12] Cambrensis, *Topography*, p. 70.
[13] Ibid., p. 39.
[14] Ibid., p. 47.
[15] Ibid.

English will reform appalling native practices, Cambrensis implies, when reporting that 'shortly before the arrival of the English in the island, a cow gave birth to a man-calf, the fruit of an union between a man and a cow'.[16] English occupiers in subsequent centuries continued to regard the Irish as little better than animals.

Early commentators on the state of Ireland frequently link the native population with livestock. As continues to be the practice in many rural cultures, Irish country labourers kept their animals in their homes, and were especially solicitous of the pig. Pigs were not only heroic in ancient legend but were also considered 'the gentleman who pays the rent', literally a lifesaver in times of poor harvest and hunger. So valuable was the pig that the old Irish phrase 'on the pig's back' ('*ar mhuin na muice'*) still denotes success and good fortune. In the metropolitan centre of empire, however, where the pig was 'increasingly associated by the bourgeoisie with offenses against good manners' [17] the animal served as an especially evocative symbol for all that was abject about the native Irish before Darwin's theories supplied a new vocabulary for degeneration and devolution. Michael de Nie notes it was widely claimed that 'an Irishman did not know the difference between dirtiness and cleanliness. His cabin was filthy and badly lit, and he shared it with his livestock'. The Irish didn't just tolerate, but loved their squalor and indigence, evidence of animal-like ignorance and lack of civilization. Nie concludes that because of such animality the Irish 'were often symbolized in the satirical press by the pig'.[18]

Many 19th century Irish novels depict filthy, derelict cabins shared with animals. These novels functioned ethnographically, 'explaining' backward, alien Ireland, now ostensibly a

[16] Ibid.
[17] Stallybrass and White, *Transgression,* p. 51.
[18] De Nie, *Paddy,* p. 17.

part of the United Kingdom, for the amusement and edification of an English reading public. Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy novelists, writing before the famine, caricatured the Roman Catholic Irish peasant as a dirty, harmless simpleton, a kind of domestic animal requiring careful husbandry. Lover's *Handy Andy* (1842) includes a typical description of a chaotically populated Irish cabin:

> The dog ran to the corner of the cabin where the pig habitually lodged, and laid hold of his ear with the strongest testimonials of affection, which polite attention the pig acknowledged by a prolonged squealing […] now the cocks and the hens that were roosting on the rafters were startled by the din, and the crowing and cackling and the flapping and the frightened fowls, as they flew about in the dark, added to the general uproar and confusion.[19]

This comic novel depicts an idealized, feudal Ireland where labourers and landlords know and appreciate their respective places, and where affectionate master and servant relationships are often built around animals, especially in the case of natives responsible for the care of those animals symbolising the Ascendancy: horses and dogs. In Lover's novel, the dying groom Rooney lingers for several pages of encomia praising his loyalty to both master and horses. However, the native Irish potentially corrupt fine gentlemen, enticing them away from the elite pursuits of hare coursing and fox hunting, in favour of 'low' entertainments like badger baiting and cock fighting, a fear shared by - Protestant and "respectable" Catholic characters in Gerald Griffin's *The Collegians* (1829). The work of Catholic novelists like Griffin, members of the rising bourgeoisie writing around the time of Emancipation, reflects concerns the rising Catholic middle class had to argue for their fitness for responsibility and participation in government and policy. Eagerness to improve their condition and make claims to power results in conservative novels, in which the animalized native is differentiated by class rather than faith or 'race'. The villainous peasant, Danny Mann, of *The Collegians,* for example, is described as having 'paws' instead of hands and grunting like a

[19] Lover, *Andy,* p. 71.

pig, while the novel's Catholic gentlemen mimic their Protestant coevals, obsessed with their dogs and horses.

Horses and hounds are associated with the enduringly popular 'Irish RM' stories (published in three collections between 1899 and 1915) by Edith Somerville and Martin Ross (penname of Violet Martin). For Irish women writers, making recourse to animal imagery engages differently from male writers with issues of identity, authorship, and authority. In the RM stories, animals and women, across sectarian and class boundaries, routinely undermine the authority of the English Resident Magistrate, Major Sinclair Yeates, who is also — tellingly — an inept Master of the Hounds. The construction of patriarchal masculinity as the obverse of the feminine or the animalistic went hand-in-hand with the feminization and bestialization of colonies. It is not difficult to imagine that feminization in these instances operated simultaneously as bestialization; as if 'to be changed into animal is equivalent to being changed into woman.'[20] And so, when a native cabin appears in the work of Maria Edgeworth, it must be read with this in mind. Lord Glenthorn, narrator of *Ennui* (1809), visits the home of his childhood nurse, 'a wretched-looking, low and mud-walled cabin':

> At my approach there came out of the cabin, a pig, a calf, a lamb, a kid, and two geese […] followed by turkeys, cocks, hens, chickens, a dog, a cat, a kitten, a beggar-man, a beggar-woman […]. I asked if Ellinor O'Donoghue was at home; but the dog barked, the geese cackled, the turkeys gobbled, and the beggars begged, with one accord, so loudly, that there was no chance of my being heard.[21]

This miscellaneous assemblage of detritus, beggars, and livestock, scarcely distinguishable from one another, is home to Ellinor, whom Glenthorn comes to discover, is *not* his nurse, but his mother, who switched him at birth with the rightful lord of the manor. The novel throws into disarray male identity, integrity, authenticity, origin, and all the attendant issues

[20] Ellmann, 'Changing', p. 90.
[21] Edgeworth, *Ennui,* p. 60.

of position and power, not least the doctrine of blood and birth that in colonial Ireland asserts the Ascendancy's 'natural' right to rule and the animal-like natives' corresponding constitutional incapacity for self-government.

The identification of unruly women with the lowliest of animals, then, can potentially signal defiance of numerous hierarchies, including the 'tyranny' of male-determined 'meanings of "natural"' challenged, according to Clíona Ó Gallchoir ,[22] in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), in which a drove of pigs interrupts a duel between two cross-dressing women, saving the duellists from being attacked by outraged locals. However, challenging entrenched hierarchies can prove impossible for women whose proximity to the animal justifies oppression and limitations, especially upper-class women in an Irish context where the native belongs to an animalized 'race'. The gender non-conformance of the titular character of Somerville and Ross's *The Real Charlotte* (1894) aligns her with the animal, usually emphasising her lack of femininity. She is compared, for instance, to a horse 'champing with a heavy bit', a dog snarling for meat, a 'ferocious feline' moaning, and to 'some amphibious thing'.[23] Despite the inherent potential of the androgynous Charlotte Mullen, described as 'gentlemanly', to represent an emancipated New Woman, her desperate aspiration to outdated feudal values blinds her to alternatives, and she is isolated and marginalized by novel's end. She is a 'hybrid' of Catholic and Protestant parentage, a source of shame and resentment for her, which she projects onto another woman of similarly 'mixed' background, Julia Duffy, whom Charlotte calls a 'starving rat', and whose house, Gurthnamuckla (the field of pigs) offers another example of the cabin-menagerie shared with hens and turkeys. For Charlotte, an idealized sectarian/class affiliation trumps alliance with other suffering creatures, whether

[22] Ó Gallchoir, *Edgeworth*, p. 43.
[23] Somerville and Ross, *Charlotte,* pp 17, 248, 301, 292.

human or nonhuman. Like Charlotte, the Anglo-Irish Aroon St Charles, growing up in early 20th-century Ireland in Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour* (1980), is deemed insufficiently dainty and feminine for marriage and motherhood. She tends to her beloved father's dogs and becomes an able horsewoman, but, despite her efforts, is also marginalized and isolated, called 'Pig' and 'Piggy', which places her in the peasant cabin rather than the Big House, especially humiliating for Aroon, who disdains any familiarity with the 'lower' orders. Decades later, she has her revenge against a cold and oppressive parent through the animal, by feeding her now-invalid mother rabbit infected with myxomatosis. The veneer of the title's 'good behavior' constantly slips. The upper-class Protestant performance of superiority, which comprises little more than pretending not to know or care about anyone else, reveals a self-absorbed elite who are sexually rapacious, cruel, and shockingly unfeeling toward their own children. They are capable of savagery unmatched by the behavior of the 'lowly' Irish living alongside them.

Colonial and Postcolonial Metamorphosis

More harrowing than the damage done to Aroon is the destruction both endured and brought about by Francie Brady in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), and Michen O'Kane in Edna O'Brien's *In the Forest* (2002). In both novels, institutionalization produces bestialized murderers. Labelled 'pig' like Aroon, Francie is sent to an industrial school, where he is bullied and sexually molested, after his mentally ill mother is institutionalized and his alcoholic father fails to care for him. One of his tormenters threatens, 'we'll gut you like a pig'.[24] Even before his mother's crisis, Francie understands his family's standing, thanks the highly 'respectable' Mrs Nugent who deems them: '*Pigs—sure the whole town knows that*'.[25]

[24] McCabe, *Butcher*, p. 110.
[25] Ibid., p. 4.

As Francie's own mental health declines he absorbs porcine identity, living in filth, scrambling around on all fours, snorting, and imposing a 'pig tax' on passers-by. Hired at an abattoir, he specializes in killing pigs. Francie's transformation makes his self-loathing especially lacerating when he 'auditions' for the job by slaughtering a helpless young piglet Francie imagines begging to be spared. A similar tension obtains in O'Brien's novel: O'Kane identifies tenderly with animals and fantasizes about a pet fox but at the same time is happy to torture and kill them. Francie applies his butchering skills to Mrs Nugent, murdering her with a stolen bolt gun. A symbol of aspirational propriety, Mrs Nugent distances herself from the 'uncivilized' colonial stereotypes of Irishness performed by Francie's family: drunkenness, madness, dirtiness, violence. But Francie reduces Mrs Nugent to his animalized level, when he uses her blood to write 'PIGS all over the walls of the upstairs room'.[26]

The native Irish were long believed to have powers of human-animal metamorphosis. Cambrensis and, later, Edmund Spenser, in *View of the Present State of Ireland* (1633) claimed that the Irish regularly turned into wolves. In the late 19th century various threats to the status quo, including feminists and Fenians, were figured as werewolves.[27] Following the Great Hunger and the subsequent rise of Fenianism, which agitated for Irish independence often through acts of violent terror, the image of the threatening Irish animal became ubiquitous in English culture. Sometimes the Irish were jokingly depicted as resembling chimpanzees; more often, however, they figured as slavering monsters, human-ape hybrids poised to spread chaos and destruction. In either case, the power of such imagery lay in the assumption that the Irish, like other subject 'races', had not evolved at the same rate as the English, an idea supported by racist pseudo-sciences of the period asserting the inferiority of

[26] Ibid., p. 195.
[27] Bourgault de Coudray, 'Upright Citizens', p. 12.

non-white peoples, and claiming, for example, that Celts were Africanoid, high on the 'Index of Nigrescence'.[28] Giorgio Agamben discusses this paradoxical element of modernization, which must admit — in order to disavow — the essential animality of the human, proceeding by a series of exclusions, beginning with producing the inhuman 'by the animalizing of the human […] the non-man is produced by the humanization of an animal: the man-ape, […] and above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of an animal in human form'.[29] The undecidability of the Irish as 'non-man' was used to varying effects by Irish writers whose fiction presents fantastic transformations, full metamorphoses, and liminal, hybrid creatures challenging and even effacing boundaries between human and nonhuman.

According to Irving Massey, 'metamorphosis is typically violent and flies in the face of reason. It does not lend itself to assimilation into pleasurable or consoling schemes. … it has something typically monstrous, unabsorbable about it'.[30] In Bram Stoker's fiction, metamorphosis is always monstrous and terrifying, an existential threat to society and the male subject. Count Dracula in *Dracula* (1897) transforms into a bat, a rat, and a wolf and manifests animal-like traits when in human form, such as super-human strength and a lizard-like ability to scale buildings. Critics who treat the novel as an Irish allegory differ as to whether Dracula is a vampiric Ascendancy landlord or an animalized figure of the native Irish who drained and 'infected' England when emigrating there in droves during and after the famine. He is, in any case, a spectre of the disavowed animal other inhering in the human. Jonathan Harker, the English solicitor who travels to Transylvania to conduct business with the Count, is debilitated and unmanned by female vampires, 'unwomanly' creatures who eat an infant. Lucy Westenra, an 'improperly' independent flirt, is also a monstrous, unmotherly

[28] Beddoe, 'Ethnology', p. 20.
[29] Agamben, *Open*, p. 30.
[30] Massey, *Gaping*, p. 17.

woman who kills and consumes children when in vampire form. Mina Harker, Jonathan's intelligent and competent wife, deviates from gender expectations, but emerges more heroically, indicating ambivalence about the period's New Woman. Lucy's overt sexuality distinguishes her from Mina. In Stoker's later novel, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), Lady Arabella's first appearance signals latent monstrosity in an erotic, troublingly shameless self-display: 'her dress alone was sufficient to attract attention. She was clad in some kind of soft white stuff, which clung close to her form, showing to the full every movement of her sinuous figure'.[31] The description emphasizes her animality, specifically her snake-like features: a voice 'very low and sweet […], the dominant note was of sibilation', and 'peculiar' hands, 'long, flexible, white, with a strange movement as of waving gently to and fro'.[32] The narrator obsesses over her 'beautiful human body' while pursuing his theory of her possession by the spirit of a primeval monster. The chaotic final confrontation, between Lady Arabella, now a huge, pale, phallic worm, and the men who destroy her, recalls Francie Brady's self-destructive impulses, turned outward in misogynist rage.

Metamorphosis dominates the 'Circe' chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), first serialized in 1918, just a few years after Stoker wrote *The Lair of the White Worm*. It is also the chapter some critics claim demonstrates Joyce's misogyny, but this reading relies on hierarchical distinctions and prejudices elevating the human above the animal. In the chapter's dreamscape, 'comparable to the Freudian unconscious in which language coalesces with the animal', according to Ellmann, 'human superiority is exposed as a delusion based on the repression of the animal'.[33] Joyce said writing this chapter turned him into an animal, and Ellmann argues that throughout the novel the human-nonhuman boundary is 'undermined by

[31] Stoker, *Lair,* p. 31.
[32] Ibid., p. 32.
[33] Ellmann, 'Changing', p. 75.

animals, whose constant incursions into hearth and mind compromise the integrity of homo sapiens'.[34] Stephen Dedalus denounces his home country in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) saying 'Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow' (203),[35] an assertion not only misogynistic, but which also reasserts ancient stereotypes of the Irish as cannibals and as swine, and participates in a larger Western tradition that sees human 'integrity' degraded by comparison with animals. In *Ulysses*, Stephen appears to have evolved into a 'bullockbefriending bard,'[36] but the title is meant to be insulting, like Buck Mulligan calling him 'poor dogsbody',[37] or referring to Stephen's mother as '*beastly* dead' .[38] In the opening chapter, Stephen observes the old woman who delivers his milk, seeing in her the personification of 'Mother Ireland' and 'silk of the kine',[39] an unflattering transfiguration. Her ability to communicate with her cows is weird and inhuman to Stephen who mentally condemns her for her 'woman's unclean loins […] made not in God's likeness the serpent's prey'.[40] The anti-hero, Leopold Bloom, on the other hand — a Jew (another oppressed people often figured as animals), a cuckold, and, while intelligent, lacking Stephen's education — thinks often and sensitively about animals. For the more 'feminine' Bloom, identifying with the animal does diminish his own humanity. Carrie Rohman describes Joyce embracing 'confusion' and animalized otherness in the figure of Bloom as a liberating strategy.[41] Metamorphosis in literature can conduct a 'critique of language' (Massey, 32),[42] a critique central to Joyce's modernist project, most vigorously pursued in *Finnegans Wake* (1939), the text of which emerges from the scratching of Biddy Doran the hen, one of Anna Livia

[34] Ibid., p. 78.
[35] Joyce, *Portrait,* p. 203.
[36] Joyce, *Ulysses,* p. 36
[37] Ibid., p. 6.
[38] Ibid., pp 8, 129, 539.
[39] Ibid., p. 14.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Rohman, *Stalking,* p. 33
[42] Massey, *Gaping*, p. 32.

Plurabelle's transformations. As Donna Haraway observes, nature is '"other" in the histories of colonialism, racism, sexism, and class'.[43] Joyce recognizes the interlocking structure of these 'histories.' In *Ulysses* Bloom is transformed into a woman, a sow, and an ox. The irony of the humiliating 'degradation' of Bloom's metamorphoses is clear when through these transformations he becomes the most elevated of sacrificial victims, Jesus Christ, and, Joyce's personal political hero, Charles Stewart Parnell.

Gendering the Beast

Since the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*, in which Queen Medh wages war over rights to the services of a stud bull, the status accorded Irish women by their association with cattle has degenerated. 'Silk of the kine' (or oxen), is an ancient, pre-colonial name for Ireland, which metamorphosed under English occupation into derogation of the natives' full humanity. In *Ulysses*, Stephen sarcastically applies the phrase to the woman delivering milk, while in *The Collegians,* a young Catholic gentleman visiting a peasant cabin overhears discussion of 'old Moll Noonan', a suspected witch blamed for 'the butter going from us this two months now'.[44] Like the woman Stephen mocks, old Moll's closeness to animals is doubly othering and threatening, a source of masculinist fear, to be defused through contempt or violence. The cow, a female animal valued for her reproductive functions, like the hen, symbolizes a passive and dull-witted domesticity, according to Joan Dunayer, who concludes, 'comparisons between women and domesticated animals are offensive'.[45] This is evident in Patrick McGinley's *Foggage* (1983), narrated by Kevin Hurley, who draws what he thinks are logical and loving comparisons between women and livestock: 'women like cattle thrive on good treatment. […] If all men treated their women as he treated his dry stock, wives

[43] Haraway, 'Promises', p. 297.
[44] Griffin, *Collegians*, p. i.231.
[45] Dunayer, 'Sexist Words', pp 12-13, 15.

would not lose their sweetness after the first year'.[46] Kevin is sleeping with his twin sister, Maureen, whom he describes as having 'heavy udderlike breasts' and breath 'warm and heavy like a cow's'.[47] Though Kevin thinks of women as cattle, McGinley's own figurative patterns are not similarly gendered. In *Bogmail*, for example, a young barmaid attempts to seduce the publican Roarty by treating him like a female animal: 'she caressed the back of his neck with her strong fingers and scratched his head behind the ears as she might do to a cow to get her in the mood for milking'.[48] In *Foggage* Kevin identifies with his bull Henry, but the solidarity grows from instrumentalist attitudes towards implicitly 'inferior' female livestock, Henry's 'beautiful heifers'. Kevin's sympathy for a male animal is not only self-centred, but also reveals his objectifying impulse toward all living beings on the farm. The 'special quality of his relationship with his sister'[49] requires she demand no acknowledgement of an independent subjectivity. Kevin appreciates the fact that they need not speak to each other. Maureen is not even a separate person; as Kevin's twin, she is a convenient extension of her brother. For Kevin, the line between sister and heifer is thin and somewhat arbitrary, the crossing of which exposes his desire to sexually exploit bodies as so much unfeeling material for his own ends.

In Edna O'Brien's late fiction, in contrast, otherwise threatening and/or damaged men are ironically humanized, rendered sympathetic, via interaction with domestic animals, including cows, when attending the most female of activities, birth. In *House of Splendid Isolation* (1994), McGreevy, an IRA killer on the run in the Republic has been animalized by hunger and exhaustion: 'he thinks he's eating hay, chewing it like a cow, and then chewing the

[46] McGinley, *Foggage,* p. 46.
[47] Ibid., p. 8.
[48] McGinley, *Bogmail,* pp 139-40.
[49] McGinley, *Foggage,* p. 155.

cud'.[50] McGreevy's capacity for redemption is suggested when, just after this description, he helps a young cow in difficulty delivering a calf, and marvels at 'the impossible licking love of it' after 'all that agony'.[51] In *Down by the River* (1997), James MacNamara, who rapes and impregnates his 14-year-old daughter Mary, helps a distressed mare to foal, a moment when Mary imagines the healthy, nurturing father-daughter relationship she will never experience. O'Brien's fiction offers examples of post-Independence fiction's deployment of the animal to mediate anxieties and crises of reproduction, sexuality, and gender. In 'The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits' (2002), Emma Donoghue fictionalizes the story of impoverished laborer Mary Toft, who, in the 17th century, successfully convinced the English public of cross-species parturition, a 'miracle' that made the reputation of the attending doctors for whom Mary becomes a money-making object on display. The medical examination finally exposing the sham occurs in a brothel where other women spread their legs for men with little benefit to themselves. Animals also figure in scenes of complex shame and desire around childbirth in Clare Boylan's *Black Baby* (1998), featuring a mature virgin, Alice, an elderly orphan, at once prematurely geriatric and immature after a life of virtual imprisonment by parents who discouraged friendships and forbade love affairs, which, she explains, made her expend her affection on animals. Despite repeated protests that she has 'neither chick nor child', Alice half-convinces herself that Dinah, a young con-woman selling bibles, is the 'black baby' Alice bought with her missions' money as a child. Nearly every character in the novel partakes of animal-qualities: nuns are 'penguins' ; Alice's neighbor, Mrs Willoughby is 'a bird in a gilded cage'; one of Alice's frustrated erstwhile suitors is 'Mr Gosling'; Alice confuses Dinah with her cat, Tiny; a young homeless woman taken in by Alice, Verity, has hair 'exactly like the fur of a neglected animal', and a 'long neck' making her 'resemble a

[50] O'Brien, *House,* p. 14.
[51] Ibid., p. 15.

flamingo'.[52] Dinah mishears her name as 'Ferrety'. Verity's flamingo-like neck indicates the Alice-in-Wonderland pattern of imagery which culminates in Alice's attempted embrace of the baby Verity leaves behind. Alice anticipates the infant's 'feathery feel […] still fluttery from prehensile wings left over from its recent angel state'. However, a less heavenly inhumanity develops: 'It was like a baby pig. The child's face began to change. Its features drew together and its snout wrinkled up and its eyes vanished into folds of flesh. Its complexion turned the bright unwholesome ruby of a monkey's behind. It grunted. It actually grunted'.[53] Just after this, the narrative reveals Alice has had a stroke, and how much of her relationship with Dinah or other details have been imagined in her comatose state remains unclear, but even in fantasy, Alice, who has for too long understood her 'animal' embodiment as shameful, cannot imagine motherhood as anything but traumatic and abject.

'Prehensile wings' also figure in Mike McCormack's *Crowe's Requiem* (1998). Crowe regularly feels a vestigial itch between his shoulder blades, which 'fibrillate and crackle' (188), even though, he says, 'my wings are long gone, shorn by the terrible speed of my descent'.[54] An unusual child and man, unearthly in his preternatural knowledge, he is ostracized by other children. He grows his fingernails long and yellow, 'strong as talons',[55] and, when walking with his grandfather and struck by a 'black shape' falling from the sky, he christens himself Crowe.[56] Crowe's only begins to feel human when he falls in love with Maria. When she runs into money troubles, Crowe raises funds by undergoing scientific trials at an ominously anonymous institute, and sustains fatal cardiac damage. Crowe's animality, and, therefore, femininity, have rendered him vulnerable to manipulation and

[52] Boylan, *Black Baby*, pp 24, 4, 45, 108, 175, 182.
[53] Ibid., p. 199.
[54] McCormack, *Requiem,* p. 5.
[55] Ibid., p. 17.
[56] Ibid., p. 24.

experimentation, victim to the patriarchal control of bodies treated by medical authorities as unfeeling, inferior matter. In *The Beth Book* (1897), by first-wave Irish feminist and novelist, Sarah Grand, Beth fully comprehends her surgeon-husband's misogyny when she discovers him vivisecting a dog. The novel 'explicitly unites masculine control and abuse of women and animals as wielded through the rhetoric of medical science and masculine rationality'.[57] Haraway has similarly identified the traditional hyper-masculinity of science and technology, dedicated to the domination of 'female' nature', identifying the drive for complete control, the 'masculinist reproductive dream' at the heart of scientific inquiry.[58]

Marty, the narrator of Anne Haverty's *One Day as a Tiger* (1998), who introduces himself, in a litotean feint, as not 'quite inhuman', encounters a victim of one such dream/nightmare, Missy, a lamb genetically engineered with human DNA, created at the 'Institute': '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'.[59] The metaphor of violent, medicalized extermination, justified by bestialising its victims, bleeding through the description's decorous surface, like Marty's arch introduction, intimates the horror that awaits Missy. Immature and solipsistic, Marty is at once obsessed with and resentful of male competition. He purchases Missy in a childish gesture of defiance of his younger brother Pierce, on whom he has become dependent. After their parents' death, Marty gave his share of the family farm to Pierce to attend Trinity … and pursue loftier goals than farming. Having sabotaged his academic success, Marty returns to the family farm to sulk in an outhouse he ineffectively refurbishes and eventually shares with Missy. He admits to having 'little feeling

[57] O'Connor, *Species*, p. 90.
[58] Haraway, *Simians*, p. 152.
[59] Haverty, *Tiger*, p. 22.

for' animals and a desire to distance himself 'from the pitifulness of their destinies',[60] threatened by any 'feminising' identification with their weakness. Missy is 'the first living thing' he has loved; however, like Kevin's love for Maureen, Marty requires Missy's silence and an ostensible lack of independent subjectivity. She ironically makes Marty feel human: 'Turning to me in her helplessness, she repaid my response by investing me with a faint gleam of hope in my ultimate return to a place in the human fold; or at least restored to me my sense of loss'.[61] Other sheep on the farm reject Missy, and in his self-pity and self-absorption, Marty neglects her, a suffering little monster created by masculine hubris, finally killed by Marty's feelings of inadequacy, his bruised masculinity.

As Patricia Coughlan observes, 'the rationalising language of the modern, with its emphasis on personal freedom and autonomy of subjects, ignores personal ties and emotional connectedness', qualities associated with women.[62] Fiction by contemporary Irish male writers often figures complex and potentially destabilising relationships of masculine competition and identity using the animal. Oppressed by the legend of his father's Irish Revolutionary and Civil War heroics, the narrator of Neil Jordan's *Sunrise with Seamonster* (1996), joins the Spanish Civil War, service which ends in disappointment, betrayal, and compromise. The father–son relationship is largely conducted on a more companionable, less dangerous killing field, silent fishing rituals. To the narrator and his father fish were 'the garland to our cruellest moments and our kindest ones' (168). The 'seamonster' is the narrator's mother, absent from the narrative, except as a nightmarish spectre from his subconscious. After her death, he dreams of 'odd misshapen creatures, pallid, translucent […] huge whiskers and eyes, mouths shaped like tulips' (6). The dream returns at his father's

[60] Ibid., p. 128.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Coughlan, 'Postmodernity', p-. 177.

death: ‘As I came closer it revealed itself, outsize and majestic, […] quite silver-scaled, eyes bulging and distended, tulip-mouthed, on its forehead a curved and perfect horn’ (147). In a bizarre triumph over emotional vulnerability, figured as both animal and woman, the narrator and his father’s ghost kill, cook, and eat the monstrous fish.

Another inarticulate father-son relationship is tentatively attempted through the animal in Colin Barrett’s story, ‘Calm with Horses’ (2013). Armstrong, a petty criminal and drug-dealer, feels a consuming, disconcerting love for his nonverbal autistic son, whose therapy with horses fascinates Armstrong. Armstrong visits the stables but is humiliated when a horse runs away with him. Deeply shaken, he re-asserts his manly dominance though a violent confrontation with a business rival. Armstrong denies the seriousness of his own wounds to the woman of the house, identified only as Widow Mirkin, who recalls her brother ‘who died of stubbornness’ when he was too ‘embarrassed to say a colt had fallen on him’.[63] The widow’s brother refused medical attention, as does Armstrong, and died. At story’s end, she loads an unconscious Armstrong into the back of her van, but discovers ‘the poor creature inside that van was dead’.[64] Armstrong is finally crushed by denying his fragile animal self, despite strenuous efforts to transcend it. The image of being crushed and defeated by the ‘powerless’ animal recurs in Billy O’Callaghan’s short story, ‘Farmed Out’ (2013), about a boy ‘purchased’ from an industrial school as a farm laborer. His connection to the animal is evident early in the story: ‘not knowing the horse’s name, the boy presses his mouth close to the animal’s ear and mutters something that is all sound but no real words and the Connemara raises his head […] and gives up a sound of his own’.[65] The boy is worked without rest and denied human contact, sleeping and eating in the barn with the rest of the livestock, valued

[63] Barrett, ‘Calm’, p. 139.
[64] Ibid., p. 141.
[65] O’Callaghan, ‘Farmed’, p. 4.

only for their monetary worth. When the boy tries to help a calf stuck in a marshy field, he slips beneath her and is slowly crushed to death. His passing means nothing more than an inconvenience to the farmer. As nameless as the Connemara pony, he is disposable and disregarded, according to the logic of patriarchal capital.

Embracing Otherness

'Ireland's troubled relationship to modernity has persisted well into the last century, granting the animal continued significance and power as instrument of human legibility, particularly for the marginalized'.[66] Steve Baker argues that 'decentring of the human subject opens up a valuable conceptual space […] by destabilizing the familiar clutch of entrenched stereotypes which works to maintain the illusion of human identity, centrality, and superiority'.[67] Marian Scholtmeijer maintains that this is especially true in fiction by women writers, uniquely positioned, due to their own traditional otherness to culture, their centuries-long relegation to the category of the 'natural', to access 'the creative freedom of narrative to liberate otherness from the notions of dominant ideology. Women writers use fiction to concretize, affirm, and empower the state of being "other "which dominant ideology objectifies as a site of weakness, but which finds living expression in nonhuman animals'.[68] In the fiction of Elizabeth Bowen, the animal can figure for 'queer' desires and embodiments, like Benito the kitten *To the North* (1932), emblem of the intimacy between Emmeline and Cecilia, whose 'life together' is described as being like a 'quiet marriage'.[69] Lady Waters, who disapproves of the domestic arrangement, tellingly misidentifies Benito as 'Beelzebub' .[70] Benito comes and goes at will, an elusive, beautiful creature, only partly domesticated. In contrast, Cecilia's

[66] O'Connor, *Species*, p. 28.
[67] Baker, *Picturing*, p. 26.
[68] Scholtmeijer, 'Otherness', p. 23.
[69] Bowen, *North*, p. 148.
[70] Ibid., p. 17.

first encounter with Markie, a more 'appropriate' love object, who fatally interferes in the women's relationship, occurs on a train, where Cecilia 'began to feel she was in a cattle truck shunted into a siding'.[71] In *The Heat of the Day* (1949), another undomestic/domestic animal, a stray dog, is temporarily claimed by the androgynously-named Louis, in order to approach two objects of her diffuse, indiscriminate desires, Stella and Harrison. According to Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, 'Bowen's novels work towards an affirmation of the undecidability of identity, and towards an ethics and an erotics of such an affirmation',[72] so that love is only possible 'on condition of asocial otherness'.[73]

Asocial otherness is the condition of love in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's short stories when desire wields the power to transfigure, to transcend human embodiment, to exceed approved social or racial limits. In 'Summer Pudding' (1997), the narrator falls in love and runs away with a 'tinker' because of his perceived animality, his 'mad eyes that don't seem to blink, like the eyes of cats or foxes',[74] while in 'The Pale Gold of Alaska' (2000), Sophie discovers transformative intimacy with a Blackfoot Indian, a passion conveyed by images of immersion in animalized identity: 'Wrapped in her seal skin, she felt she was a seal. […] Naked, bathing in the deep dark pool of the creek, she felt she was a fish. A slippery salmon, fat and juicy.[75] However, the quiet, selfless love between Ray, an abject outsider, and One Eye, the mutilated, unwanted dog he adopts, as evoked in Sara Baume's *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* (2015), is one of the most transformative in Irish literature. One Eye's account of his escape from the badger fight that half-blinds him opens the novel. Ray, a self-loathing shut-in, is found by One Eye, when he goes in search of a 'ratter' for his dishevelled, lonely house. Like

[71] Ibid., p. 5.
[72] Bennett and Royle, *Bowen,* p. 93.
[73] Ibid., p. 71.
[74] Ní Dhuibhne, 'Pudding', p. 172
[75] Ní Dhuibhne, 'Pale Gold', p. 27.

Boylan's Alice, from childhood Ray has been dominated and isolated by a controlling parent. He describes himself as overweight, ungainly, with 'womanly' long hair. Though his initial purpose in adopting One Eye is practical and impersonal, he merges with the dog, also awkward and unsocial: 'I see my head sticking out of your back like a bizarre excrescence. I see my own mangled face peering dolefully from the black'.[76] Ray believes the two share the same 'lump of fear'[77] that isolates them from their fellow creatures, and sees their relationship as one of deep reciprocity and complementary: 'I find it hard to picture a time when we were simultaneously alive, yet separate. Now you are my third leg, an unlimping leg, and I am the eye you lost'.[78] Throughout the text, Ray demonstrates unusual sensitivity to all other objects in the world. The attention paid an injured swan upsets him when no one cares about a jackdaw killed on the same road, and he mourns a dead shrew, whose 'life was worth no more or less than yours or mine, than the man in the pope mobile or the sardines in the sardine tin'.[79] Ultimately, Ray's love and respect lead him to realize neediness might be one-sided and that One Eye deserves an unfettered life, without leads or collars. Given an opportunity, One Eye bolts, and the novel ends with a brief ode to his freedom:

> He is running, running, running.
> He is One Eye.
> He is on his way.[80]

On the last page of this novel, the Irish animal sheds its symbolic burden, the imperative to serve humans in any way, including the production of literary meaning.

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[76] Baume, *Spill,* p. 10.
[77] Ibid., p. 12.
[78] Ibid., p. 37.
[79] Ibid., p. 142.
[80] Ibid., p. 215.

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