

## **Panel 32**

### **Experimental Narratives**

**Some Infinities are Bigger than Other Infinities:  
An Examination of Experimental Capacities in Mike McCormack's *Solar Bones*  
and Adrian Duncan's *A Sabbatical in Leipzig***

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Writing of the innovative pulse in contemporary Irish fiction in contrast to earlier more modest approaches to technical experimentation, Rob Doyle poses the following crucial question: “The common factor among such eras is their stability: why indulge a mania to innovate when civilization is ticking along just fine?” (3). Doyle’s line of questioning gets directly to the heart of why formal and thematic innovation have become not only prevalent but crucial in contemporary Irish fiction. His perspective resonates especially with recent works by Mike McCormack and Adrian Duncan, whose novels – *Solar Bones* (2016) and *A Sabbatical in Leipzig* (2020) respectively – illustrate how experiment can respond meaningfully to the recent developments concerning socio-political and/or existential instability. Having reconfigured the intersection between form and content, both novels reflect the extension of Ireland’s experimental tradition into a mode elevated to capture the fragmented, uncertain intensities of contemporary realism. This presentation therefore aims to discuss the evolution of Ireland’s experimental thread and its divergences, before arguing that the innovative use of technical and formalistic devices in *Solar Bones* and *A Sabbatical in Leipzig* is not only essential to articulating the interiorities of their respective narrator’s worldviews, but also aligning the narratives more closely with the dissonances and intensities of contemporary reality. Specifically, by resituating the significance of the everyday, rather than trying to establish a totalising vision of life, both works demonstrate how innovation becomes not an indulgence permitted by societal calm, but a formal necessity when articulating the complexities of the present.

### **Biography**

Charlotte Remes is pursuing her postgraduate studies at Nanyang Technological University Singapore under the RSS Scholarship. She recently graduated, also from NTU, with a Bachelor of Arts in English, during which she developed an interest in Contemporary Irish Literature. Her final year paper, and subsequent research, explores the experimental thread within the contemporary landscape of Ireland.