

List of abstracts and bios for the 6th International Postgraduate Conference in Irish Studies, Prague

September 22–23, 2023

Sarah d’Episcopo (University of Zurich)

“An Aperture of Silence”: Thresholds of Potential in Ciaran Carson’s Post-Troubles Poetry

My PhD research focuses on Northern Irish writer Ciaran Carson’s (1948-2019) post-Troubles poetics, arguing that it is characterised by narrative and formal "in-betweenness". I examine how Carson explores the role of language in mediating but also hindering communication, the inherent provisionality of a city and its community in historical-political limbo, and the power of intertextual networks and translations to produce new possibilities of literary creation.

This paper highlights one aspect of in-betweenness, namely the theme of liminality that appears throughout Carson’s post-Troubles poetry. Liminality plays an important role in Carson’s writing of this time, embodying not only the complicated relationship between past and present but also the kaleidoscopic position of the narrated self. Carson frequently employs motifs such as the threshold, depicting the hesitancy of being in-between past and present, in that transitory space that is full of promise and yet awareness of the dangers that lurk in the darkness of the unknown.

My paper presents a close reading approach where I sketch out the role of liminality as a theme in a selection of poems from Carson’s post-Troubles collections. I discuss the question of how memories of the past can be navigated and negotiated in the ambiguous literary and cultural space that is post-agreement Belfast and how to Carson, writing is an act of sense making. Thus, liminality as a poetic theme offers a rich ground for Carson to contemplate the uncertain experience of existence in transition, while highlighting the poetic potentiality inherent in the in-between.

Bio

Sarah d'Episcopo is a PhD researcher at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Her research focuses on Northern Irish writer Ciaran Carson, whose poetry and translation she studies with specific regards to his engagement with in-betweenness, an approach she argues characterises Carson's writing, after the Good Friday Agreement.

She has a BA and MA in English literature and linguistics, with a minor in cultural studies. Her academic interest lies in Irish studies, as well as postmodernity, deconstruction, and phenomenology. An avid lover of popular culture, folklore, and various languages, she particularly enjoys examining instances of intertextuality and works of translation and adaptations. She is a member of the Swiss Centre of Irish Studies at the Zurich James Joyce Foundation and aims to further continue her academic career after her PhD. She has presented papers at the 2021 EFACIS conference in Prague as well as the 2022 EFACIS PhD seminar in Leuven.

Vasiliki Tatouli (Mary Immaculate College)

Connecting Ireland and Greece with the Collective Human Experience: Heaney and Dorgan's Transnational Memory Recollections Through Poetry

Theo Dorgan and Seamus Heaney are not just reputable national Irish poets who contributed to Irish literature but are European storytellers depicting Greek and Irish culture through poetry. This paper will examine why and how these poets' made connections between Greece and Ireland through analysis of selected poems like Heaney's 'Anything Can Happen' and 'Into Arcadia' as well as Dorgan's 'Begin, Begin Again' and 'Running with The Immortals'. Dorgan wrote two books of prose in connection to Greece, *Greek*, and *Orpheus*. Each book points to shared elements of Greek and Irish culture. There is a mixing and coming together of Irish and Greek mythology as both nations often have literary references to ancient gods, the seas, and trees. Facing adversities and exploring the Self are addressed as well as everyday life in modern society. Heaney experienced Greece and referred to ancient Greek mythology. He connected these myths to modern-day life bypassing space, time, and location. Both Dorgan and Heaney made needed connections between the two nations and put global human experiences under a literary lens while experimenting with the tradition of storytelling. They unearthed common

grounds and general truths about the human spirit that is being remembered in European as well as transnationally in global collective memory.

Bio

Vasiliki Tatouli is an international Modern English Literature doctoral candidate at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, Ireland. She examines Anglophone writers' literary contributions recounting Greece and the Greek identity for global memory. Her poetry has been published in *Thraka Magazine*. Vasiliki Tatouli's doctoral research analyses Anglophone writers' contributions to the modern Greek nation and its identity. She explores elements of Greek culture and Greek identity markers inscribed into twentieth and twenty-first-century Anglophone literary works produced by writers such as Seamus Heaney, Theo Dorgan, Leonard Cohen, and Don DeLillo. Her interests lie in ethnography and historiography using postcolonial theory in literary analysis.

Brianna Riggio (Trinity College Dublin)

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill: The Undead and Untranslatable

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill made her name as an Irish poet, in large part, by publishing bilingual Irish-English editions with facing translations in order to reach a wider anglophone audience. Although she was also bilingual herself, however, she famously renounced writing in English in a now-canonical piece for the *New York Times* entitled "Why I Choose to Write in Irish, The Corpse that Sits up and Talks Back," proclaiming, "The language that my soul speaks, and the place it comes from, is Irish." Thus, the translations featured prominently in her publications and at her readings were composed by anglophone peers, and a common point of criticism amongst her praise was that the original writer's voice was obscured by a variety of translators' styles. Yet, translation being a necessary evil to reach her audience, two questions emerge: do we have any clear examples of her work being translated faithfully, and which translational strategies can best represent her originals without effacing the essential Irishness of her poetry? By comparing passages from a rare edition of one of her earlier works featuring self-translated poems, *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta (1986)*, with re-translated later versions of these poems, we can glean some insight into how the writer's original work compares with other translations. Furthermore, an exploration of the impact of different translational strategies via Lawrence

Venuti's concepts of *domesticating* vs *foreignizing* approaches may shed some light on how to respect and preserve minority languages across linguistic divides.

Bio

Brianna Riggio is an MPhil of Irish Literature from Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses on 20th century Irish poetry examined through a postcolonial sociolinguistics lens.

Alexander Kroll (University College Dublin)

“Did You Read about Erskine Fogarty?”: Trust and Trauma after the Celtic Tiger

In the span of a single generation, the boom and subsequent bust of the Ireland's Celtic Tiger constituted a period of dramatic economic and cultural change. The effects of its downfall in the 2008 recession not only impacted Ireland's economic policy but also greatly influenced the nation's literature and society as expectations of material “success” during the Tiger became increasingly unavailable to the Irish public. In this paper I will analyze Blindboy Boatclub's 2017 absurdist short story, “Did You Read About Erskine Fogarty?,” to present the widespread feelings of distrust towards the Irish government, cultural identity, and economic systems following the collapse of the Celtic Tiger economy. In the story, Boatclub explores the pre-existing conditions of cultural trauma and distrust in contemporary Irish society that were exacerbated by the psychological impact of sudden widespread financial insecurity throughout Ireland. The work provides a surreal account of the rise and fall of the Celtic Tiger as a traumatic event for Ireland, as the titular character completely loses trust in the institutional systems of globalized capitalism, the era's prevailing culture of materialism and superficiality, and even the concept of the Irish family unit, as he mentally deteriorates due to the sudden loss of his financial stability. As his trust fails and the illusions of materialism collapse around him, Erskine's mind unfolds as his expectations and ego dissolve into violence, toxic masculinity, and further trauma. Boatclub's absurdist style provides social commentary through abstract and surreal forms of language and storytelling, depicting the collapse of post-Tiger Ireland and the public's loss of institutional trust through the realm of the psychological as his characters become paranoiac, manic, and distrustful of the world around them.

Bio

Alexander Kroll is a doctoral student at UCD's School of English, Drama & Film in Dublin, Ireland. His research explores representations of social trust in/and the small town in American and Irish literature after 1990. His work is supported through the project "Trust: Imaginative Literature and Social Trust, 1990-2025," funded by the Irish Research Council. He has a BA in English from the University of South Carolina (2016-2020) and an M. Phil. in Irish Writing from Trinity College Dublin (2021-2022).

Sara Romero Otero (University of Seville)

The Suppression of Grief in the Context of the Northern Irish Troubles: Wendy Erskine's "Lady and Dog"

This article investigates the way the suppression of grief is portrayed in contemporary Northern Irish fiction through the study of Wendy Erskine's short story "Lady and Dog", which delves into the consequences of silencing grief over the loss of a loved one to political violence, particularly due to the self-imposed repression that comes along with allegedly inappropriate social behaviours. The study relies on a close reading of the short story, as well as a broader reflection on the culture of grief and silence in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, particularly through Jacobsen and Petersen's considerations on the sociology of sorrow and Rosenblatt's ideas on the suppression of grief, as well as its long-lasting impact on the population of the area.

Bio

Sara Romero Otero is a PhD student in Philology at the University of Seville, after completing her degree in Literary Studies at the University of Barcelona and a Master's in Contemporary Cinema & Media Studies and a Master's in Comparative Literature, Art and Philosophy at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona), as well as a Double Master's in Secondary School Teaching and Linguistics, Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Seville. Her work focuses specifically on gender studies and female Irish authors, as well as intermedial relationships between literature and cinema. She has published a fiction novel (*Feroces como el viento*, 2016) as well as her three previous Master's thesis, which can be found in their home universities' online platform.

Marie Gemrichová (Charles University)

Breaking the Binary: Portraying a Generational Gap in Contemporary Northern Irish Novel

Although the Good Friday Agreement is often revered as a document which concluded the armed conflict in Northern Ireland, it also strengthened a binary which had been previously long established in the province. Recently, critics have drawn attention to a growing disparity between this binary and the diversifying society in the province which no longer corresponds to that 'simple' double division; specifically, they point to the growing gap between the generation that directly experienced the Troubles and a younger one that didn't. This dispute can be observed not only in the society itself but also in recent Northern Irish novels which often concentrate on how younger characters face previously established truths and knowledge and how these may clash with and frustrate their own experiences.

While the immediate community these characters grow up in first helps in identifying what is important and forms a part of what then constitutes the characters' primary knowledge and memory of their world, the paper will look at how it also hinders further development and strengthens the previously established, and possibly no longer applicable, certainties. The narratives and the memories of an older generation may cripple a development of a younger one, which attempts to create its own. The paper will look at the recent novel by Anna Burns, *Milkman* (2018), specifically at the central characters and discuss the influences that form their background and awareness, new knowledge that they gain during the narrative, and the clash that these two realities present for them. To discuss these topics, the paper will make use of concepts from cognitive psychology which can aid in describing the way individuals learn, gain explicit and implicit knowledge, and importantly form memories, and how these can interact under the influence of the outside world.

Bio

Marie Gemrichová is a PhD student at the Centre for Irish Studies at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures. She studied both her BA and MA at the department and during her MA program also spent an academic year at Trinity College Dublin as part of the Erasmus+ program. Her MA thesis discussed the novels of Dermot Healy. Her PhD research focuses on the topic of personal and communal memory in post-agreement Northern Irish novel and tracks the development in the portrayal of the conflict in the narratives. She has presented

papers at different international conferences. Currently she is an editor of *The Protagonist*, a student academic journal, and the PhD representative in EFACIS.

Luca Bertolani Azeredo (Scuola Superiore Meridionale)

The Children of the Empire. Youth organisations in British Ireland between imperialism and anti-colonialism, 1909-1916.

Early XX century Europe saw the establishment of paramilitary bodies as a reaction to what were considered modern social problems such as strikes, individualism, and the loss of physical culture. In Great Britain, Robert Baden-Powell decided to establish a body of scouts. His idea – in reaction to the imperial and military crisis of the Boer War – was to raise and drill a new stronger generation of citizens, loyal imperial soldiers for the forthcoming European war. In reaction and in extension to this body, Ireland witnessed the establishment of two young paramilitary bodies: the nationalist Na Fianna Eireann, and the conservative Young Citizen Volunteers.

Na Fianna were founded in 1909 in Dublin as a counterreaction to the imperial Boy Scouts to shape the revolutionary generation, rise up, and establish a free Ireland. They managed to expand beyond Dublin, enlisting some thousands of members. The Young Citizen Volunteers were formed in 1912 in Belfast with the aim of continuing Baden-Powell's ideals with the older boys giving them a sense of discipline and municipal nationalism. They failed to expand and were later incorporated into the Ulster Volunteer Force.

This paper will analyse and compare the two movements, taking into consideration which role religion, social status, and different backgrounds had in the shaping of the young Irish generations. It will also be considered their establishment, the propaganda and culture production, the members' social backgrounds, the relationship with the later adult paramilitary bodies, and their participation in the Irish Revolution and in the Great War.

Bio

Luca Bertolani Azeredo is a PhD Student in Global History and Governance at the Scuola Superiore Meridionale. He got his MA in Historical Sciences at the University of Padua and his BA in History at the University of Bologna. After a semester in Belfast as a Visiting Student at Queen's University Belfast, he is currently a Visiting Student in Cork at University College, Cork. His research focuses on the development and interaction of Irish paramilitary bodies in

the early XX Century to connect the constitutional and labour struggles, with a common and shared culture of political violence, and overcoming the brutalization theory that points at the Great War as a watershed.

Constantin Torve (Queen's University Belfast)

Mapping the Molly Maguires. Tracing an agrarian secret society in the Ulster-Connacht borderlands and beyond, 1844-1870.

While the study of Irish agrarian secret societies has received increased attention over the past two decades, the Molly Maguires remain poorly understood. Despite their cultural significance, which is expressed in various folk ballads and a connection to the Ulster tradition of mummery, as well as their important role in social conflict in the early years of the Famine, little effort has been made to trace their activities. Where they are mentioned in academic research, it is usually as a prelude to their namesake in America, and rarely transcends the realm of speculation. Accordingly, many questions about this society remain unanswered. These include notably their religious background, organisational structures, relationship with other societies like the Ribbonmen, and their social base in a changing socio-economic environment which increasingly featured pockets of industrial labour.

This paper will chart and visualise the phenomenon, as well as providing some discussion of existing popular and academic interpretations of the phenomenon based on the results. I will draw on newspapers and the Outrage Papers, using QGIS to map every single incident ascribed to the Molly Maguires in the Ulster-Connacht borderlands. My research will thus provide new insights into the socio-economic origins and context of this previously elusive agrarian secret society, focusing on their relationship with physical space, their social class, and the question of sectarianism. The results will contribute to ongoing scholarly debates regarding spatiality and territoriality in colonial insurgency contexts, as well as their later representation and remembrance in Ireland and its diaspora.

Bio

Constantin Torve has completed an MA in Modern History and an MSc in Political Science at Uppsala University. He is currently a first year PhD student at Queen's University Belfast, funded by the Northeast and Northern Ireland Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE DTP) of

the UK Economic and Social Research Council. His research on 19th century political violence in Ireland combines established approaches to history from below with quantitative and digital methods.

Karen Hanrahan (University of Brighton)

“Life depends on the liver”: education as salvation in the lives of nuns and former nuns

The considerable (unpaid) contribution to education made by women religious, and the sense of a dual vocation (a ‘call’ from God and a ‘call’ to teach) experienced by many sisters, has been noted by scholars. Drawing on the oral testimonies of two nuns and four former nuns (one of whom is my mother), I explore how these women were shaped by, and in turn actively shaped, the educational mission of their congregation. All of the women entered before the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and their life stories offer rich insights into how their teaching order became established in Ireland and how its own growth is closely allied to the development of female education. These women held senior roles in teaching and educational leadership in Ireland and abroad and their testimony illustrates how they navigated the tensions they sometimes experienced between their two callings. Whilst such conflicts often existed on an internal level, it also meant working with, or against, policies laid down by their Superiors or by the Minister for Education. One of the striking themes emerging from the women’s life stories is their steadfast commitment to teaching, and those who left retained this professional identity after leaving. I argue that their own access to Higher Education played a critical role in developing their sense of agency, enabling them to transcend preconiliar beliefs around obedience to which they had been conditioned and helping them to cope with change. Education enabled movement, socially, geographically, spiritually, and psychologically, and for some these shifts within the self ultimately engendered a move beyond convent walls.

Bio

Karen Hanrahan a principal lecturer in Education at the University of Brighton, UK. Her AHRC funded doctoral research is located at the interface between a number of disciplines (life history and life writing, Irish Studies, sociology and narrative psychology) and draws on narrative and life history methodologies to explore the lives of former Irish nuns. Her research is concerned with representations of the past and how ethical memory can challenge the imposing ideologies of the present. Other research interests include the role of reflective practice in professional

becoming and how biographical and arts-based methodologies can lead to transformative learning in Higher Education.

Tiffany Thompson (Boston College)

Raids, Riots, Refugees: (Re)Writing Women into the (Re)Introduction of Internment in Northern Ireland

Burnt-out homes and barricaded neighborhoods in urban centers like Belfast and Derry left entire families displaced as early as August 1969 and throughout the 1970s, but it was overwhelmingly women, usually with children in tow, who fled the North. Through an analysis of women who fled Belfast in the aftermath of the re-introduction of internment on 9 August 1971, this project focuses on the opportunities for and the limits of women's agency as constituted by the state and charitable institutions they encountered within Northern Ireland's borders and beyond them. It also interrogates the ways that gendered hierarchies of power shaped the Troubles as conceptions of normative masculinity and femininity conditioned the lived realities of violence as well as contemporary understandings and representations of violence's meanings. This research, therefore, recenters women and their place in this story, asking about their experiences of urban violence, displacement, and life in refugee camps.

Bio

Tiffany Thompson (she/her) is a Ph.D. Candidate in the History Department at Boston College. Her research interests include women and gender, migrations and diasporas, and civil rights and the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Her dissertation which examines gender, violence, and the dislocation and migration of urban families during the first decade of the Troubles.

Paddy Brennan (University of Liverpool)

Clogging up the System: Consumption and Self-Starvation in the Fiction of Sally Rooney and Niamh Campbell

A 2019 article in the *Irish Times* criticises the work of Sally Rooney, arguing that her “wildly popular and accessible novels seem to glorify unhealthy eating habits, and link desirability or beauty with the characters' tiny frames.” This paper challenges this reductive view of thinness

and food rejection, and seeks to develop a more nuanced view of these themes through its reading of Rooney's novels *Conversations with Friends* (2017) and *Beautiful World, Where are You* (2021). These novels are read alongside the works of Rooney's contemporary, Niamh Campbell, whose novels *This Happy* (2020) and *We Were Young* (2022) both broach similar themes.

The paper views food denial through the prism of the *künstlerroman* genre, examining the implications of Rooney and Campbell's mutual foregrounding of young, female artists and intellectuals. While the spectacle of self-starvation can be seen to serve a performative function, it is also indicative of a desire to privilege consciousness over and above the needs of the material body. Neither Rooney nor Campbell glorify this attempted transcendence, but rather, both reveal the harmful consequences of estrangement from the body and ironise their heroines' attempts to elude corporeal needs. Moreover, both Rooney and Campbell depict the act of consumption as inextricably bound up in capitalist modes of production. Thus, Through their characters' rejection of food, both authors pose a critique of Ireland's neoliberal status quo and its purported naturalness or inevitability.

Bio

Paddy Brennan is a Blair Chair scholar at the University of Liverpool's Institute of Irish Studies. He is currently researching a PhD on the textualized body in Irish fiction. On the university's Continuing Education programme, he has led the course 'Scandal and Censorship in Irish Literature'.

Danielle O'Sullivan (Mary Immaculate College)

“Being alone with her is like opening a door away from normal life and then closing it behind them”: Intimacy in Sally Rooney's novels

Sally Rooney's novels represent varying levels of intimacy between her characters. Reading her work provides an opportunity to look at the various intimacies and how they differ from relationship to relationship. In *Normal People*, Marianne and Connell share a romantic intimacy that neither of them shares with their other partners throughout the novel. Similarly, in *Conversations with Friends*, Frances' relationship with Nick is very different to her relationship with Bobbi. These characters illustrate the varying levels of intimacy within romantic relationships.

This paper will discuss the definition of intimacy and its variations as depicted in Sally Rooney's writing, specifically in *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*. Using the work of Lauren Berlant, Lynn Jamieson, and Caroline Magennis, this paper will describe the scenes of intimacy described in Rooney's novels, specifically romantic intimacies, and the varying levels of shame and legitimacies associated with these intimacies. Berlant defines intimacy as communicating 'with the sparsest of signs and gestures' (Berlant, 1998, p. 281). Jamieson describes intimacy as 'a very specific sort of knowing, loving and being close to another person...[with] emphasis... on mutual disclosure, constantly revealing your inner thoughts and feelings to each other' (Cooke, 2013, p. 138). For Magennis, intimacy is a term that is 'used for a variety of acts, practices and orientations...as a euphemism to cover a range of ambiguous, usually sexual, acts... [and as] a way of talking about that which is hidden or behind closed doors' (Magennis, 2021, p. 16).

This paper will also explore intimacies that are 'silenced and liminal' in the novels, including feminist and queer approaches to intimate scenes and also scenes from the novels that involve 'under-age sex, BDSM, ... rape, and same-sex fellatio' (Cooke, 2013, pp 5 & 11). The study of intimate relationships within novels is important, as Magennis and Cooke point out, reading or writing fictional intimacies serves as a means of understanding our own. Looking at the specific intimacies within a relationship can also tell us more about the relationship as a whole. It allows inside the characters' minds, giving us information on the healthy and unhealthy elements of the relationship and what this says about the characters themselves. This project is part of a wider study on the effect of childhood trauma on adult romantic relationships depicted in contemporary Irish women's writing.

Bio

Danielle O'Sullivan is a first year PhD student in Mary Immaculate College. She completed an MA in Modern English Literature in 2021, and a BA in English and History in 2020, both in Mary Immaculate College. Her research interests are contemporary Irish women's writing, trauma theory, and feminist theory.

Sofía Alférez Mendía (University of Almería)

Female Sexual Conduct in Sally Rooney's *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*: Resilience or Resistance.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the sexual behaviour – masochist or sadist – that Rooney's female characters adopt during their sexual encounters with other male characters. As subjects who belong to the Post-Celtic Tiger society, their personalities are characterised by traits of guilt, responsibility and shame,¹ which happen to be three characteristics that the current neoliberal system seems to reinforce as well; such a reinforcement is carried out through the promotion of resilience, one of the main principles of neoliberalism par excellence.² For this purpose, attention will be paid to the treatment of vulnerability in such novels; characters' paternalistic conception – or maybe misconception – of their own vulnerability as a mere frailty will be analysed following Judith Butler's theorization of vulnerability as an actual virtue: as 'enter[ing] into agency' instead of opposing it.³ Furthermore, to the methodological corpus will be added Hannah Arendt's account on agency and action in which being an agent means both being an 'actor and sufferer'.⁴ As argued by Sarah Bracke, the neoliberalist understanding of vulnerability precisely attacks this mentality, and it is affecting feminism too in that 'the fragility of normative femininity is replaced with a new ideal geared towards overcoming [...] the fragility and vulnerability they have learned to embody and to believe'.⁵ This will be made even more interesting by taking into account Rooney's own ideas on this facet of post-feminism: 'I came into politics [...] through feminism, [...] seeing female independence as a very important goal of the feminist movement, [...] and now I just don't believe that anymore, I don't believe in the idea of independent [invulnerable] people. [...] We all rely on each other's labour all the time, I mean, for the food we eat, for the clothes that we wear...'.⁶

¹ Marcus Free and Clare Scully, 'The Run of Ourselves: Shame, Guilt and Confession in Post-Celtic Tiger Irish Media.' *International Journal of Culture Studies* 21.3 (2016); Barros, 'Sally Rooney's *Normal People*: the millennial novel of formation in recessionary Ireland', 177.

² Sarah Bracke, 'Bouncing Back: Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience' in *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 52-75.

³ Judith Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance' in *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 25.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 184.

⁵ Bracke, 'Bouncing Back: Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience', 62. ⁶ Sally Rooney, 'Sally Rooney on Writing with Marxism | Louisiana Channel', *YouTube* (2019).

Bio

Sofía Alférez (she/her) is a 2nd-year PhD candidate at the university of Almería and holds a BA and MA in English Studies. She has been awarded a predoctoral grant from the Research Plan 2023 of the University of Almería, and she is conducting her thesis on Sally Rooney and the treatment of vulnerability in her works. Her interests lie within the fields of Irish literature, philosophy, gender studies and celebrity culture.

Taylor Follett (University College Dublin)

“Fragmenting without her mother’s ordering gaze”: Family breakdown in the contemporary Irish novel

This paper interrogates the role of family in contemporary Irish literature, examining the way memory and place are used to construct a shared narrative of family life. This will be done by reading *An Unravelling* (2019) by Elske Rahill and *The Green Road* (2015) by Anne Enright, paying careful attention to the semantic gaps between the construction of Irish family by sociopolitical and legal entities, and its enactment in the narrated experience of Irish families. Using McGlynn and Ryan’s discussion of economic space within *The Green Road*, this paper will develop this line of inquiry by considering this alongside inheritance and family as financial practice in *An Unravelling*. Using sociological studies from *The New ‘Irish’ Family* (2014) and character theory such as Marta Figlerowicz’s *Flat Protagonists* (2016) as key theoretical lenses, this paper argues that these novels depict a breakdown of the stereotypical ‘nuclear’ family characterized by a failure to construct shared memory, and emotional removal from shared space. It argues that the polyphonic narratives in these novels depict solipsistic approaches to family interaction that counteract attempts toward cohesive construction of the shared past, illuminating the nodes at which the family begins to falter. It discusses the consequences of this failure before turning to the novels’ narrative endings, taking an approach informed by feminist and queer theory to ultimately argue that the ‘traditional’ family structure is portrayed as precarious, but not without opportunities for reassembly.

Bio

Taylor Follett (he/they) is a Ph.D. candidate at University College Dublin, where he researches women’s relationship to the family in Irish novels post-2010. Taylor’s research interests include contemporary Irish writing, LGBTQ+ representation in Irish literature and beyond, and

queer and trans* theory. He has previously published on Nicole Flattery's short stories and Emilie Pine's essays. Taylor holds a B.A. in English from U.C. Berkeley and an M.Phil. in Irish Writing from Trinity College Dublin. He lives in Dublin with his husband and pets.

Nathalie Lamprecht (Charles University)

Vivian in not-so Wonderland: Looking for Belonging in Caitriona Lally's *Eggshells*

A sense of feeling or being out of place is pervasive throughout many Irish novels written by women in recent years. None plays with this sense of unbelonging more than Caitriona Lally's *Eggshells*. Believing that she is a changeling, protagonist Vivian surveys the city of Dublin in search of 'thin places,' those places where our world and that of the fae are closest to each other – in short, she searches for belonging. However, rather than a fairy child put in the place of a human child, Vivian could be described as an affect alien, as defined by Sara Ahmed: "affect aliens are those who are alienated by virtue of how they are affected by the world or how they affect others in the world" (Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 164). This paper aims to analyse Vivian's relationship to the spaces that surround her, both those she sees as home and those she has to remind herself are "safe safe safe," (Lally, *Eggshells*, 14) as well as how those spaces influence and are influenced by her feelings. Indeed, it will be argued that in *Eggshells*, emotions are oftentimes reflected in and narrated through space. Using aspects of Sara Ahmed's work on emotions and in particular happiness, this paper will look at how unhappiness and unbelonging are configured in this narrative, paying particular attention to Vivian's interactions both with the people and the places she encounters.

Bio

Nathalie Lamprecht is a PhD candidate at Charles University's Centre for Irish Studies. Her research, which is supported by the Charles University Grant Agency, examines the intersections of gender, space, and identity in recent Irish novels written by and about women. Nathalie holds a BA in English and American Studies from the University of Vienna, as well as an MA in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures with a specialisation in Irish Studies from Charles University. She has presented at several international conferences and is deputy editor of the student academic journal *The Protagonist*.

Franca Leitner (Irish Studies Würzburg)

Atopias in Post-Celtic Tiger Literature

In her chapter “Atopia / Non-place” in *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space* (2017), Siobhan Carroll explains that “the word ‘atopia’ denotes a space antithetical to habitable place” (159). In her discussion, she further distinguishes between natural atopias, such as the ocean or outer space, and man-made atopias, such as highways – spaces created by humans where no form of dwelling is possible. This paper will discuss two spaces in contemporary Irish literature which can be regarded as man-made atopias: the ghost estate as portrayed by Conor O’Callaghan in his novel *Nothing on Earth* (2018) and the industrial Ballymount estate in the centre of Rob Doyle short story “No Man’s Land”, which was published as part of his collection *This is the Ritual* in 2016. Both spaces are disconnected from any sense of *place* in the sense of a habitable place or a dwelling place – instead, the spaces endanger people’s lives. In *Nothing on Earth*, a family, living in a ‘show house’ on a ghost estate, is isolated by the estate’s remote location in a landscape that becomes more and more dystopian. In this space, their lives become precarious as members of the family begin to disappear one after the other. In “No Man’s Land”, the industrial estate first seems as a refuge to a young man suffering from depression – yet, the story reveals that he can only recover once he leaves the site of the estate, a space connected with death and despair, behind. I will argue that the concept of atopia in post-Celtic Tiger literature speaks of a fundamental insecurity when it comes to the transformation of space in Ireland and expresses a concern about the loss of habitable places both during and after the Celtic Tiger period.

Bio

Franca Leitner is a PhD candidate in Irish Studies at the University of Würzburg (ISWÜ). She graduated from the University of Freiburg with an M.A. in British and North American Cultural Studies in 2022. Her PhD dissertation will focus on the representations of precarity and homelessness in Irish fiction of the post-Celtic Tiger period.

Soltan Jaber (University of Szeged)

Hecuba in the Contemporary World: Marina Carr's Usage of Reported Speech

Marina Carr relocates Euripides's Hecuba from a women-empowering myth into a twenty-first century colonial piece. Her choice stems from the fact that she "writes in Greek" (McGuinness) and highlights "contemporary issues through the plight of a marginalised, gendered individual" (Kurdi). Her rewriting centers around the Irish colonial struggle through introducing a new, vulnerable Hecuba who despises war and reveals colonial motifs. What Carr also does is employ reported speech throughout the play to replace dialogue that is "at the heart of every dramatic encounter, whether in theatre or in the classroom" (O'Neil). Her usage of reported speech invites the audience to investigate the different motifs behind it. In Carr's adaptation, the whole play is written in reported speech. Carr, I assume, experiments with a new narration method that was exclusive to messengers as a part of their duty of delivering a message. She instead reconstructs this way of narrating to include monarchs and noblemen like Agamemnon and Odysseus. Her play centers around ancient colonial motifs and agenda that still exist in our days. Furthermore, according to Greg Myers, "reported speech both depicts the experience of the original utterance and detaches reported utterance from the reporting speaker" which contributes to the story's objectivity. With that said, my research will focus on the motifs behind using reported speech as a way of voicing the silenced, providing evidence, shifting the frame, and acquitting Hecuba.

Bio

My name is Soltan Jaber, a second year PhD student in Comparative Literature at the University of Szeged. My research examines, comparatively, Irish adaptations of Greek mythology in the last three decades. Some of the names I work on are Marina Carr, Seamus Heaney, and Frank McGuinness. I try to analyse the circumstances that led to these adaptations and study them from a modern perspective. I finished my Master's degree at the University of Pecs where I also analysed the case of Samuel Beckett's revival of the Greek myth of Sisyphus in his theatre of the absurd.

Klára Witzany Hutková (Charles University)

Medea in the Midlands: Death, Swans, and the Mélusine Legend in Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*...

This paper investigates Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats*... (1998), a transposition of Euripides' tragedy *Medea*, with focus on intertextuality and folklore references. Introducing Euripides' play, the article analyses Carr's departures from the original in terms of narrative, as well as investigating the Irish cultural context into which the tragedy has been transposed. The main focus is the folklore tradition of the mélusine legend, which is investigated along with the motif of swans and the *bean sí* figure. Postulating Hester Swane as an older version of the *cailleach*, an Otherworld woman of the Macha, fairy, or mermaid wife type, the paper investigates the implications for reading the Medea myth in Carr's play.

Bio

Klára Witzany Hutková is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Irish Studies (Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures) at Charles University in Prague. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on the theatre of Marina Carr and the cultural heritage of ancient Greece and is supported by funding from the Charles University Grant Agency (GA UK). Other research interests include women prose writers and Irish folklore. Klára received a Master's degree in Irish studies from Charles University in 2021 and an undergraduate degree in Ancient history from the University of Edinburgh in 2015. She was a visiting student at University College Dublin (2021–22), Trinity College Dublin (2020–21), and Université de Bourgogne (2013–14). She has presented at international conferences and is a member of the editorial board of *The Protagonist* and editorial assistant of *Litteraria Pragensia*.

Ciara Moloney (University of Limerick)

The Intertextual Presence of Seán O'Casey in Martin McDonagh's Irish Plays

Martin McDonagh's Irish-set plays are replete with references to Irish theatre, with critics noting the influence of JM Synge (Richards, 2003), Samuel Beckett (Roche, 2004), Tom Murphy (Wiegand, 2018), and even Lady Gregory (Murray, 2006; Roche, 2004). But largely ignored has been Seán O'Casey's influence on McDonagh: the most significant scholarship on this connection is Paul Murphy's critique of both for their use of humour in traumatic situations

(2006). But Seán O’Casey’s plays, and his Dublin Trilogy – Juno and the Paycock, The Plough and the Stars, Shadow of a Gunman – in particular, are a key intertext in McDonagh’s Leenane (Beauty Queen of Leenane, A Skull in Connemara, The Lonesome West) and Aran Island (Cripple of Inishmaan, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, and arguably The Banshees of Inisherin) Trilogies. O’Casey’s scepticism of Irish nationalist orthodoxy, his caustic wit, and his attention to class, disability and lives otherwise on the fringe of Irish society feed into McDonagh’s wild intercultural alchemy. As an Irish diasporic writer, McDonagh is also specifically engaging with Irish diaspora adaptations of O’Casey, including John Ford’s 1937 film adaptation of The Plough and the Stars and Alfred Hitchcock’s 1930 film of Juno and the Paycock. Both Ford and Hitchcock were deeply unhappy with their adaptations; McDonagh re-engages with O’Casey from his position in the Irish diaspora.

Bio

Ciara Moloney is a PhD candidate at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, where she is in receipt of the Mary Immaculate College Doctoral Award. Her research focuses on interculturalism and diaspora in Martin McDonagh's work for stage and screen. She contributed a chapter on Anna Marie Hall to *The Golden Thread: Irish Women Playwrights, 1716-2016* (Liverpool University Press, 2021). Her film and television criticism has appeared in publications including Cineaste, Fangoria, Paste, and Current Affairs.

Jie Wang (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Reconstructing the “Prison House”: An Analysis of Emily Lawless’ *A Chelsea Householder*

A Chelsea Householder represents the development of the artist heroine, Muriel Ellis, from the day when she inherits a property at Chelsea to the moment when she decides to leave Chelsea and to step into marriage. Furthermore, the novel narrates how Muriel, the financially and spiritually independent heroine, struggles to negotiate between the patriarchal expectations and gender norms, on the one hand, and her artistic ambitions, on the other. Employing the feminist theory Rita Felski proposes in *Literature after Feminism*, the paper analyzes how Ellis is torn between a more conventional feminine self which obeys the patriarchal rules and norms and a newly awakened artistic self, which pursues her dream of becoming a professional painter. Using Gilbert and Gubar’s well-known binary, one could also see this division as the struggles

between an “Angel” and a “Monster” self, whereby the “Monster” suffers a lot to survive under the pressure brought by male hegemony in the late 19th and the early 20th century, which demands that she chooses between being a wife and being an artist. Muriel’s attempt to achieve a balance between her social duty and artistic dream will also be read in the context of other contemporary artist novels which depict the severe difficulties female artist characters faced in their struggle to carve out a place for themselves and the inevitable ends to which they were often doomed. In this way, the paper aims to clarify how Lawless both uses and revises the conventional genre of artist novel.

Bio

Jie Wang is a PhD student at the Faculty of Arts at KU Leuven. Born in China, she obtained her B.A degree in English Language and Literature in Yunnan University in 2019 and her M.A degree in Irish Studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2022. In April 2020, she won Government of Ireland International Education Scholarship. Then from January to July 2021, she studied in the School of English, Drama and Film in University College Dublin as an exchange student. At present, she researches the Irish female artist novels from the 1880s to the present, under the supervision of Professor Elke D’hoker. Her research interests lie in the area of modern and contemporary British and Irish literature, narrative theory, genre theory and gender studies.

Declan Houten (University of Liverpool)

“Life is Suspended in Doubt”: *Exiles*, the Revolutionary Period and the Early Drafts of *Finnegans Wake*

This paper will examine the artistic challenges posed by the period of 1916-1924 in Irish history. Here, the Irish artist must confront the dissolution of the teleology of Home Rule into the fragmentation of the revolutionary period, Civil War and partition. James Joyce, is a crucial figure in this regard whose complex works can help us understand the aesthetic legacy of this historical period. Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a liminal document of Irish history — set in 1904 and intimately concerned with the legacy of nineteenth-century politics, it also subtly engages with the tumult of Irish revolution. Yet the early sketches of *Finnegans Wake* see Joyce rip up the aesthetic method of the recently-published *Ulysses* and drastically rewrite the tradition of revolutionary art.

This paper will examine the early extracts of the *Wake* which appeared in *Transatlantic Review* and *transition*, comparing them to the stylistically unorthodox latter episodes of *Ulysses*. It will suggest that in the *Wake*, Joyce pioneered a new artistic response to address the transformed revolutionary chronology whose memory formed a new aspect of the ‘conscience’ of his ‘race’. While stylistically innovative, the liminal historical status of episodes such as ‘Cyclops’ and ‘Circe’ in *Ulysses* conversely limits their ability to comment radically on these national transformations. In abandoning the nineteenth-century historical concerns which contribute to *Ulysses*’ liminality, *Finnegans Wake* creates an aesthetic without boundaries which is perfectly adapted to the overriding uncertainty of the revolutionary period.

Bio

Declan Houten is currently a PhD student at the University of Liverpool. He is currently researching the political aesthetics of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and how they contribute towards his later change of artistic strategy in the early sketches which would eventually form part of *Finnegans Wake*.

Margaret Bonass Madden (Dundalk Institute of Technology)

“The power of ambiguity in complicating loss”⁶: Saying Goodbye Without a Body in Donal Ryan’s *From a Low and Quiet Sea* (2018).

The Irish funeral and wake, along with their rituals and traditions, allow for the progression through the stages of grief and enable the bereaved to come to terms with their loss. However, when there are no remains to bury or cremate, the mourners are denied their natural progression through their grief. The bereaved are stuck in the uncertain phase of liminality, where they are denied certainty and are suffering an “ambiguous loss” (Boss, 1999, 5). Applying the work of Pauline Boss on ambiguous loss to contemporary Irish literature affords an extended understanding of the importance we place on funerals, wakes and the opportunity to say goodbye and how we navigate through the liminal space.

Boss states that while ambiguous loss has been “mostly silent” in clinical settings: “the phenomenon has always been the stuff of opera, literature and the theatre” (Boss, 1999, 5). In literature, as in real life, there are not always answers or resolution, but there is insight into the

⁶ Boss, P. *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 13.

need for the rituals and traditions we associate with death: the wake, the funeral, and the opportunity to say goodbye. This paper will examine ambiguous loss in Donal Ryan's *From A Low and Quiet Sea* (2018). The protagonist has no bodies to bury, and this compounds their grief. It will discuss the theory of ambiguous loss - and its uncertainty - in the liminal journey through grief.

Bio

Margaret Bonass Madden is three months to completion of her Ph.D in Humanities in Dundalk Institute of Technology, Co. Louth, Ireland. Her area of interest is contemporary Irish fiction, in particular the area of Irish funerary culture: grief, tradition and the liminal space. She is also a book reviewer for the Irish Times, Sunday Independent and LMFm Radio. She presented a paper on Irish Funerary Traditions at the 2022 Presov University Conference on Place, Region, and Local/Indigenous Cultures (Cultural Identities) in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures and presented her research at the 7th PhD seminar organized by the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies in collaboration with EFACIS and the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe. She presented at the ACIS Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference, Hunter College, New York and at two symposiums at DkIT. Her paper on The Liminal Space of Covid19 Lockdown in Roddy Doyle's *Life Without Children* (2020) has been published in *Dealga*, the Irish Journal of Humanities and Social Science and her article entitled 'Anne Enright's *The Gathering*: The Five Stages of Grief in the Liminal Space' was published in Vol. 7 (2023) of *Aigne Journal*. She was recently the guest expert of the successful podcast series *Why Would You Tell Me That?*, where she revealed the bizarre wake games and rituals of the Irish Wake.

Claire Palzer (University of Vienna)

"How About Us?" – Hearing Unheard Voices in Spoken Word Poetry in Ireland

Spoken word poetry in Ireland has been flourishing in the 21st century but is currently still conspicuously under-researched. A notable exception to this absence of critical literature is the work done by Anne Mulhall on the work of women and marginalized poets and poet-performers in contemporary Ireland (2020; 2021). I expand on her work on the politics of the spoken word artform by devoting more space to the performed poem as a situated practice which demands a methodology that incorporates and moves beyond conventional poetic analysis (cf. Novak 2011).

In my paper, I analyze the poem “How About Us?” by the spoken word artist Felispeaks. The specific performance in question was part of the event “A Night in the Key of 8”, which took place in the Olympia Theatre in Dublin on April 23rd 2017 as a fundraiser for the Repeal Project. This performance offers critiques of patriarchal violence, white Irish feminism, the literary establishment and the erasures and silences perpetuated by these systems. I argue that the interrogation of these notions happens on the level of the embodied and vocally expressed performance as well as on the textual plane. I claim that the combination of these levels leads to an incisive activist intervention which can also elicit a powerful affective response in the viewer. Additionally, I posit that attentiveness to the multiple modes of meaning-making in spoken word poetry – going beyond a reading of the written word towards a seeing and hearing of the performance in context – produces more comprehensive, artform-appropriate analyses. This will be vital as Irish studies extends its eyes and ears to spoken word poetry.

Bio

Claire Palzer is a PhD researcher at the University of Vienna, working as part of the ERC-funded Poetry Off the Page project led by Dr. Julia Lajta-Novak. Her doctoral work is concerned with spoken word poetry performances in Ireland from the 1990s to the present day. On the basis of these performances as well as self-conducted interviews with participants in the scene, she aims to write an account of spoken word poetry in Ireland that is attentive to the particularities of this performative and situated art form. She has had a life-long passion for Irish literature and culture which was cemented during her year abroad at University College Dublin and resulted in her diploma thesis on Irish women’s fiction and the Easter Rising.

Clodagh Heffernan (University College Cork)

“Soft Boy” Vulnerabilities: An Aesthetical Analysis of Drugs and Love in Kojaque’s “Midnight Flower”.

This paper engages in a technical analysis of a popular Irish rap track – “Midnight Flower” – an early piece from one of Ireland’s best-respected MCs: Dublin-born Kevin Smith, who goes by the professional hip hop moniker of Kojaque. As Colin Graves has observed, Kojaque’s tracks emit “a languid, oozing, nocturnal flow that’s part hip hop, part poetry; each track a

novel in itself, a world of words, images and stories that paint a picture of working-class Ireland delivered in his signature Dublin drawl”. Kojaque co-established Soft Boy Records in 2015, stating that “the motto of the label – Stay Soft – the whole idea of that is to not harden up, not to get shelled in”. His lyrics sidestep the convention of masculinist posturing in rap music, instead opting to take a “Soft Boy” approach to discussing the emotional vulnerabilities of young men. The lyrics of “Midnight Flower” detail the speaker’s melancholy after the female subject of his affections “[departs] just as quick as she came”. The rap/poem (to use Alexs Pate’s phrase) sees speaker’s attempts to construct a façade of masculine resilience in the wake of his lover’s departure; in order to so, he self-medicates with alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and prescription drugs. In the final verse, the speaker drops the pretence of emotional stoicism, now freely articulating his vulnerabilities and desires: “You’re like a dream I can’t shake for the life of me / Every night you arrive in my mind to tackle me”. This paper reads these issues in “Midnight Flower” through what Pate calls “the elements of rap poetry”, referring to texture, imagery, and language.

Bio

Clodagh Heffernan is a working-class scholar and an awardee of the Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scholarship. She holds a BA in English and History from Maynooth University, and an MA in Irish Writing and Film from University College Cork. She is currently pursuing her doctorate at UCC, under the title “Protest Writing and Dissent Culture in Contemporary Working-Class Ireland: Poetics of Defiance”.

Lauren Cassidy (University College Dublin)

“Call me Éire and Weed All the Aryans out of Your Area”: Irish Feminist Mythmaking in Anne Enright’s *The Green Road* and Denise Chaila’s Music

This paper contends that Anne Enright and Denise Chaila disinter a key figure from Ireland’s cultural history: the sovereignty goddess. In “Black Bodies and ‘Headless Hookers’” Ronit Lentin argues that while “[w]oman’s body creates and contains birth nations and demarcates territories ... woman – the gendered other of modernity – is often deleted from state protection and right”. A transhistorical literary motif, the sovereignty goddess continues to symbolise the paradoxical relationship between women’s bodies, the land, and women’s lack of autonomy over their bodies in twenty-first century Ireland.

Enright's *The Green Road* (2015) analyses an ageing, almost obsolete Mother Ireland during the Celtic Tiger. While Rosaleen (the novel's sovereignty goddess) attempts to keep a grasp on a new generation, her relationship with Denholm, a refugee from Kenya, and an increasingly globalised Ireland is deeply uncomfortable. Chaila, a Zambian and Irish rapper pioneers hybrid, multicultural sovereignty myths through her music. In her songs "Anseo", "Might Be" and "Dual Citizenship", Chaila cultivates regal imagery, uses bilingual lyrics and produces transnational mythologies (which include reference to Greek, African and Irish mythic traditions).

This paper establishes a dialogue between Enright and Chaila's work, interrogating the nexus between gender, racism, and contemporary Irish exceptionalism. I will apply Bracha Ettinger's theory of the "matrix" to Enright's *The Green Road* and Chaila's songs, evincing the co-existence of womb and tomb in their texts. I argue that Enright and Chaila mourn the nightmare of Ireland's hetero-patriarchal history to make space in the contemporary cultural landscape, producing new feminist sovereignty myths for the modern state.

Bio

Lauren Cassidy is a final-year PhD student at University College Dublin in the School of English, Drama and Film. Her research explores contemporary Irish feminist writing, and its reproduction of a key figure from Ireland's cultural history: the sovereignty goddess. Lauren's project analyses novels by Iris Murdoch, Emma Donoghue and Anne Enright, as well as songs by Denise Chaila, arguing that their works queer and transnationalise the sovereignty goddess for a changing nation. Lauren is interested in feminist psychoanalysis, queer theory, postcolonial studies, chronopolitics and the digital humanities. She currently works as a research assistant on the ERC VICTEUR project.