



## Voices from the Margins: Ireland Seen and Unseen

The 7th International Postgraduate Conference in Irish Studies

### PANEL 1: UNCOVERING HIDDEN HISTORIES

#### WOMEN OF WAR OR PEACE? CONSTRUCTING FEMININE IDENTITIES IN IRISH PROPAGANDA 1914-18

DION, AIMÉE (UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL, QUEBEC)

During the Great War, propaganda relied on traditional gender roles to elicit male enlistment. Irish women were the subject of many recruitment posters, yet their true roles in the war effort were largely underrepresented. Relegated to roles as caregivers or victims, women were represented in the margins of Ireland's war effort; yet images of women provided the *raison d'être* for male enlistment, urging—even commanding—men to defend them.

These passive representations nonetheless served to command men to go to war, challenging the notion of women as peacemakers. Erin thus appeared as a mother, martyr and mobilizer, as the fabric of the Irish nation was embedded in gendered conceptions of the war effort. The trope of Pax Femina was woven into nationalist discourse to convince men to protect the home and hearth. Both in official propaganda and republican counterpropaganda efforts, women were cast as a moral and emotional keystone of the Irish cause, representing the nation's past and future in order to provide a potent appeal for men to fight.

The gendered construction of combat motivation is critical in understanding competing official and republican war cultures that fought over what Erin meant to Ireland's national discourse and future. To what extent were women seen in visual war cultures? How did female iconography in (counter-)propaganda reflect the construction of the Irish nation itself? My paper will focus on the ways Irish propaganda saw and did not see women and their roles in the war effort between 1914-18.

**Bio:** Aimée Dion is a PhD candidate and part-time lecturer in History at Université Laval (Québec, Canada). Author of *Affiches de guerre, guerre d'affiches* published at the Presses de l'Université Laval (2024) and recipient of the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, her research focuses on the representation of violence and nationalism in Great War propaganda in French Canada and Ireland. Her thesis adopts a comparative approach to explore the mobilizing force of images and their role in shaping popular imaginaries and political discourse. Through iconographic and discursive analysis of war posters, Dion investigates the construction of visual cultures within the British empire.

## **“REBELS UNDER THE UNION JACK”: REASSESSING LOYALIST RADICALISATION IN THE HOME RULE CRISIS**

BERTOLANI AZEREDO, LUCA (Scuola Superiore Meridionale)

In the historiography of the Irish revolutionary period, the radicalisation and militarisation of the Home Rule Crisis has been overwhelmingly framed through the lens of Nationalist and Republican narratives. However, such a perspective overlooks the role of the Loyalist Unionist movement, which, through the mobilisation of the early paramilitary groups and the later Ulster Volunteer Force, predated and influenced the militarisation of Irish politics.

Despite its pivotal role in shaping the events of the early twentieth century, the Loyalist movement's failure to prevent Home Rule and its later incorporation into the broader political settlement of Northern Ireland led to its removal from dominant historical narratives. Both Nationalist and mainstream Unionist historiographies have largely sidelined its contributions, focusing instead on the successes of the Irish Volunteers and the eventual partition of Ireland. This paper seeks to reinsert the Loyalist Unionist movement into discussions of early twentieth-century Irish paramilitarism, arguing that its strategies, rhetoric, and actions fundamentally altered the political landscape and provided a template later adopted by Nationalist forces.

Drawing on archival sources, including British intelligence reports and contemporary Unionist publications, this research will examine the extent to which the Loyalist organisations, arms procurement, and ideological positioning influenced subsequent Nationalist military formations.

By repositioning the "defeated" side of the Irish Question within scholarly discourse, this paper challenges established narratives and calls for a more balanced historiographical approach to the Home Rule Crisis and the origins of political violence in Ireland.

**Bio:** Luca Bertolani Azeredo is a PhD candidate in Global History and Governance at Scuola Superiore Meridionale. His research focuses on paramilitary culture and political violence in pre-WWI Ireland, exploring the development of Unionist and Nationalist movements and their role in shaping the political and cultural landscape of the period.

## **TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES: DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF ULSTER-SCOTS HERITAGE AT HOME AND ABROAD**

GALLOT, EVA ELISABETH (Université de Caen)

With the recognition of the Ulster-Scots as a national minority within the United Kingdom under the New Decade New Approach Deal in 2020, measures have been drafted in favour of the preservation of the Ulster-Scots tradition. Among the numerous measures agreed upon was the creation of an Office of Identity and Cultural Expression which aims at funding Ulster-Scots projects, but also the appointment of a Commissioner, to promote Ulster-Scots' heritage<sup>1</sup>.

Five years after the signing of the agreement, the promotion of Ulster-Scots' culture in Northern Ireland today, seems compromised, especially as regards the National Museums of Northern Ireland, for example. Indeed, Professor Wesley Hutchinson argued that 'there's been a considerable amount of hostility towards the very idea of an Ulster-Scots culture' and that in academia, there was the idea that simply 'there was no culture'<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, the uncontested role played by eighteenth-century Ulster-Scots in revolutionary America leads the United States to act differently, and to put forward this heritage. One may then notice an important difference in the development and preservation of Ulster-Scots heritage at home in Northern Ireland, and abroad in the US. The purpose of this presentation will be to analyse the various reasons which may explain a significant difference in safeguarding the Ulster-Scots heritage, from these perspectives.

1. New Decade New Approach Deal, p. 16 (full text online).

2. Wesley Hutchinson interviewed by Northern Vision TV about his recent publication entitled *Tracing the Ulster-Scots Imagination* (2018), 1min 09s. Available on YouTube.

**Bio:** Eva Elisabeth Gallot is a PhD student at Université de Caen Normandie in France. Her research is on the Ulster-Scots in revolutionary America, with a focus on representations and recent perceptions of this history in Ulster today. Her Research Director is Professor Linda Garbaye, and her co-supervisor is Lecturer Anne-Catherine De Bouvier, both at Université de Caen Normandie. Eva is also a temporary teacher, and recently gave lectures to Master students, a course written and based on her own preparation, entitled 'Ireland's past relations with two great European powers: Great Britain and France, 1490s-1920s'.

## **VOICES IN THE MARGINALIA: IRISH TRAVELLERS AND THE HISTORICAL ECONOMIC NETWORKS OF THE SOUTHERN U.S. MULE TRADE**

MAYO, MORGAN (University of Galway)

This paper utilizes original primary materials to reconstruct the hidden historical economic networks, roles, and trade routes of Irish Travellers<sup>1</sup> working in the mule trade in the American South between 1865 and 1950, for the first time. After emigrating from Ireland in 1865, a collective of Irish Travellers settled in Georgia, Texas, and Tennessee, where they played a critical role in the American mule trade for over a century. Because of inequitable twentieth-century collection practices, traces of this historically marginalized community exist only in the marginalia of American archives. This project leverages oral histories, census data, draft registrations, photographs, and letters, from the Foxfire Museum in Mountain City, Georgia and the William Ferris Collection at the University of North Carolina to reveal the hidden economic networks of this community. Grounded in scholarship on Irish immigration by Cian McMahon and Pauline Jackson, this paper re-contextualizes nineteenth and twentieth-century American economic and social history, by highlighting how the labor of Irish Travellers shaped U.S. industry trends and narratives of migration and Irish American identity.

Coinciding with the establishment of collections preserving Irish Traveller history at the University of Galway in Ireland, this paper expands this history by amplifying the unheard voices of Irish Travellers in the American South. This paper is a component of the first social and economic history of Irish Travellers in the U.S., making a substantial contribution to the field of Irish Studies. This paper examines how Irish Travellers shaped the American mule industry, leaving a lasting mark on the rural economy of the Southern United States.

1 This abstract utilizes the naming convention “Irish Traveller” as a contemporary descriptor for this community (Irish Traveller Movement). Historical sources often relied on derogatory descriptors, such as, “Irish gypsies,” “Irish tinkers,” and most commonly “Irish mule traders.” These names are exclusively used to describe the nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish American Traveller community. These sources do not refer to “settled” Irish people from the dominant culture who also lived in the American South during this period.

**Bio:** Morgan Mayo is a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Irish Studies at the University of Galway. She is a lecturer at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina. Morgan was the 2023 Southern Studies Research Fellow at the University of North Carolina and a participant of the 2024 University of Notre Dame’s Kylemore Summer School for Irish Studies. Her PhD dissertation reconstructs the social and economic history of Irish Travellers in the rural United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## PANEL 2: STAGING MARGINALISED IDENTITIES

### CONTESTING THE HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE OF THE NATION: FEMALE MARTYRDOM ON THE STAGE

TOGOIRES, ARTHUR (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

As seen with the #WakingTheFeminists movement, women in the theatre field in Ireland have been barred from positions of power and influence, and are less represented than men have been. I argue that this can also be seen in the ways in which the female characters undergoing a process of martyrdom – fighting against a powerful antagonistic force and dying because of it – on the stage have been less often studied as plays that “introduce, confirm or challenge” (Reynolds) the “consensual fiction[s] that organize a community and its relation to authority” (Lloyd)<sup>1</sup> than those with male characters in the same process.

This in turn can be read with the historical fact that real women have been erased from the fights for independence during the beginnings of the Republic in political discourses. Thus, female martyrdom on the stage, from the twenties until today and in Ireland as in Northern Ireland, can be read as a dramaturgy which aims to contest the hegemonic discourse of the nation and by extension may re-write women into its history.

By way of example, two plays of my corpus rewrite the myth of *Antigone*: Tom Paulin’s *The Riot Act* (1985), first staged in Derry, and Brendan Kennelly’s *Antigone* (1986), first staged in Dublin. In both, she aims to go against the hegemonic discourse of her nation, represented by Creon, to bury her brother, and a new focus on nationalism and feminism emerges. However, I argue that there is still a trace of hegemonic patriarchal discourse in both as *Antigone* is linked with piety and familial duty.

**Bio:** Arthur Togores is currently in his third-year of PHD studies at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France, under the supervision of Professor Pascale Sardin (Bordeaux) and Professor Alexandra Poulain (Sorbonne Nouvelle). His doctorate thesis is on the evolution of the dramaturgy of martyrdom in Irish theatre from the 1920s until today. His work exists at the crossroads of theatre studies, gender studies and postcolonial studies and aims to study this dramaturgy as a discourse of contestation against the hegemonic discourse of the nation.

1 Reynolds, Paige. 2007. *Modernism, Drama and the Audience for Irish Spectacle*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, p. 119 and Lloyd, David, quoted in the above p. 118.

## THE TWO SIDES OF THE COIN OF IRISH WOMANHOOD: OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION IN MARINA CARR'S *WOMAN AND SCARECROW*

HANÇER, MERVE (Muş Alparslan University)

The concept of womanhood has been a frequently explored theme on the Irish stage since the foundation of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. Writers of the Irish Literary Revival, such as W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Padraig Pearse, often associated the ideal woman with Ireland, aligning her with nationalistic ideologies. However, this one-dimensional and romanticized portrayal became increasingly untenable given the evolving socio-cultural landscape. Among contemporary Irish playwrights, Marina Carr stands out as an influential female voice who challenges these idealized and romanticised representations by offering complex and nuanced depictions of female protagonists.

This study explores Marina Carr's *Woman and Scarecrow*, examining in some detail the duality of Irish womanhood through the interplay of visibility and invisibility as embodied by the protagonist, Woman, and her alter ego, Scarecrow. Woman embodies societal expectations—defined by motherhood and domestic obligations—while Scarecrow, her alter ego, represents the repressed self, harbouring unfulfilled desires and a longing for liberation. This dichotomy reflects the broader cultural tensions in Ireland, where traditional gender roles and family structures serve as oppressive forces that confine women to prescribed identities, often resulting in psychological fragmentation. While Woman conforms to these visible expectations, Scarecrow challenges the unseen yet pervasive patriarchal constraints that shape her reality. Ultimately, *Woman and Scarecrow* serves as a poignant meditation on the struggle between oppression and liberation, with Woman's fragmented self-symbolizing Ireland's own evolving identity, caught between tradition and the desire for change.

**Bio:** Merve Hançer is a PhD student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Türkiye. She holds two MA degrees: one in Central European Studies from Hungary, and another in Contemporary Irish Drama, from Türkiye, focusing on the representation of split selves in the works of Brian Friel, Frank McGuinness, and Marina Carr. She has been a visiting doctoral researcher at Loughborough University in the UK and has also been awarded a Kylemore Fellowship by the University of Notre Dame, Ireland.

Merve's research explores the intersections of the Field Day Theatre and *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, focusing on the omission of women writers from the anthology's original volumes. Currently, she works as a university research assistant in Türkiye, where she teaches undergraduate courses, including The Short Story: Analysis and Teaching, Classical Literature, and British Drama.

## FAIRIES AND QUEENS – QUEERING THE ALL-IRELAND POETRY SLAM

PALZER, CLAIRE (University of Vienna)

Spoken word poetry, and poetry slams in particular, have been framed as formats that aim to give a space to marginalised voices, especially when these perform aspects of their identity for the audience. In the Irish spoken word scene “the centrality of a performative personal ‘I’, a progressive political position, and an emphasis on identity and narrative” are valued, as Anne Mulhall<sup>1</sup> writes. My work, which pays sustained attention to the format of slams as well as the poetry performed therein, is an intervention in the discourse that criticises poetry at slams as either self-indulgent catharsis or a pandering comedy; I propose that these views ignore the

In my paper, I turn to the longest-running poetry slam in Ireland, the All-Ireland Poetry Slam, in which poet-performers from across the island come together once a year to perform their poetry. Specifically, I examine poetry performances drawing on Fintan Walsh's work on queer Irish performances, in which he identifies dissent and disorientation as key strategies<sup>2</sup>. Using Munster poet Jim Crickard's performances at the All-Ireland Poetry Slam in Cork in 2022 – livestreamed and archived on YouTube - I argue that the embodied and vocally produced poems enhance the negotiation of rural/urban Irishness and non-normative gender and sexual identities. Specifically, Crickard's use of accent work, body communication, folklore and consumerist language contribute to a complex, dissenting performance of identity/ies on stage that can be understood within the context of larger cultural and political developments in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> Mulhall, Anne. “Arrivals: Inward Migration and Irish Literature.” In *Irish Literature in Transition: 1980–2020*, edited by Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds, 182–200. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108564373.013>. p. 194

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, Fintan. *Queer Performance and Contemporary Ireland: Dissent and Disorientation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137534507>. p. 13

**Bio:** Claire Palzer is a PhD researcher at the University of Vienna in the Poetry Off the Page project led by Dr. Julia Lajta-Novak. Her work focuses on spoken word poetry in Ireland from the 1990s to the present day and the particularities of this performative and situated art form. She has lectured on contemporary Irish poetry and has written about Irish women's historical fiction from a cultural memory perspective. She also works in EFL didactics.

### PANEL 3: NARRATING THE SILENT

#### GIVING VOICE TO THE 'MONSTROUS' MOTHER: DE-MARGINALISING MATERNAL AMBIVALENCE IN MEGAN NOLAN'S *ORDINARY HUMAN FAILINGS* (2023)

EDWARDSON, HATTIE (University of Sheffield)

In her study of Irish mothers in twentieth-century Irish fiction, Áine McCarthy (2004) writes, “motherhood is generally written about from the outside, by writers who have no first-hand knowledge of the experience and [...] seem to believe that a mother’s place is in the wrong” (pp. 113-114). One look at the longlist for the 2024 Women’s Prize for Fiction, which featured three Irish novels (Anne Enright’s *The Gathering*, Claire Kilroy’s *Soldier, Sailor*, and Megan Nolan’s *Ordinary Human Failings*) told, at least in part, from the perspective and in the voices of mothers, proves the extent to which the Irish literary landscape has changed over the course of the twenty-first century. The last-mentioned of these novels, Nolan’s tale of a working-class teenage girl (Carmel Green) and her unwanted pregnancy and subsequent motherhood in 1970s Ireland/London in the 1990s, provides a sympathetic portrayal of the much maligned and stereotyped “bad” working-class mother. This paper will look at Carmel’s practices of self-harm and self-starvation as a means of aborting her pregnancy in *Ordinary Human Failings*, and at the figure of Catherine of Siena in the novel in particular. I will refer to the feminist/cultural model of eating disorders, according to which anorexia represents a rejection of the mother and of motherhood as it is organised in patriarchal culture. Nolan’s novel, I will conclude, shifts the blame for child abuse and neglect away from mothers such as Carmel and onto the wider society that makes mothers’ ‘ordinary human failings’ monstrous.

McCarthy, A. (2004) “Oh Mother Where Art Thou? Irish Mothers and Irish Fiction in the Twentieth Century” in Kennedy, P. (ed) *Motherhood in Ireland: Creation and Context*. [Online] Mercier Press: Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10197/9080>. (Accessed: 18 April 2024), pp. 111-26.

**Bio:** Hattie is a second year AHRC (WROCAH)-funded researcher at the University of Sheffield, under the supervision of Professor Brendan Stone. Her research looks at representations of self-starvation and anorexia in contemporary Irish women’s writing. She has a Bachelor’s degree in English Literature from Newcastle University (2020), and an MLitt in Modernities - Literature, Culture, Theory from the University of Glasgow (2021). Hattie is currently learning Spanish with the University of Sheffield’s Modern Languages Teaching Center. She is a lover of seafood and Taylor Swift.

#### “A GHOST VEIN ON THE MAP”: DISCUSSING BORDERS IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION BY FEMALE AUTHORS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Begliorgio, Caterina (University of Trento)

Borders hold a layered meaning, working both physically and symbolically, as they often divide different social and political practices. While this is true globally, it is evident in Ireland, where a contested geographical border (Magennis, 2021, 19) coexists with cultural margins. Specifically, in the context of Irish literature, borders have operated as instruments of exclusion, labeling female authors “as a separate category” in a predominantly male-centered canon (Sullivan, 2008, 272-273).

Throughout history, however, Irish writers have crossed physical borders, embracing movement and making Ireland a site of multiplicity (Einarsson, 2009; Kiberd, 2005, 20). Recently, the literary notion of border has been challenged particularly by women, actualizing bell hook’s idea of the margin as a “place of radical openness” (1989, 19).

Considering this, the paper will examine how women writers from the Republic and Northern Ireland are rediscussing borders in contemporary fiction, through accounts of movement. In particular, the paper will focus on selected parts of Sara Baume’s *A Line Made by Walking* (2018) and Kerri ní Dochartaigh’s *Thin Places* (2021), assessing how and why protagonists cross borders, creating connections between domestic and foreign spaces. Concurrently, the paper will try to evaluate how cultural barriers are challenged, and how canonically unseen authors are providing fresh perspectives on Irish literature in English. Ultimately, the analysis will assess whether questioning borders “opens up possibilities for fictions rather than closing them down” (Smyth, 2002, 1085), creating a space where “those who live along multiple axes of inequality” can be seen (Braidotti, 2021, 7).

**Bio:** Caterina Begliorgio is a doctoral student from Italy. She earned a B.A. in Foreign Languages from the University of Trento and a M.A. in Postcolonial and Comparative Literatures from the University of Bologna (Italy). She developed a deeper engagement with Irish literature and culture during her year at University College, Dublin.

Currently, she is pursuing a PhD at the University of Trento. Her research explores the intersections between posthuman studies, post-national studies and contemporary works of fiction by female authors in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

#### PANEL 4: PERFORMING THE INVISIBLE

##### THE WINDOWS AND CLOV’S QUEST FOR MEANING IN *ENDGAME*

NASIM, IQRA (Charles University)

In Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame*, the windows symbolise the outside world, a place both alluring and unreachable for the trapped characters. Clov, as the most mobile character, is uniquely positioned to interact with this liminal space. His gaze, directed towards the window, is a constant reminder of the limitations of perception. In fact, Hamm’s understanding of the outer world is entirely dependent on Clov’s limited perspective. Clov becomes a kind of window himself, offering Hamm a restricted view of the world beyond their confined space.



Jacques Derrida's concept of 'invisibility' in *The Gift of Death* offers a framework for understanding the interplay between the windows, Clov, and the play's broader theme of invisibility. While physically present, windows are also sites of invisibility. Although they offer a glimpse of the outside world, this glimpse is limited and often obscured. Clov, as a marginalised figure, is also marked by invisibility.

This paper proposes to explore the relationship between the windows and Clov in *Endgame*. Both represent the characters' desire for escape and transcendence. The window, despite offering a glimpse of the outside world, reinforces their confinement. Similarly, Clov, while relatively free to move, offers a distorted and limited view of the world to Hamm.

**Bio:** Iqra Nasim is a PhD student in the Department of Irish Studies at Charles University, Prague. Her research focuses on the intersection of philosophy and literature, particularly the exploration of themes of blindness and invisibility in Samuel Beckett's theatre.

## **CORPOREAL POLYPHONIES: REVERSING THE "UNSEENABLE" FEMALE BODY ON THE IRISH CONTEMPORARY STAGE**

MALLEK, SOPHIA (University of Lille)

In recent decades, Irish contemporary playwrights have started to question the ongoing process of invisibilization of Irish women on stage correlated to the recent release of the McAleese Report (2013) and to enactment of the Thirty Sixth Amendment of the Constitution (2018). These two historical events paved the way for the re-appropriation of now *talking female bodies* reclaiming a corporeal voice. As a consequence, female bodies are drawing away from a normative, anthropocentric perspective. Thus, this emergence of female corporeal agencies allows *unseable* bodies- those who were kept invisible for years - to be seen. Productions such as *Pentecost* by Stewart Parker (1987), *Faith Healer* by Friel (1980) and *Shining City* by Conor McPherson (2005) exhume transgressive female bodies that challenge the rules of perception. Our prehension of female protean, elastic bodies rests upon our understanding of Celtic visuality that considers the balance between visual excesses and blanks as the perfect combination- labeled as the plastic metamorphosis- for the indirect apparition of hybrid corporeities revealing themselves only after a perceptive decryption of intertwined parts forming a changeable whole. This Celtic inspiration impregnates contemporary productions extending the body beyond the limits of perception such as the one led by the Operating Theatre, *Angel/Babel* (1999). This paper argues that this visible reassertion of female corporeities is nothing other than the ritual return of the repressed Celtic body. This paper uses art history and theatrical phenomenology to prove that the body is not a monolithic, unified composite but a fragmented, revertible performing actor.

**Bio:** Sophia Mallek specializes in Irish studies and contemporary drama with a special interest in Celtic art history for which she completed a MA in Art History and Archeology at Sorbonne University. She won an academic award (RADAC) for her Master's thesis on the performance

of the Irish body. As a PhD student at the University of Lille Nord and as a member of the CECILLE lab, she is completing her second-year thesis entitled *From an invisible body to a reversible body: stagings of choreographed bodies on the Irish contemporary stage* under the supervision of Hélène Lecossois and Élisabeth Angel-Perez (Sorbonne).

## MIRRORS, OBJECTS, AND THE VIOLENCE OF PERCEPTION IN V. WOOLF'S "THE LADY IN THE LOOKING GLASS" AND E. BOWEN'S "JOINING CHARLES"

ZVONÍČKOVÁ, ANDREA (Charles University)

This paper argues that in Elizabeth Bowen's short story "Joining Charles" and Virginia Woolf's "The Lady in the Looking-Glass", identity is not disclosed through what is visible, but through what is withheld, unseen, or unsaid. While the narratives are saturated with material detail – boxes, letters, mirrors, ornaments – their interpretive force lies in absence and silence, where objects, images, and gestures operate as projections of interiority. Both Woolf and Bowen dramatize the instability of perception, as what seems revelatory in these stories is never clarifying but destabilising, exposing how perception itself is a fraught and often violent act. In Bowen's story, Louise's departure to join her husband is haunted by the objects and spaces that seem to withdraw from her even before she leaves. The disordered domestic sphere, the spectral image in the mirror, and the wounded cat Polyphemus all point to an unspoken reality that contradicts the family's sentimental narrative of Charles's virtue. In Woolf's tale, Isabella Tyson is read obsessively through her possessions and gestures, culminating in the mirror's supposedly objective revelation, yet what it discloses is not depth, but void, an unsettling absence that collapses imaginative certainty into epistemological doubt. By setting Bowen and Woolf side by side, the paper highlights their shared critique of mimetic identity and the instability of perception. Both authors demonstrate that the unseen, when imposed on objects, spaces, and surfaces, becomes constitutive of lived reality, even as it resists being fully known.

**Bio:** Andrea Zvoníčková is a PhD student at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Charles University in Prague. Supported by Charles University Grant Agency, her doctoral research focuses on British and Irish literature, particularly examining the role of space, objects and consciousness in the works of Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen. She holds a master's degree in Czech and English Studies from the University of South Bohemia, where she focused her thesis on the topic of time, space, and journey in Virginia Woolf's writing.

## PANEL 5: HIGHLIGHTING ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

“CROWNING GLORY”: EMBODIMENT, INTERSECTIONALITY AND TRADITION IN ROSALEEN MCDONAGH’S *UNSETTLED* (SKEIN PRESS, 2021)

UNSWORTH, ELSIE (University of Salford)

The Mincéirí/Irish Traveller community maintains several traditional practices relating to hair care and styling that are distinctive, highly valued and often subject to racist scrutiny and discrimination. This paper examines the second essay in McDonagh's *Unsettled* – "Crowning Glory" – in which the author explores how her practice of this tradition has embedded itself into her identity. McDonagh's essay details how she learned traditional practices from her mother and grandmother as a child, and this became important for her sense of self later in life, as an Irish Traveller woman with a disability. This tradition is shown to be shaped by personal experience; shaped by the author's experiences in schools and hospitals, by racism and popular trends, by family, by institutional discrimination and trauma. Because of this, "Crowning Glory" outlines the ways that traditional practices are embodied, based in bodily knowledge and shaped by bodily experience. This embodied tradition is inherently intersectional, closely tied to personal experience, and thus exemplifying intersectional models of identity, community and marginalisation. Therefore, this text has interesting implications for the relationship between intangible heritage and identity. This paper examines hair traditions in "Crowning Glory", and McDonagh's interest in bodily knowledge and experience. It considers the ways that traditional practice is distinctly embodied, and the intersectionalities of tradition that are highlighted by this embodied perspective. Furthermore, it examines the ways that McDonagh's memoir and embodied style of writing in *Unsettled* is useful for understanding these aspects of intangible heritage.

**Bio:** Elsie Unsworth is a PhD student at the University of Salford, undertaking research on contemporary Irish folklore. They are interested in the ways that folkloric storytelling speaks to community and identity, and recent literary approaches to folklore that reflect subaltern and marginalised experiences.

## **HIDDEN WOMEN, HIDDEN WORDS: THE DIARY SPEAKS**

MCPHELM, DIANNE (Dundalk Institute of Technology)

'Where are the women?'

Regularly posited by Irish historians, scholars and literary critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this question often relates to the neglect of predictable female voices such as revolutionary Countess Markovic or writers like Edna O'Brien. But what of the inattention of the 'ordinary woman'? My research explores the role of the diary in uncovering 'hidden voices' and as an opportunity to understand and trace changes in Irish culture and society. Focusing on the writings of Mamo McDonald (1929 -2021), a mother, widow, businesswoman and poet living on the Irish border during the height of the Troubles, I aim to address said neglect through the investigation and digitalisation of selected diary extracts written between 1980 and 2000. Like many other 'ordinary' women, Mamo's name is anonymous in contemporary studies, despite recorded activism focusing on societal improvement for females within rural communities in Ireland and abroad. A member of the Irish Countrywomen's Association, Mamo became, in her own words, an 'accidental activist', campaigning for

women's rights and in later years co-founding Age and Opportunity. Once dismissed as a 'profoundly female and feminist genre' (Huff, 1989, p. 2), diaries offer current research a personal and informative perspective of history. The diary's admission as a cultural influence has encouraged contemporary scholars to extend new critical vocabulary for interpretation while acknowledging their contribution to our understanding of past societies. Mamos diaries are a textured and intimate legacy; an opportunity to hear a forgotten voice, encouraging consideration of the past through the lived experience.

Huff, C. (1989) "'That Profoundly Female, and Feminist Genre': The Diary as Feminist Practice', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 17(3/4), pp. 6–14.

**Bio:** Dianne McPhelim is a recipient of a Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship. A doctoral student at Dundalk Institute of Technology, her current research, under Dr Daithí Kearney and Dr Naoise Collins, investigates the diaries and archives of Mamo McDonald (1929-2021), mother, businesswoman, poet and formative campaigner for Irish Women's rights.

A published poet and writer; Dianne holds a degree in Creative Writing and Literature from ATU Sligo. Her MA Modern Literature (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick) dissertation investigated 'The Eco-Critical Perspectives of Gothic Spatiality in the Short Stories of John Steinbeck and Annie Proulx', a subject she continues to research.

## PANEL 6: CLAIMING (NARRATIVE) SPACE

### NEGOTIATING NARRATIVE SPACE, AUTHORIAL CONTROL, AND PLURALITY IN FLANN O'BRIEN'S *AT SWIM-TWO-BIRDS* AND MÁIRTÍN Ó CADHAIN'S *GRAVEYARD CLAY*

ROCHFORD, MIKELYN (University of York)

Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Graveyard Clay* (1949) are both characterised by an exchange between the frequent intrusion of an author-figure and the characters within responding in a disorderly and polyphonic manner. In *At Swim-Two-Birds*, multiple embedded narratives are disrupted by the characters' rebellion against their author as they cross narrative levels in an attempt to negotiate authorial control. In *Graveyard Clay*, the "Trump of the Graveyard" recurrently imposes a cyclical and strict "Regimen" on the graveyard's buried inhabitants, whose cacophony of verbal exchange competes for narrative primacy. In both novels, narrative space and action are manipulated, challenged, and negotiated through a constant interplay between the author and the myriad of voices being represented within the narrative. If it is at times difficult to differentiate between voices in each novel, it is to simulate for the reader the tumultuous, unsteady, and pluralist condition of a nation negotiating its literary identity.

I posit that the interplay of these voices functions as an exploration of the oftentimes competing voices of a nation reworking its literary tradition and storytelling practices, and effectively creates a more encompassing, immersive, and accurate representation of Ireland's

writerly preoccupations in the mid-twentieth century. Through this use of self-reflexive dialogue, pastiche of genres, and Irish mythic traditions, both novels explore the ever-shifting and complex political and artistic landscape of Ireland, its negotiation with authority, its pluralism, and its conflicting views on how to treat literary tradition.

**Bio:** Mikelyn Rochford is a postgraduate student at the University of York in the department of English and Related Literature. Her research is focused on twentieth-century Irish fiction (novels and plays), comedy, and narrative theory. Mikelyn holds an MA in English from the University of Idaho and a BA in Literature from Pacific University.

### **GAEILGEOIRÍ IN MIGRATION IN DÓNALL MAC AMHLAIGH'S *EXILES***

MacGloin, Niamh (University of York)

In his novel *Exiles* (trans. 2020) Dónall Mac Amhlaigh portrays Gaeltacht migrants in Britain in the post-war period, most prominently those who migrated from Galway to London. London's urban nature was key to the building of a gaeilgeoir community amongst the London-Irish. Paradoxically, London's urban, multiculturalism allows this insular community to be formed. Through the character of Niall, an autofictional representation of the writer, Mac Amhlaigh opens the text with a strong statement of the importance of this rural community to Irish culture and identity, aligning them with ancient Celtic society and emphasising the history they carry through their language. He expresses fears over the persistence of the language when such a large proportion of the community are migrating. Through Nano we see how Irish language was easily lost in Britain, living outside of London, she loses any opportunity to speak Gaeilge though she still lives amongst an Irish community. She initially expresses a desire to move to London and live amongst her own people and to hear Irish being spoken again. In London, Trevor is on a quest to defeat the 'Jackeen', a young man from Dublin, the Connemara man wins the fight, defends his tribe and therefore his culture and his language. The tensions between rural and urban Irish society in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century were heightened by the country's economic concerns in the new era of independence. Mac Amhlaigh, by highlighting their cultural significance, inverts the traditional social order and places the rural community on top.

**Bio:** Niamh is a first year PhD student at the University of York, working on a project titled 'Language and the Anxiety of Belonging in London-Irish literature'. Prior to studying at York, she undertook a master's at Trinity College Dublin in Irish writing and a bachelor's degree in English at the University of Bristol. Her research is broadly interested in themes of migration and diasporic identity, postcolonial theory, memory studies, language and translation, and working-class literature.

**'I PROMISED MY PARENTS THAT I WOULD SHUT DOWN ALL MY ACCOUNTS, BUT I CAN'T. I WOULD BE ERASED. IT WOULD BE AS IF I NEVER EXISTED' (O'NEILL, 2015). SOCIAL MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND IDENTITY IN LOUISE O'NEILL'S *ASKING FOR IT*.**

MEANEY, NIAMH (Mary Immaculate College Limerick)

This paper will discuss the role of social media and technology in identity formation and deformation within Louise O'Neill's *Asking For It*. Emma O'Donovan from Ballinacorney Co. Cork is arguably your stereotypical Irish teenager. At eighteen years old she is in her final year of secondary school preparing to take her Leaving Certificate Examinations, she is boy-crazy, more interested in spending time with her friends than her family, and obsessed with what others think of her. However, following the gang-rape of Emma by a group of boys she thought her peers, all she knows about who she begins to unravel and at the heart of it is social media.

A Facebook page titled 'Easy Emma' is set up by her perpetrators following her sexual assault, containing the photographs taken by the men during the assault. The images consist largely of Emma's naked, unconscious body splayed out on the bedspread, as well as being vomited on, urinated on, having the men's various limbs being inserted into her vagina, and the men pressing their faces into her vagina. This is how Emma becomes aware of her assault, and the beginning of her social media shaming and bullying: 'I click on the photo. Pale limbs, long hair, head lolling back on to the pillow. The photos start at the head, work down the body, lingering on the naked flesh spread across the rose-covered sheets. (O'Neill, 2016, p. 146). Using scholars such as Mary McGill will be key for this investigation as she notes in today's society it's 'Trial by social media: it's quick, it's brutal, and it's very, very disappointing' (2021, p. 2).

The call for papers specifically emphasizes the intersection of Irish Literature and Identity Studies, making my research particularly pertinent. My paper on *Asking For It* offers a thorough exploration of the pivotal role social media plays both seen and unseen on identity formation in the 21st century, providing a timely and groundbreaking analysis that aligns seamlessly with the conference's theme. By critically engaging with scholarly work such as Mary McGill and Kelleher and O'Sullivan's 'Technology in Irish Literature and Culture', I offer new perspectives and contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding the influence of technology and social media on identity formation in contemporary Irish literature.

**Bio:** Niamh Meaney is a second-year Ph.D. student at Mary Immaculate College Limerick in English Language and Literature. Her research fields include feminist theory, contemporary literature with special interest in Irish and Anglophone literature, critical race theory and psychoanalytic theory. Her publications are: Meaney, Niamh. 2024. "Review of A Dublin Magdalene Laundry: Donnybrook and Church-State Power in Ireland, by Mark Coen, Katherine O'Donnell, & Maeve O'Rourke (eds.) *Review of Irish Studies in Europe* 6 (3) and Meaney, N. (2024). Rain. *Aighe Journal*, 10, p. 162.