What is it like to write poetry right now at this moment in world history? What is it unlike? Or, to avoid comparisons at all, what is poetry now? Fascists and an “alt-right” search for platforms, opposed but not often enough; global warming renders laughable our comfortable and anachronistic sense of cyclical change; secular stagnation mocks the entire program of austerity; a frantic media, its profitability untenable, devours and annotates every tweet it can. We could compare the moment to anything from the discount bin of history — why not, right? — whether it be China in the seventh century CE or the eleventh century BCE. A common touchstone for Europe or the northwest is the 1930s in the same region. It was a decade haunted by an economic crisis, a period of decline. Culture is an uncapturable swarm of what living people really do, say, sing, paint, photograph, and write, but our inability to delineate it in total does not lessen the imperative to ask what happens when our nebulous and uneven cultural moment is compared with a sense of doom and panic inscribed into other eras, or brought into contrast with other times and ideas. We need to pay attention to the ways in which those transpositions might in their inadequate commensurations be an impediment to grasping what is at hand, while they nonetheless jolt us into describing how those comparisons fail, and thereby perhaps become retroactively justified.
This essay is an attempt to describe the ways in which the financial crisis affected poetry in Ireland, and thereby how economics and poetry interpenetrate. I concentrate on poems that take the economic changes which Ireland has undergone in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as their subject matter, poems which ostentatiously announce themselves as attempts to grapple with those changes. I will largely focus on the work of Trevor Joyce, a contemporary Irish poet whose work emerges from the modernist traditions of Irish literature. The predominance of this poet’s work in my argument is partly due to the insistent regularity of his engagement with economic vocabulary and concepts. I will focus on the poem “Capital Accounts” and the chapbook *The Immediate Future* (2013). The center of gravity in my argument is Irish poetry and economics, but other poets and other locales are brought into relation with this, including China and Mexico, countries pulled into this orbit to bring Ireland into relief, because these contrasts are what motivate the poems themselves. By virtue of throwing into relief the ways in which our period is like and unlike these places, times, and writings, the texts I look at offer compelling and troubling explorations of our present moment.

As surely as there is a ground for a simile or metaphor, there is a sky which illuminates that ground, without which it would be unthinkable. The differential between the sky and ground of these comparisons is a kind of torsion which speaks to the irreducibility of the *there and then* of the poems I will discuss. It is this sky I want to gesture toward, the ways in which these poems *don’t work* and come apart at the seams. Another more blunt way to come at this dynamic would be to say that commensurability and incommensurability are tightly knotted together. Incommensurability describes that which is impossible to measure or compare, that which lacks a common quality on which to make a comparison. Commensuration is a powerful tool because it can render some aspects of life invisible or irrelevant, as when the wage masks or degrades feminized labor through its differ-
ing levels of validation and valuation. Sometimes the wheels come off the commensurations in these poems, especially when they are fixed in place, spotted, analyzed. Their commensurations have a tendency to lose their potency, to display themselves as facetious and inadequate, but that is the whole point, that the mechanism comes apart and we can see what is really happening offstage or behind our backs. The torque between the failure of these comparisons and their explanatory power was and remains a spur to active and passionate thinking at every reading of them that has been given or undertaken in public and private, on page or stage. I want to suggest that Irish literature has taken a decisive turn toward oblique explorations of incommensurability in form and content since the financial crisis of 2007–8.

Much twentieth-century American poetry takes the reconfigurations of society under capitalism as its subject matter. The critic Christopher Nealon has argued that this is the case not only of self-consciously radical or left poetries but also centrist and right-wing ones, and this remains relevant to Anglophone literature of the twenty-first century, in particular the poetry in and around Ireland. One could argue that economic consideration have been central to the sphere of literature in Ireland for much longer. At the putative dawn of Anglophone Irish literature, Jonathan Swift wrote the Drapier’s Letters (1724–25), a pseudonymous series of pamphlets which laid bare the machinations behind Wood’s halfpence (a privately minted copper coinage that was believed to be of inferior quality). Writing for an incumbent public sphere with substantial power, Swift argued that Ireland was constitutionally and financially independent from Britain and thereby he contributed to the formation of a national identity in congruence with certain bourgeois interests. Swift looks smug on a Series B £10 banknote, circa 1976–82

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(fig. 1), while James Joyce, safely free from influencing a political sphere in his own day and age, looks a bit less *himself* as he smirks and casts his eyes downward, looking embarrassed, on a Series C £10 banknote, circa 1993–2002 (fig. 2). Every old Irish banknote stamped with the visage of Swift or Joyce was so blatant a manifestation of the synergy between the Republic and its literary heritage that to venture this point as an argument is unnecessary. Since Ireland entered the Eurozone in 2002, these prestigious names ceased to adorn the local currency. But the writers I discuss in this essay are not in danger of having their likeness adorn a currency of wider validity than, say, the Brixton pound or an avant-garde bitcoin, and it would be a great disservice to their work to argue for its special status. It is common for literary scholars to assert the uniqueness of the Irish literary tradition, and this is undoubtedly due in part to Ireland’s status as a postcolonial nation-state; this sense of uniqueness is shared with other postcolonial states. As in many nation-states, literature is to the Irish State what casings are to batteries, but I would suggest that in Irish literature the antagonism between the State’s role in the crisis and the experience of its lower classes is more acute than in the literature of either the USA or the UK, where it is perhaps easier for writers to occupy a critical attitude to the state. That is to say, as the literary tradition is more intertwined with nation-building in Irish poetry, the impact of the
financial crisis on Anglophone literature is more visibly discernible in contemporary Irish literature.

The typical narrative of the financial crisis is as follows: the global financial crash began with a dip in the subprime mortgage market in the US in 2007 and hypertrophied into an international banking crisis with the collapse of the investment bank Lehman Brothers on September 15, 2008. Many banks were over-leveraged, with high levels of debt relative to their capital, and because bad debt was pervasive, banks ceased lending. To prevent the collapse of the world financial system, massive bailouts of financial institutions followed. For economic historian Robert Brenner, this global crisis was simply a particularly dramatic expression of a decades-long tendency, the long downturn. He argues that capitalism’s problem is that rates of profitability have increasingly diminished business cycle by business cycle since 1973. The financial crisis of 2007–8 was merely a manifestation of huge unresolved problems in the real economy that “have been literally papered over by debt for decades.”

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tivity, and then retract, burning certain stakeholders, perhaps banks, but more frequently mortgage-owners, workers, and of course whatever population capitalism dubs “surplus” at that moment. Ireland was the first Eurozone country to enter recession during the crisis, hit by a sudden rush of rectitude from across the pond. But its problems were not simply imported by the disease vector of bad US debt. The Irish economy has its own unique history of development as a colony and then an independent state which led to this situation. Of particular importance here is the nature of the boom known as the “Celtic Tiger.”

The Celtic Tiger appeared to be a long overdue catch-up with the rest of the West. After an anti-colonial guerrilla struggle, Irish Independence was declared in 1916 and ratified in 1921, but the newly formed state was deprived of the industrialized north due to the prevalence of Unionists and Protestants in that region. There followed a civil war which excised leftist elements, and the victors of that conflict had to peg the punt to the pound and continue to run the Irish economy largely as a supplement to the British economy until 1978, when Ireland joined the European Monetary Union, and around this time it became better to run the Irish economy as a supplement to the US economy. Of course, this overview is incredibly simplistic and there were exceptions; in particular, from 1932 to 1938 the United Kingdom and the Irish Free State waged economic war, where the Irish Government refused to pay Britain land annuities from loans granted to Irish tenant farmers under the Irish Land Acts in the late-nineteenth century. These payments had been agreed on in 1921 as part of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The Irish economy was not in a good position at the outset of this 1932–38 conflict, and this imposition of trade restrictions caused severe damage to the Irish economy. After that conflict ended, Ireland remained neutral during World War II and therefore failed to receive any of its economic benefits in the way that, for example, Belfast industries did. After the war the Republic’s economic growth remained slow. But lo, in 1958, down from the mountain came the civil servant T.K. Whitaker bearing aloft a plan for national regeneration. Seán Lemass, who was Taoiseach (or Prime Min-
ister of Ireland) from 1959–66, implemented this plan, named First Programme for Economic Expansion, between 1958 and 1963. It involved abandoning the principle of protection and encouraging foreign direct investment (hereafter FDI, which is defined as an investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country). From 1958, then, Ireland was poised to hoover up any FDI it could get. This moment is frequently retroactively praised as the source of later economic growth. In fact, the policies praised for the boom were instigated by Whitaker in 1958 to little effect, because, contrary to neoliberal doctrine, there is no causal relationship between low taxes and economic success. Although Ireland willingly donned the golden straitjacket, the benefits would only come about when rates of profitability declined in the US, and capital fled in search of profitable ventures.

The performative economic artifact known as FDI is a concept taught in undergraduate courses and perhaps it is of little use in a “globalized” economy—after all, in what meaningful sense is the money form tied to any particular nationality? Is it the nationality of the individual investor, or is it the company as legal entity? Is it currency, or is it the nationality of the labor force whose expropriated labor power the money represents? In the Ireland of the Celtic Tiger and still now, dependence on foreign firms means that there is a high divergence between Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) (also called Gross National Income, or GNI, see figure 3). Economists highlighted over-reliance on FDI repeatedly as a major structural weakness in the Irish economic model.4 Thinking about sociality under certain market forms, Marion Fourcade has asked:

What kinds of meaning, sentiment, moral predicaments, and social bonds are these performative technologies intertwined with? How do economic artefacts connect to human

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relationships—how do they change, how are they changed by them, and what do they say about them? What kinds of political representations are the discourses and social technologies of the market entangled with?5

These are important questions, and the first poem I turn to, Trevor Joyce’s “Capital Accounts,” is a poem which tries to answer these questions with regard to FDI, showing us the kinds of meaning which proliferates with high amounts of FDI bloating GDP figures and a prevalent political discourse justifying this as “globalization.” The distortions of GDP and GNP produced by FDI can be detected in this poem as well as the effacement of domestic and feminized labor in the measures of both GDP and GNP.

The term “Celtic Tiger” refers to the economy of the Republic of Ireland for the decade or so spanning the mid-1990s to

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the mid-2000s. In the early 1990s, Ireland was a relatively poor country by West European standards, with high poverty, unemployment, emigration, inflation, and low economic growth. It had failed to separate church and state and the resulting policing of morality in Ireland sharply differentiated it from many liberal European countries. With the advent of the Celtic Tiger, this changed by degrees as Ireland underwent a period of relatively rapid economic growth fueled by FDI, slowly causing corresponding changes in Irish culture. Former Taoiseach Garrett Fitzgerald says that Ireland’s ability to “catch up” with its EU partners during the Celtic Tiger years “owed everything to a happy timing coincidence between the period of peak demand by foreign industry for Irish labour in Ireland and a parallel peak in the availability of Irish labour.” Fitzgerald was right to see the Celtic Tiger as a fortuitous conjunction of circumstances, a lucky break. One of the reasons for the peak in availability of Irish labor, Fitzgerald points out, was the entry of women into the labor market. The bar stopping married women from engaging in remunerated labor was abolished in 1973 (and earlier for women teachers), but it took some time for the number of women to rise in the workforce. Tax policies were introduced by the Minister for Finance Charlie McCreevy at the turn of the millennium which were “clearly designed to increase the workforce in order to feed a young and hungry Celtic Tiger,” as they favored married couples where both spouses were earning over those where only one partner was working.

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tal relies on gendered ideologies and social relations to recruit and discipline workers to reproduce and cheapen segmented labor forces within and across national boundaries.¹⁰ Once international capital needed a larger workforce, Irish labor was freed up in particular by allowing Irish women to work outside the homestead through the employment of au pairs from the European continent who would get to practice their English in exchange for a wage and childminding. This makes for a suggestive irony given the role that Irish migrant women played in the social reproduction of native workers in the past as maids, nannies, nurses, and care workers in foreign countries such as the US and UK.

Feminized and migrant labor forces are crucial to reducing the high costs of private consumption and social reproduction at the centers of power and privilege. Much of the Irish poetry about the boom celebrates how far the citizens of Ireland have come, revelling in brands and luxuries and new lifestyles even as it ostensibly critiques them, for there is joy too in repudiation. For example, Dennis O’Driscoll’s poem “The Celtic Tiger,” published in 1999 in Weather Permitting, describes the new youthful workers with the following lines: “Lip-glossed cigarettes are poised / at coy angles, a black bra strap / slides strategically from a Rocha top.”¹¹ Lip gloss and cigarettes, the named branding of the “Rocha” top (John Rocha CBE is a Hong Kong-born fashion designer who is based in Ireland), all suggest a commodity fetishism that is deeply gendered. O’Driscoll ties economic growth to shopping and exhibits an oblique fear of feminization in all its forms.¹² This gendered take on the Celtic Tiger is not without

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precedent and is important to my reading of “Capital Accounts,” written in 2003 and published in 2007.

Another example is in order, this time from literary criticism. The critic Benjamin Keatinge has claimed that during the Celtic Tiger globalization “engulfed Ireland and threatened her sovereignty and survival.” The “her” here signals the furtive entry, stage-right, of Kathleen Ni Houlihan, symbol of Ireland, famously deployed in the theater by Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory to rally young men to Ireland’s defense from the English oppressor. Keatinge’s reliance on this figure is curious, suggesting that for Keatinge, Ireland must protect herself or be protected, she must retain her honor. A more even-handed assessment might tone down the nostalgia, the hyperbole (survival, really?), the paternalism, and the austere implication that Ireland should not succumb to this economic boom. An increase in wealth is, after all, a slight increase in autonomy under current social conditions. She should not give herself up for money, no — exerting self-discipline, she must avoid base materialism. Well, all feminized subjects must hustle and do what they got to do in the collective hostage situation we currently call everyday life. Corporate growth and dependence on the FDI sector are obviously not good things for most of the world’s occupants, but the language in which Keatinge argues for its eschewal is saturated with nostalgia. Keatinge suggests that poets are defending national sovereignty, noting that “several Irish poets have written persuasively about the dangers of consumerism.” But consumerism is the mirror image of what is actually happening under capitalism. For Keatinge, tradition, rootedness, and culture are opposed to popular consumerism. Keatinge’s essay upholds an all too pervasive common-sense notion that the growing consumerism during the boom years eroded some kind of Irish culture, replacing it with capitalist ideals of the United States.

14 Ibid., 71.
Equally, the massive influx of US FDI and the repatriation of the profits that FDI produced do not figure in Keatinge’s account. Although the Celtic Tiger is not an economic and cultural shift that one can simply step outside of to judge, Keatinge should be criticizing petty nationalism, isolationism, and globalized capitalism’s ills without rhetorically and conceptually relying on nostalgia and blaming consumers for consumerism. If Keatinge’s essay is concerned with globalization in Irish poetry and not the globalization of Irish poetry or of poetry in general, I will instead assume that Irish writing has always been enmeshed in world history and has always been concerned with capital, workers, and migration.

The Celtic Tiger had the effect of markedly increasing international trade and cultural exchange, both of which have been central to the project of what hypermetropic commentators call “globalization,” hence Keatinge’s use of the term. The Celtic Tiger, they say, was symptomatic of globalization of capital but also of labor—an influx of foreign labor. This altered Irish demographics and resulted in expanding multiculturalism in Ireland’s towns and cities. The sociologist Bryan Fanning optimistically claims that the mono-ethnic conception of the Irish nation had been disrupted “at least a little bit” by the Celtic Tiger, even after the financial crisis. But in many ways, xenophobia heightened across both periods. A Referendum on Citizenship was held in 2004, and the majority of the public voted to

15 Central Statistics Office · An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh, “Population and Migration Estimates April 2003 (with Revisions to April 1997 and April 2002),” December 10, 2003, http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2003/popmig_2003.pdf. Multiculturalism is a centrist, middle-class, and disingenuously neoliberal way of naming a situation in which the ethnicities involved are happy to remain as “cultures” (once a year festivals, ethnic cuisine), without having irreducible political othernesses (like traditionalist religion, for instance, or traditions of capitalist resistance, or criminality) and bolsters a globalized capitalist status quo. It signals a vision of globalized migrant labor in which everything works out in an orderly fashion.

remove the constitutional right to Irish citizenship for children born to immigrants in Ireland, suggesting that an ethnic nationalism still mattered to many Irish citizens and that a significant portion of the population had a latent tendency toward ethnic chauvinism. In 2005 the CEO of the American technology giant Oracle, a provider of cloud applications and platform services, was quoted in the Irish Times suggesting that the Irish should be more open to immigration. The glimmers of a fissure appear in this yoking together of immigration and foreign investment, as if one entails the other, as if the CEO could speak on behalf of immigrants of all classes and phenotypes. Capital is not people, but certain people will suffer for capital’s sins. Labor migration and FDI have tended to work together, apparently part and parcel of the same hustle for profitability that is called variously globalization, neoliberalism, and financialization, but the search for new sites of access to cheap labor coincides with the emergence of a global immigration detention network set to administer the movement of bodies alongside the movement of capital. The rise of ethno-nationalist populism which would become clear after the financial crisis across many advanced capitalist countries—a cadre of countries that Ireland likes to imagine it has joined—and the global network of detention centers go hand in hand. In Ireland, the policy of Direct Provision was introduced in 2000, and it severely curtailed the rights of asylum seekers, providing social welfare according to nationality rather than need. Under this policy, asylum seekers are given full room and board, not allowed to work, and given a weekly pittance to live on, while companies like Mosney Irish Holidays PLC rake in rent.


from the government. These detention centers have been compared to Magdalene Laundries and Famine-era workhouses because of the abusive staff, restriction of personal freedoms, and generally callous attitude to human flourishing they present.\footnote{See, for example, Ronit Lentin, “Asylum Seekers, Ireland, and the Return of the Repressed,” Irish Studies Review 24, no. 1 (2016): 21–34.}

Although the Celtic Tiger is generally considered by many historians and newspaper columnists to be a success story for globalization, for economic historians Denis O’Hearn and Maurice Coakley the Irish economy is better conceptualized as a bridge economy between the US and Europe. It was not a product of globalization, nor a product of indigenous economic growth.\footnote{Maurice Coakley, Ireland in the World Order: A History of Uneven Development (London: Pluto, 2012). See also Denis O’Hearn, The Atlantic Economy: Britain, the US and Ireland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015). For further suspicion on the usefulness of the term globalization in describing Ireland, see Nicola Jo-Anne Smith, Showcasing Globalisation? The Political Economy of the Irish Republic (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).} Certain poets and critics know this, and I would argue Joyce is one such. Joyce’s poetry is too focused on a longue durée to be seduced by the latest labels for historical processes. His work stresses the slow and often imperceptible effects of space, climate, and technology on the actions of human beings over long periods of time, it is populated by kings, fat cats, actuaries, gods, joy riders, slaves, solicitors, and emperors. Because of the long timeframe this juxtaposition of ancient and modern implies, his work can be usefully read alongside the work of Giovanni Arrighi. Arrighi’s The Long Twentieth Century from 1994 traces the shifts in the relationship between capital accumulation and state formation over a 700-year period. Building on the work of Fernand Braudel, he argues that the history of capitalism is a succession of long centuries during which a hegemonic power uses a combination of political and economic networks to secure control over an expanding world-economic space. Arrighi then tracks the changing fortunes of English and American capitalism, and in his later book Adam Smith in Beijing he
suggests that the next global hegemon will be China. Chinese economic growth is feared by the West, and some other contemporary poems such as Keston Sutherland’s *Hot White Andy* (2005) have drawn on this theme. The rise of European capital during earlier financial empires partly developed through the mercantile trade of riches from the orient, and now the tables have turned as the ostensibly Communist China is poised to become the next global hegemon of the capitalist world-system.

Arrighi has no truck with the term “globalization” because “much of what goes under the catch-word ‘globalization’ has in fact been a recurrent tendency of world capitalism since early-modern times.” It denotes a system in which “governments have little control over their finances and compete fiercely with one another for the favor and assistance of privately controlled capital.”

There is nothing really new about the contemporary period. Although globalization may name an “explosive growth in world financial markets,” it is not “a departure from the ongoing process of world-market reconstruction launched under US hegemony in the wake of the Second World War.” Nonetheless, for Arrighi, capitalist development is entering an “autumn” phase as American power wanes. The Celtic Tiger was funda-

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mentally an epiphenomenon to the autumn of the American cycle of capital accumulation.

China bookends this essay because of its importance in the contemporary geopolitical imaginary and in Joyce’s poetry, in particular “Capital Accounts” and *The Immediate Future* (2013). Born in Dublin in 1947, Joyce has published more than seventeen works of poetry since his initial collection, *Sole Glum Trek* in 1967. This was the first book to appear from New Writer’s Press, which was cofounded by Joyce and Michael Smith with the intention of publishing young poets from Ireland and abroad who were not receiving an audience through the few Irish presses in existence at the time. Joyce kept publishing poetry up to 1976 and then was silent until 1995, when *stone floods* came out. His poetry employs a wide range of forms and techniques, from traditional forms to modern experimentalism. Joyce regularly publishes translations and often describes these as “workings” from a given language to emphasize that they are poetic re-imaginings in the tradition of Ezra Pound. He has given public readings of his work throughout Ireland, the UK, and the US. Joyce has had a long engagement with China; he taught classes on classical Chinese poetry as part of the Ireland China Cultural Society in Dublin, which led to him giving a paper alongside Joseph Needham and others at the University of Oxford in 1982.25 Joyce’s work with the Irish–Chinese Cultural Society prompted an invitation from the Chinese government to join an Irish delegation on a three-week tour of China in September 1983.26 During that period, he passed through Hong Kong on his way to mainland China. More recently, he visited Hong Kong

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26 Ibid., 11–28, at 13 and 25n3.
in May 2016, delivering a powerful reading of several poems including “Capital Accounts,” which is a translation of a text by poet Lu Zhaolin (ca. 634–ca. 684). In what follows, I look at the poem “Capital Accounts” to begin to uncover the ways in which economic concerns enter poetry, and I consider how that poem satirizes the Celtic Tiger.

For Joyce, China’s history is of extreme importance in world-history; as already discussed, for Arrighi and many other economists, it is the next global hegemon. China has only recently entered capitalist modernity, as its countryside only began fully participating in global market dynamics in the early years of the new millennium, but it has always served as a limit-case for conveying the great reach of merchant capital.\(^27\) It has been argued that if whatever it is we currently call globalization had a big bang it was during the 1820s, when a steady, continuous decline in transport cost brought about a commodity price convergence across nations.\(^28\) In 1829, John Francis Davis published *Poeos Sinicae Commentarii: The Poetry of the Chinese*. He was Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, working for the East India Company in Canton, and would later become the second governor of Hong Kong. As he expanded the grip of empire and fueled economic growth, he mused that perhaps Chinese poetry could be mined for useful “grafts” that would help English poetry to thrive:

> Fruits of the highest culture may be improved and varied by foreign grafts; and as our gardens have already been indebted to China for a few choice flowers, who knows but our poetry may some day lie under a similar obligation? However small


the prospect of advantage, every scrap of novelty may turn out to be a real gain.\textsuperscript{29}

Davis’s horticultural metaphor is striking: grafting is a technique whereby tissues of different plants are joined to continue their growth together. In this means of asexual propagation the upper part of the combined plant is called the scion and the lower the rootstock, and the success of the joining requires that the vascular tissues grow together in a process called inosculation. Chinese poetry provides flowers in Davis’s image, implying that it will be a scion on the rootstock of Anglophone poetry. The major poet to apply these grafts to Anglophone poetry was Ezra Pound, and it is a \textit{consensus mou} that the work of Pound is a significant influence on the work of Joyce. This graft metaphor carries with it a wide penumbra of meanings, many of which are discussed in the poet J.H. Prynne’s \textit{Graft and Corruption}, a commentary on Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 15” in which he points out that the word graft has meanings which range across labor, syntheses, and corruption.\textsuperscript{30} In the first section of this book, I will show how during the period of economic growth known as the “Celtic Tiger” Joyce decided to place himself under the obligation described by John Francis Davis: to use foreign graft. Using Lu Zhaolin’s poem as a rootstock to an oblique consideration of Irish corruption, Joyce’s poem offers a testament to the asexual and sexual indebtedness of the Irish economic boom to foreign investment, foreign graft or labor.

Across the world, hip hop and rap offer a unique populist form of critique and resistance, and Ireland is no different.\textsuperscript{31} The African-Irish rap group Rusangano Family have often focused on the struggles of overcoming cultural barriers in foreign lands,


and the group’s early website proudly announced that despite their “diverse cultural backgrounds,” they operate “as a family unit.” Here, the typical family unit is transcended in the name of the family of the musical collective. The bio goes on: “Instead of struggling with the idea of being different, they celebrate it.”

There is a reasonably simple multiculturalism at work here. In the song “Lights On,” released in 2016, Zimbabwean MC God Knows raps:

I landed in Ireland in 2001
About the same time that Dre dropped 2001
Thirteen years later the album’s done
Rusangano presents *Non-national With an Attitude, Volume One*

[…]
Where would I be without JME?
Without knowing he helped me see that I couldn’t be anything else but me
Half Yoruba, half Igbo
Lyrics like that freed my soul
Thought I had to be American, thought I had to be English, everything else but Irish
Before it’s the black boy from Caimans school surrounded by white like my Iris
I just wanted to be Harlem, I just wanted to be London
I just wanted to be Trench Town, now it’s time to be Shannon
Now it’s time to be Limerick, get used to my surroundings
Where would Limerick be without GAMAK?

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These bars are God Knows’s *Künstlerroman*, recounting his struggles to assimilate in Ireland (being “surrounded” by “white”), and to find a means of articulating that experience. His initial influences were English and American. In 2001, the year that God Knows arrived in Ireland, the population of Ireland finally met and began to exceed pre-Famine numbers. He alters the gangsta rap group N.W.A.’s name to reflect his circumstances and equally inspirational is *JME*, an English grime MC. All have “helped” God Knows to study his craft. He plays the white Irish against the white of the sclera surrounding his iris. But he feels the need to use the actual content of their lives, and now opts to embrace Ireland as subject matter, to focus his attention on the life that he actually lives, as the song’s chorus puts it. He turns from Harlem to the city of Limerick where he lives. He ends these bars with a rhetorical question: where would Limerick be without GAMAK? Giveamanakick—typeset as giveamanakick and abbreviated as GAMAK—were an Irish rock music duo from Limerick, active from 2001 to 2009. Would it be too much to read something else into this? Gamak is also ornamentation used in the performance of Indian classical music. *Gamaka*, or गमक, means “ornamented note” in Sanskrit, a graceful touch given to a single musical note or a group of notes. In this rap, it might be synonymous with multiculturalism, which is clearly important to the group’s self-image or a figuration of God Knows’s presence in Limerick. In a wider sense, the Sanskrit scholar Monier Monier-Williams defines *gamaka* as “causing to understand, making clear or intelligible, explanatory, leading to clearness or conviction.” We might parse God Knows’s question thus as what would Limerick be without immigration, or,


what would Limerick, indeed Ireland, be without the clarity that immigration brings? This question can, I think, illuminate the first two poems I will be analyzing, Joyce’s “Capital Accounts” and Flynn’s “Profit and Loss,” and it remains a concern throughout.

In this essay I will weave discussions of immigration, sex work, financialization, and export-processing zones through my discussion of Joyce’s “Capital Accounts.” I will then go on in section 2 to give a brief overview of the housing bubble which popped and ended the Celtic Tiger, highlighting that it was seen many years before it burst. I will discuss some prevalent reactions to the crisis and neoliberalism’s relationship to aesthetics, and then go on to discuss how Leontia Flynn’s poem “Letter to Friends” reacts to it, by amplifying fear of foreignness and talking about W.H. Auden and Iceland. My analysis of Flynn’s poem will then feed into my discussion of Dave Lordan’s poems “A resurrection in Charlesland” and “Nightmare Pastoral,” which I will discuss in section 4 in the context of the Catholic Church’s sexual abuse scandals at around the time of the financial crisis. In section 5, “Thought-starting Clichés,” I will discuss a novel by Donal Ryan which offers an account of the crisis and helps to contextualize the ways in which some of the poetry I look at handles or returns to clichés. I then discuss Warriner’s Eleven Days, followed by an analysis of the ways clichés are addressed in poetry by Lordan and Mairéad Byrne. This will lead into my discussion of Joyce’s chapbook The Immediate Future at the essay’s close. In section 6, “Futures,” I describe a speech by Bertie Ahern and describe it as an attempt to cast a spell, whereby I discuss some of Joyce’s concerns with divination in the chapbook and relate this to pensions and concerns about the future. In section 6.1, “The Decline and Fall of Whatever Empire,” I look to the final poem in Joyce’s The Immediate Future and consider what other critics have said about the reaction to the crisis in Irish poetry. The sections are uneven in length but form an idiorrhythmic whole.

The range of texts I survey is admittedly unusual: poetry and a novel from major publishers, as well as small-press publica-
tions of small circulation which are sometimes difficult to find, such as Warriner’s *Eleven Days*. However, Joyce’s “Capital Accounts” is freely available online as is his chapbook *The Immediate Future*. In contrast, many of *The Irish Times* articles you might follow up on in the footnotes, if you care to, may not be accessible without paying. Although I have focused on the work of Trevor Joyce, much more could be written about every poet I discuss reacting to the financial crisis. And more again could be written on the poetry of Sarah Clancy, James Cummins, Kit Fryatt, Rita Ann Higgins, Fran Lock, David Lloyd, Christodoulous Makris, Aodán McCardle, Ian O’Reilly, Billy Mills, Billy Ramsel, David Toms, William Wall, Catherine Walsh, and David Wheatley, among others. But I have reacted to the poetry that I encountered at the time that provoked a reaction in me.