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Invited Speakers

Desmond Egan

Desmond Egan has published many Collections of Poetry (including, most recently, *Laptop* in 2024), 3 of Prose Essays, and 2 Translations from the Greek of plays by Sophocles and Euripides. 25 Collections of his work have been published in translation, across Europe and world-wide. Various Awards include The Irish Books and Media (IBAM) 2017 Award for Literature; The National Poetry Foundation of USA Award; and others. Hon. President, The Classical Society of Ireland 2004; Hon. Doctorate in Literature from Washburn University 1996. DVD Documentary published in USA and broadcast on PBS Television. Artistic Director, The G. M. Hopkins Annual Festival in Newbridge College.

Books by Desmond Egan include: *Epic*, ‘An important Collection’ (Thomas Kinsella); *A Song for My Father*, ‘Moving poems’ (Samuel Beckett); *Elegies*, ‘The work of a major poet’ (Brian Arkins); *Hopeful Hopkins: Essays*, ‘A new phase in Hopkins studies ... an admirable and careful reading’ (Alex Assaly); *Rogha/Choice, translations by Michael Hartnett*, ‘A book to be grateful for’ (Gabriel Fitzmaurice); *Complete Poems*, ‘Makes me think we have moved beyond even the achievement of Seamus Heaney’ (Hugh Kenner); *Seeing Double*, ‘In Egan almost every poem has a metaphysical aspect. He is, for me, the most remarkable poet writing in English’ (Birgit Bramsbäck); *Philoctetes: A translation of Sophocles’ play*, ‘Rare fidelity to the source language in an emphatic modern register – a remarkable achievement’ (Brian Arkin).

Fiona Farr

Fiona Farr is Professor of Applied Linguistics and TESOL in the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics at the University of Limerick, Ireland, where she is Director of the Centre for Applied Language Studies. Her key areas of expertise are teacher education, reflective practice, continuous professional development, applied corpus linguistics, and technology-enhanced language learning. She has published widely in high impact journals in her field and is author of *Teaching Practice Feedback: an*

investigation of spoken and written modes (2011, Routledge), *Practice in TESOL* (2015, Edinburgh University Press), *Social Interaction in Language Teacher Education* (2019, Edinburgh University Press, with Farrell and Riordan), and *The Reflective Cycle of the Teaching Practicum* (2023, Equinox, with Farrell) and contributed as an author to Knight, D. et al. (2024). *Corpus Linguistics for Virtual Workplace Discourse*, New York and London, Routledge. She is co-editor (with Bróna Murphy) of the *EUP Textbooks in TESOL Series*, and is Associate Editor of the Journal *Second Language Teacher Education*. She is also co-editor (with Liam Murray) of the *Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology* (2016, 2nd edition 2026). She has been Adjunct Professor at the Inland Norway University, Hamar, (2022-2024) and Visiting Research Scholar at Lancaster University and Queen's University, Belfast. She has also led and taken part in a number of national and international projects including Digilanguages (2016-2017), Shout4HE (2018-2021), and Interactional Variation Online (2021-2024) (<https://ivohub.com/>).

Lorna Hutson

Lorna Hutson is the Merton Professor of English Literature at Oxford. She has taught at London, Hull, Berkeley and St Andrews. Her books include *Thomas Nashe in Context* (1989), *The Usurer's Daughter* (1994), *The Invention of Suspicion* (2007), *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (2015) and *England's Insular Imagining* (2023). She is editor of *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature 1500-1700* (2018) and co-editor, with Victoria Kahn, of *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe* (2001) and has edited Ben Jonson's *Discoveries* (2012). She is a Fellow of the British Academy, has held Guggenheim and Leverhulme Fellowships and has won Bainton and Saltire Prizes for research.

Christopher Morash

Christopher Morash is Seamus Heaney Professor of Irish Writing at Trinity College, Dublin. With research interests ranging widely across the field of Irish literary and cultural studies, he has published extensively on Irish theatre, including a standard history, as well as a theoretical work on theatre space and is also the editor of the *Cambridge*

History of the Irish Novel (forthcoming early in 2026). Pursuing simultaneous interests in technology and culture, he has published on the transatlantic telegraph, not to mention the only synoptic history of Irish media to range from the 16th century to the 21st century. Perhaps best known for his work on literary Dublin arising out of his book, *Dublin: A Writer's City* (2023), and the many publications and addresses which have come in its wake, he has nevertheless sustained a long-established interest in Yeats (resulting most recently in monograph on his theatre and theatre theory), as well as a concern for Irish Famine writing (which goes back to the 1990s). In the forefront of his current activities, however, is a collaborative project on 'Attention', which he frames for the purposes of the present conference as follows:

"The publication of John Guillory's *On Close Reading* earlier this year signals a renewed interest in the practice of close reading in literary studies, often attributed to what is perceived as a growing culture of distraction, even a 'distraction economy.' Drawing in part on collaborative work with two colleagues (Ronan McDonald of Melbourne, and Shane O'Mara, Professor of Experimental Brain Research in TCD), this talk takes the form of four short lectures, tracing the prehistory of the current sense of crisis, and its legacy in Irish writing."

Andrew G. Newby

Andrew G. Newby is Senior Lecturer in Transnational and Comparative History at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Specialized in the history and society of Europe during the "Long Nineteenth Century" (especially Irish history in comparative or transnational perspective), he holds concurrent Docentships in European Area and Cultural Studies (University of Helsinki, 2008) and Transnational and Comparative History (Tampere University, 2021). Between 2012 to 2017 Andrew was the Principal Investigator of the Academy of Finland project, "'The Terrible Visitation': Famine in Finland and Ireland, c. 1845-1868", and has held research positions at the Institutes of Advanced Study in Helsinki, Aarhus, and Tampere, as well as lectureships in the universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Books include *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands* (EUP, 2007); *Michael Davitt: New Perspectives* (edited with Fintan Lane, 2009); *Éire na Rúise: An Fhionlainn agus Éire ar thóir na Saoirse* (Coiscéim, 2016); *Finland's Great Famine, 1856-1868* (2023); and *An Fraoch Trí Thine! Micheál*

Mac Daibhéid, Conradh na talún agus Garbhchíocha na hAlban 1870-1887
(forthcoming, 2025).

Abstracts NAES

Transnational Scream for Humanity: Misanthropy, Callousness, and Hope in Ben Okri's "Gaza"

Akbay, Yakut. Ankara Science University, Turkey; Visiting Researcher, University of Turku

This study examines Ben Okri's poem "Gaza" (2024) to address the themes of misanthropy, stoicism and global indifference in the face of wars in the world today. The paper explores how Okri's language exposes a human's emotional and spiritual detachment. "Gaza" criticises the pervasive misanthropy and moral apathy that leads to the normalisation of human suffering. Okri's lines reveal the "coldness in the soul" that allows societies to overlook atrocities, particularly the plight of Gaza while continuing their daily lives in callous detachment. The article therefore examines stoicism, which is described in the poem as the tension between resilience and resignation despite ongoing suffering. By placing Gaza within a transnational framework, the study argues that Okri's plea transcends political, cultural and geopolitical boundaries to promote a future characterised by empathy and collective responsibility. "Gaza" is both a lament and a call for humanity to confront its own failures and rediscover its capacity for compassion and justice. It vacillates between despair and hope, urging readers to overcome silence and hatred and embrace a vision of peace, hence the poem's repeated final lines: "Who will find a / way instead of / taking a side?".

Keywords: Ben Okri, Gaza, humanity, misanthropy, stoicism, transnational

Biographical note: Yakut Akbay is a faculty member at Ankara Science University, Department of English Translation and Interpreting in Türkiye. She holds a PhD in English Culture and Literature. Her areas of interest are postcolonial studies, postmodern theories, gender studies and British fiction. She is currently a visiting researcher at the University of Turku, Department of English.

Attention in Multimodal Communication: Exploring Emojis as Semiotic Choices in Online Congratulations

Chubaryan, Astghik, Yerevan State University, Armenia

Hakobyan, Nare, V. Brusov State University, Yerevan, Armenia

Multimodality as both an approach and emerging field in human communication has been in the center of attention for decades. Its importance is highlighted in the context of digital communication during which the meaning potential comes into existence due to the orchestration of multiple resources, both verbal and non-verbal, be it emojis, GIFs, photos, graphs, tables, etc. In the current paper, congratulations as semiotic materials are analyzed in their verbal manifestation with emojis as semiotic choices in the integrated design of Facebook social networking website. The research questions put forward are

- 1) How do emojis impact the verbal expression of congratulations in the integrated design of digital communication?
- 2) What is the motivation behind the social practice of emoji application including attention?

The research questions are answered via corpus and inventory compilation, thematic analysis and surveys. The research findings are valuable for understanding how meaning potential is expressed via linguistic and non-linguistic modes, how those modes interplay to express a particular meaning and why non-verbal modes are selected in parallel to verbal modes in digital communication.

Biographical Note: Astghik Chubaryan, PhD, Professor at English Philology Chair, Yerevan State University, is the author of fifty scientific publications and twenty-one presentations on English Studies. The areas of her academic interest include Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication, Functional Linguistics, Corpus-based linguistic analysis, Discourse Analysis. She is member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Armenian Folia Anglistika*.

Nare Hakobyan, PhD, is a full-time lecturer and researcher at V. Brusov State University. She is a published author and reviewer. Her research interests focus on Multimodal Communication, Internet Language, Corpus Linguistics, Academic Writing,

CALL in EFL, Vocabulary Teaching and Learning. She is actively engaged in EFL teacher training and teaching material development.

The Not-so-straight Path of Development of English *who* and *which*: Input from Historical Corpora

Czerniak, Izabela Åbo Akademi University, Finland

The presents study constitutes a part of my postdoctoral research project whereby the environment of the relative clause (RC) in English is investigated. With the continuous development and upgrades of language corpora and with input from recent studies on RC pointing to various changes in the very environment that still unfold (e.g. Xu & Xiao, 2015; Fajri & Okwar, 2020), it seems pertinent to revisit the topic at issue. For this paper, the focus is placed on two commonly used relative markers that in Present-Day English are associated with very specific types of referents, i.e. *who* used for human- and *which* for non-human antecedents. Historically, the relationship between these relativisers and their referents was not always straight forward (e.g. Rissanen 1999; Nielsen 2005), even during the time when English prescriptivism was already in full swing. Examples of unorthodox usage of both *which* and *who* were initially retrieved from the later sections of the *Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English* (PPCHE). Subsequent examples were taken from two recently compiled databases, i.e. *Early Modern Multiloquent Authors* (EMMA) and *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET), at which point comparisons could be made. This special use, while not so frequent, is very much noticeable.

Biographical note: Dr Izabela Czerniak is a project researcher in English Language at Åbo Akademi University. In her studies, she has focused on aspects within historical linguistics, variationist sociolinguistics, contact linguistics, applied linguistics. Apart from research, her work involves coordinating the collection of texts for the new version of Finnish subcorpus of *The International Corpus of Learner English*.

Synge's *Aran Islands* (1906): Cultural Construction of the Western Islands

de Bouvier, Anne-Catherine, University of Caen Normandy, France

Long an epitome of Irish destitution and backwardness in popular as well as in political perception, the western islands, and the Aran islands in particular, gradually came to mean something else in the last decade of the 19th century, under the impetus given by the interest Nordic linguists took in them, by the Irish cultural revival, and by the rise of Irish nationalist politics. The Congested Districts Board started to subsidize a regular steam crossing between Kiltonan and the mainland in 1891, thus incidentally putting the Aran islands on the map of “the trip west” which Synge made four times between 1898 and 1902. This paper proposes to explore Synge's complex relation to the islands in his non-fiction account of those stays. Synge went to the Aran islands actuated by a quest for the pristine – in language, but also in a form of preserved Irish ethos. He (at least partly) found it on Inishmaan, which he constructs as a sanctuary, in a sort of secular rewriting of the myth of “the isle of saints and scholars”. His narrative also shows disappointment with Inishmore, corrupted by growing linguistic hybridization and what was then described as “Anglo-Saxon materialism.” *The Aran Islands* reveals a tension between preservation and adaptation, which found itself at the heart, not only of subsequent uses of or references to Synge's work in relation to the Aran islands, but also of the official definition of the Gaeltacht by the Irish Free State in 1925-26.

Biographical note: Anne-Catherine de Bouvier, Associate Professor in Irish and British history at the University of Caen Normandy, France; head of the research group in Irish Studies (GREI) and deputy head of the interdisciplinary research unit on the British Isles and North America (ERIBIA). A specialist of 19th century Ireland, with a focus on politics and the history of ideas, she has co-edited journal issues on the Famine and on Home Rule.¹ She is currently researching the treatment of the Famine in *The Nation*, Ireland's most widely read newspaper then, and the template for later nationalist periodicals.

¹ *La Question du Home Rule, 1870-1914. Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, special issue XXIV-2, 2019. Co-edited, and Introduction written with, Pauline Collombier-Lakeman (University of Lorraine). Chapter as author: « Isaac Butt: a Singular Political Path ».

La Grande Famine en Irlande 1845-1851. Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique, special issue XIX-2, 2014. Co-edited, and Introduction written with, Christophe Gillissen (University of Caen Normandie). Chapter as author : « L'échec programmé de la Loi sur les pauvres ».

The Failure of Representation in Antonioni's film *Blow-up*

Dunat, Silvana, Arts Academy in Split, University of Split, Croatia

Human understanding of the outer reality relies on how our senses receive the information from the environment and how our mind interprets the data. However, both our perception and our conception of space and time have been greatly modified by the fast development of various technologies and their omnipresence in our everyday lives, starting from the means of transportation, such as trains and planes, that have brought us new perspectives and accelerated our perception, to the media for recording visual and audio inputs, such as radio, photography and film, that have enabled our eyes and ears to span previously impossible spatial and temporal distances. Nowadays digital technology is not only reshaping the way humans perceive the world but also bringing a huge disruption into the confidence we confer to our senses. Virtuality became an alternative to reality and by blurring the distinction between the representation of the real and the presentation of the unreal brought into question the ontology of the photographic and cinematic image. Starting from this perspective and following deleuzian understanding of time-image this talk takes a new look on Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-up* (1966) in which a photographer investigates a series of photographs trying to determine whether they contain evidence of a murder. By blowing up the photographs the image becomes more and more separate from reality as details become distorted. This leads the photographer to doubt not only the representability of photography but also the authenticity of his own perception. The *opsign* (deleuzian term) becomes not only the sign of time but also the signal of the impossibility to separate objective from subjective reality.

Biographical note: Silvana Dunnat is an assistant professor at the Department of Film and Video at the Academy of Arts in Split where I hold the classes on film history, film analysis and film, media and cultural theory. My research interests are related to the history, theory and philosophy of film, as well as cognitive semiotics.

Tensions of Attention in Smith and Burke

Fogarasi, György, University of Szeged, Hungary

An important aspect of the English idiom of “attention” is its intimate relation to the psychosomatic state of tension, which is coded in the term’s Latin root *ad tendere*. This presentation attempts to investigate that aspect of attention within 18th-century British moral philosophy and aesthetics, by drawing on two closely related works, Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757/59). Smith’s initial analysis of the workings of sympathy demonstrates how the attentive spectator’s imaginary participation in the pains of someone else “contagiously” reproduces the tension of the sufferer in the onlooker, resulting in a copy that only differs from its original in degree. Then, through a series of examples, Smith proceeds to suggest that attention can also be the source of mistaken or even utterly fictional sympathies. In his treatise on the sublime and the beautiful, Burke is much in line with Smith’s basic tenet. However, he does not only devote an early chapter of sympathy but, in Part 4, he also examines the faculty of attention in detail, laying emphasis on the physiological element of tension which connects it to states of pain and fear, as well as to the activity of work in general. Showcasing Campanella’s legendary ability to endure the torments of the inquisition, Burke demonstrates how attention can even work as a painkiller, as long as it is able to make us focus on something other than our actual predicament. The aim of these readings is not simply to put the discourse of attention in a historical and physiological perspective but also to critically reflect on what the very term may imply unnoticedly.

Biographical note: György Fogarasi is associate professor and department head of comparative literature at the University of Szeged, Hungary. His publications focus on rhetoric, aesthetics, romantic literature/philosophy, and critical theory. His current book project, *Targets of Attention*, investigates the idiomatic entanglements of “attention,” as well as its relation to questions of technics, theatricality, and terrorism.

Panel: Trans-Regional Railway Cultures and the Imagination in the Twentieth Century

Finch, Jason, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Adam Borch, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Zeynep Henriques Correa, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Nirali Joshi, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

To imagine is to think about a possible future. All journeys to somewhere not previously visited must involve some expectation or speculation about what will be found at the destination. But when we talk about ‘imaginative writing’ or ‘the imagination’ we are typically thinking of something more explicitly creative, whether that means fiction-making, the composition of music, or the construction of visual images. This panel presents research from the current project RAILIMAGE, based in the English department of Åbo Akademi University from 2024-27. The project tests the potential of subjective imaginings and experiences as represented in literary and other texts as a contribution towards sustainable and egalitarian transport modes. Via case studies linking North America, Europe, the Middle East and South Asia, it works towards a new interpretation of ‘the imagination’ and ‘imaginings’, applying these terms in developing understandings of the post-Romantic but also gendered and racialized experiences of twentieth-century travellers and railway workers. In English, the concept of the imagination is closely associated with the Romantic period and its influence on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Samuel Taylor Coleridge, writing in 1817, the imagination was the human individual’s whole process of growth and ‘self-education’ from birth onwards, as trained by encounters with the phenomena of the world (Engel 1981: 343). Lionel Trilling, well over a century later, conceived modern culture as an activity of *The Liberal Imagination*, in the title of his most famous book (1950), considering the work of such an imagination in the mid-twentieth century to be an often fraught and painful process of self-examination. In the wake of postmodern identity politics, faced with the political and technological turbulence of the 2020s, such views may seem antiquated. However, we argue that they call for reinterrogation in a way that could make them applicable in the construction of a new understanding of human commonality, one fit for purpose in the mid-twenty-first century. Such an understanding would heed calls from critical urbanists and housing researchers for acts of worlding and

provincialisation (Roy 2011; Speer 2023) to develop an orientation in mobility humanities that is not just trans-regional but planetary (Clark and Szerszynski 2021), as opposed to global in a neoliberal, y2k sort of sense. As in postmodern identity politics, blithe universalisms based on the positionality of the privileged would be resisted, but the shared and comparable dimensions of human lives lived in diverse times, place and at varied scale levels, would become once more comprehensible. The key research question is what, if anything, can be specifically saved and redeployed from the tradition of thinking about the imagination linking Coleridge and Trilling, for application in the current state of emergency.

The papers brought together by this panel variously consider such questions via techniques from literary and cultural studies, anthropology and political science, focusing on case-study settings in the UK, the United States and the Mediterranean Middle East.

‘All Aboard the Night Train!’: Imaginations of Long-Distance Railroad Travel in American Popular Music (1945--65)

Jason Finch, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

The long-distance train journey during the first half of the century was the main way to move between regions of the North American continent. Imaginatively potent, it coloured privileged lives as much as those of the poor, and was represented in novels and film. Such travel generated whole artistic genres, including that of hobo memoirs describing Great-Depression-era freighthopping and loneliness. A more celebratory tradition in post-war African American popular music reached large audiences by linking lyrical content and instrumental sound with the place experience and sensory qualities of trains and their surroundings. Exploring train-themed jazz and R&B, I focus on two pieces of music: ‘Choo Choo Ch-Boogie’, which achieved huge popular success in its 1946 recording by Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five; and ‘Night Train’, first recorded in 1951 by tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest, then famously covered on James Brown and the Famous Flames’s 1963 *Live at the Apollo*. In the lyrics which Brown added to Forrest’s tune, cities from Miami to Boston are called out in something like the order that a train travelling from south to north on the East Coast would pass through them. What was the promise of infrastructure which long-distance rail travel offered Americans during the first two thirds of the twentieth century? It was, in the formulation of Dominic Davies (2023) a broken

promise, since between 1945 and 1975, vast swathes of the long-distance passenger rail network closed, and the nationalized Amtrak was reduced to largely a skeleton, tourist-oriented service outside the North-East corridor from Boston to Washington. As part of the funded project ‘Twentieth-Century Railway Imaginations’ (RAILIMAGE), this paper tests the application of critical infrastructure studies including the work of Davies, Ute Hasenöhl (2021) and Brian Larkin (2013) to this vital and evocative popular musical subgenre, so reappraising the concept of *imaginations*.

Biographical note: Jason Finch is Professor of English at Åbo Akademi University in Finland. A spatial and urban literary scholar trained in British modernism taking a comparative view of cities, his most recent book is *Literary Urban Studies and How to Practice It* (Routledge, 2022). He is also a co-editor of 2023 special features in *Urban Studies* and the *Journal of Urban History*. Earlier books include *Deep Locational Criticism* (Benjamins, 2016) and, as co-editor, *Literary Second Cities* (Palgrave, 2017). From 2024 to 2027 he is Principal Investigator of the funded project ‘Twentieth Century Railway Imaginations: Building the Mobility and Infrastructural Humanities’ (RAILIMAGE).

An Attempt to Restore Imaginative Power through Railway Imaginations: A Multi-Representational Approach to the Hejaz Railway Project

Zeynep Henriques Correia, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

To conceptualize the processes that give rise to social structures in the realm of reality, a “past” is necessary. However, this past, in its empirical sense, cannot represent the true past. As neither the past and nor the present are simply empirical realities, understanding them requires contributions from multiple disciplines, incorporating counterfactual and heuristic methods. As part of the funded project ‘Twentieth-Century Railway Imaginations’ (RAILIMAGE), this paper on the late Ottoman-era Hejaz Railway project, connecting Damascus to Medina, draws upon travel writing as a rich source for historical sociological research and examines diaries and memoirs of the Hejaz railway and the pilgrimage to Mecca as well as other forms of literary representations; including the memoirs of the prominent Sufi figure Aşçı Dede, the pilgrimage memoirs of the Ottoman bureaucrat Vassaf, and the stories of Refik Halid Karay. By doing so, the project seeks to defamiliarize the familiar, in Bauman’s sense. The Hejaz Railway project, putting its

violent and extractive past aside, serves as an example of a debt-free, long-distance railway infrastructure project, aligning with the 17th sustainable development goal of the United Nations, which focuses on cooperative action for debt financing and relief for developing countries. Moreover, the railway mobilities of female pilgrims challenge the idea of female immobility in the region and at the time. Besides, reviewing the Hejaz Railway project and the long-distance train journeys it once enabled allows us to think through the Arab Mediterranean as an epistemic space, pointing to ways of rethinking of freedom of movement and open borders in the present. By seeking ways of developing this multi-representational approach through interdisciplinary dialogue, this paper wants to set the Hejaz Railway project free from the entrenched metaphors and impoverished imagination of the formal and rigid conceptual moulds into which this early twentieth-century railway project has often been put. By doing so, it seeks to restore the imaginative power dulled by these metaphorical encirclements around it with a hope to contribute to the future discussions.

Biographical note: Zeynep Ceren Correia is an urban studies researcher. She focuses on mobility issues including mobility justice, mobility as capital, and mobility as commons, looking at them from a foundation in critical urban theory and critical realist philosophy of science. Currently she is currently post-doctoral researcher under the RAILIMAGE project at the department of English Language and Literature, Åbo Akademi University, Finland.

Imagining Techno-Nature-Human Ensembles of Care: The Self-Figuration of Stationmasters Through Memoirs

Nirali Joshi, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Manager – caretaker – servant – expert ? Which of these roles were originally conceptualised for the railway's stationmaster? And (how) did this figure become a popularly perceived amalgamation of all four? A growing body of literature in the ethnography of the everyday state and the anthropology of bureaucracy has highlighted the work of frontline staff as embodied sites of political and interpersonal care. Here, through acts of narration, interpretation and ethnographic 'telling', anthropology situates itself at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences. However, the ethnographer still tends to remain central to the act of representation. This rich literature has accorded

lesser attention to self-representation of frontline staff, as captured by autobiographies or memoirs, where questions surrounding authenticity and factual accuracy have often led to sidelining these narratives. Engaging with debates in the humanities on the historical and creative value of memoirs, this paper explores how these personal accounts can enrich ethnographic understandings of the everyday state. It draws on three memoirs of British railway stationmasters, focusing on: a) *the intimacy and judgment that accompany self-revelation* (Foster, 2005), and b) *spatial practices and bureaucratic habitats* that reveal the embodiment of bureaucracy in place. These memoirs, through their episodic, curated and imaginative storytelling – depicting trackside environs and signalling systems, abodes and workspaces, daily rhythms and disruptions, networked-ness and loneliness, and public responsibility and blame – throw into rich relief the railway’s techno-social, temporal, and moral dimensions. They also help broaden the gaze on documentary practices and relationality to include objects other than paper/inscriptions that constitute bureaucratic symbolism, function and aim. The paper ultimately helps think relationally about the co-constitution of human agency and technicity in the production of infrastructure as techno-social worlds, as public good and as sites of care.

Biographical note: Nirali Joshi is a human geographer with key areas of work and interest in anthropology of the state, legal and political geographies of public provisioning, and the socio-labours of everyday infrastructural worlds. Her work has a strong empirical focus on postcolonial railway geographies. Currently she is currently post-doctoral researcher under the RAILIMAGE project at the department of English Language and Literature, Åbo Akademi University, Finland.

Insular Encounters with Art: Imagination and Ekphrasis in John Banville's *Ghosts*

Isac, Astrid, Stockholm University, Sweden

John Banville's novel *Ghosts* (1993) is permeated by an art critic murderer's qualms of living on an island. Freddie Montgomery feels trapped, whereas his unreliability subsides as a failure of imagination. The painting-like figures emerging from a shipwreck on the island's shore he describes seem to be an inherent part of the landscape. Nevertheless, the wasteland surrounding Montgomery's life is strangely enticing and spectral, and the insularity is striking in its sense of loneliness, austere and artistic, but seemingly deserted by human life. As an author who lived in Ireland all his life, Banville brings special attention to the details of the island "off the West coast of Ireland", which seems to shape Freddie's new existence in the aftermath of a murderous act in the name of art – but can this peculiar place become his new paradise? Scholars such as Anja Müller (2004) and Neil Murphy (2024) investigate the relationship between reality and art that permeates Banville's novels. In this particular one, this is shown more prominently in Freddie's ekphrastic descriptions of several paintings located in the house of art professor Kreutznaer, where he is supposed to take shelter during his stay on the island. Against this backdrop, the paintings become a manner of escapism, where art is some form of island-like homeland. One is tempted to wonder if being away from the world means indeed being stranded – or if the island is a new point of existential reference for the protagonist. By bringing attention to the island as a contemporary wasteland, this essay will present the intricate relationship between the outer world and self, and how creative imagination is a land of its own in Banville's universe.

Biographical note: Astrid Isac has a Master of Arts degree in English literature from Stockholm University and is currently a student there in the Publishing Studies program. Her Master's thesis focuses on John Banville's *Frames Trilogy* as observed through Jacques Derrida's hauntological prism. She is currently working on articles about Banville's latest novels, with a focus on spectrality, ekphrasis and identity.

Attention, Distraction and ‘Flow’ in Aesthetic Experience

Janczukowicz, Karolina, University of Gdańsk, Poland

The paper discusses the notion of *aesthetic experience* in terms of Tatarkiewicz’s concepts of *aesthetic attention* and *distraction* as well as Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of *flow*. Tatarkiewicz (1986) describes *aesthetic experience* as a combination of two opposing attitudes – *aesthetic attention* and *distraction*. *Attention* means that we look at the work of art in two ways – observing how it was done through the culturally created system and conventions and – experiencing it directly – through emotions triggered by the recognition of the conventionalized ‘objective’ aesthetic elements, such as harmony, symmetry, moderation etc. *Distraction*, on the other hand, is brought about by personal ‘subjective’ associations. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) uses the term *flow* to describe an experience of complete engagement in a demanding task, in which somebody’s cognition and phenomenal experience merge into one and attention is so focused on a given activity that all external perceptual information becomes inaccessible, the artist loses the sense of time and self-awareness, but keeps a sense of control over one’s actions. The talk will attempt to redefine *aesthetic experience* as a synergy of perception and experience, where *perception* is understood as an active and creative interpretation of the surrounding reality, and *experience* is the *phenomenal consciousness* in the state of *flow*.

Biographical note: Karolina Janczukowicz is Assistant Professor at the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Gdańsk, Poland. She holds a PhD in Linguistics, her academic interests include psycholinguistics, applied linguistics and the philosophy of education. Her publications concern consciousness, memory, theatre and public speaking in FLT.

Attention and Immersion in Modern Media

Joyce, Stephen, Aarhus University, Denmark

In the 21st century, ever-expanding fictional universes that span a wide variety of media have become central to the modern mediascape. From *The Lord of the Rings* to *Star Wars* to *The Witcher*, fans of a particular storyworld now have a wide array of content they can consume. Within the field of transmedia worldbuilding, immersion has become a central concept. Mark J.P. Wolf has defined three levels of immersion – immersion, absorption, and saturation – with “saturation [a]s the pleasurable goal of conceptual immersion; the occupying of the audience’s full attention and imagination” (2012, 49). Brock and Green have developed a widely cited “transportation scale” (2000) that seeks to measure the level of audience immersion in fictional worlds, with the assumption that those consume the audience’s full attention are the most successful. However, is total immersion really the desired end goal of audiences? The 21st century has also seen the rise of “second screen” viewing, with audiences participating in online discussions about storyworlds even as they’re viewing them. Moreover, even a fully engaged audience still employs what Merja Polvinen has called “the double vision of fiction” (2017), in which an awareness of genre conventions and other aesthetic aspects are essential to audience enjoyment, even though this extra-textual knowledge should interfere with total immersion. This paper thus explores the concept of immersion and presents a different perspective on the multiple levels on which audiences consume fictional worlds.

Biographical note: Stephen Joyce is an associate professor at the Dep. of English, Aarhus University. He is the author of *Transmedia Storytelling and the Apocalypse* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and has published numerous articles on transmedia worldbuilding, science-fiction and fantasy storyworlds, and modern fan cultures. He is also one of the editors of *Imagining the Impossible: international journal for the fantastic in contemporary media*.

‘Break the old circuits’: Theory and Attention in Deborah Levy’s *Hot Milk*

Kennedy, Joe, University of Gothenburg at Sussex, UK

Deborah Levy’s 2016 novel *Hot Milk* tells the story of a postgraduate anthropologist’s visit to Andalucia with her mother to seek treatment for the latter’s paralysis in an expensive and dubiously managed specialist clinic. Throughout, the narrative thematises attention: characters inattentively misread messages and inscriptions, or overattentively spy on one another, or – as is the case with the central mother – daughter relationship – manipulatively and persistently solicit it from one another. Sofia, the internet-poisoned protagonist, finds it hard to affix her roving attention on particular objects or ideas: her thoughts are a jumble of personal and professional frustrations, social and environmental observations about the overworked and polluted *costa*, and fragments of critical theory remembered and misremembered from her studies. These piecemeal and typically unaccredited references point back to the novel’s epigraph, which is quoted from Hélène Cixous’ 1976 essay-polemic ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’: ‘it’s up to you to break the old circuits’. Where the reader witnesses many cornerstone works of twentieth-century theory and philosophy undergoing fracture and memeification into digestible commonplaces in the novel, they may well ask if Levy is demonstrating how the ‘old circuits’ being broken here may well be those of theory itself as it becomes merely one more form of mediocre digital content. This paper considers Levy’s staging of the question of what happens to theory in the twenty-first century’s attention economy, linking this to the novel’s broader depiction of attentiveness and inattentiveness.

Biographical note: Joe Kennedy is an associate professor of English Literature and Cultural Studies on the University of Gothenburg’s branch programme at the University of Sussex in England. He has written two books and specialises in twentieth and twenty-first century fiction and literary theory.

Can Ecoaesthetic Localism Challenge (Post)colonialism? Nan Shepherd's and Robert MacFarlane's Nature Writing

Kommonen, Ulla, University of Turku, Finland

In my presentation, I discuss localism – dialogue between soil and soul – in nature literature by Nan Shepherd and Robert MacFarlane. Could literary localism challenge contemporary forms of (post)colonialism? European examples of this can be seen in tourism industry in places like Barcelona, Venice, and Rovaniemi in Finland, where places of natural beauty are hijacked to the extent that local people are driven out of their homesteads. Could the philosophy of localism alleviate our restless life by offering alternative approaches to perceiving the landscape, to appreciate local nature that might not appear spectacular at first sight, but which could gradually grow on us in subtle ways? Walking the same paths frequently, one learns where the tree roots or stones are, and our muscle memory helps us avoid such obstacles, which become a part of an intuitive choice of route. In her book *The Living Mountain* (1977), nature writer Nan Shepherd records her close relationship with the Cairngorm Mountains (Am Monadh Ruadh) in Scotland. Shepherd walked there so often that she came to know them and their rivers, plants, animals, and varying weather conditions intimately: “Something moves between me and it. Place and mind may interpenetrate till the nature of both is altered” (1977, 8). Could close attention to ditches, pebbles, and hills, remembering various names of nature's formations, or calling light rain “a spittery smirr” like MacFarlane does in *Landmarks* (2015) help us protect our surroundings? MacFarlane seems convinced: “Words act as compasses; place-speech serves literally to en-charm the land – to sing it back into being, and to sing one's being into it” (2015, 22). I analyse how both Shepherd's and MacFarlane's nature writing incorporates prominent localist elements and how their writing is a powerful immersive experience.

Biographical note: Ulla Kommonen is a PhD researcher at the University of Turku. Her MA thesis in English (University of Helsinki 2014), “The Mind Grows Rings: Mindscape, Landscape and the Biotic Community in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*”, analyses the problematic connection between mental and physical landscapes, and the continuum of the human and the non-human nature.

“the old sea between two islands”: Islands Challenging Borders in Stephanos Stephanides’ Poetry

Kuortti, Joel, University of Turku, Finland

As an island, Cyprus is circumscribed by natural pelagic boundaries. For the past 46 years, it has also been divided by a political border. Stephanos Stephanides, a Cypriot poet (among other things), has written about such borderlines as ephemeral, yet effective. He says that it is due to his cosmopolitan life that “I write out of place” (2017, 110). His collection, *Blue Moon in Rajasthan* (2005), challenges boundaries in its irreverence for linguistic, national, religious or geographic demarcations. The poems travel from his native village Trikomo in present-day Turkish North Cyprus to “Europe, Africa, chimerical Americas” (“Locations of Childhood” 46) and beyond. They traverse the ‘diasporas’ of languages and religions as in “ars poetica: pRoem”: “Fiore-δια-Dea-σποράς” (13). The poems present a non-jingoist position towards place and identity. In my paper I analyse how Stephanides’ ‘poetics of irreverence’ negotiate borders as transitory, like clouds, water, sounds, smells, dreams, flowers, or heartbeats.

Biographical note: Joel Kuortti is Professor of English at the University of Turku, Finland. His major research interests are in postcolonial theory, Indian literature in English, hybridity, transnational identity, transculturation, gender and cultural studies and ordinariness.

The Texture and Structure of Attention in Ciaran Carson's *Still Life*

McIlfatrick-Ksenofontov, Miriam, Tallinn University, Estonia

In Ciaran Carson's *Still Life* (2019), we see the poet reflecting on his perceptions of the world around him and the crafting of this into poems. The title of each poem is a named painting that prompts the poet to dwell on the circumstances of its making, his acts of viewing it, and the meanderings of the mind that it engenders. There is no generalising or hierarchizing, everything demands his full attention for as long as he dwells on it, before it flits elsewhere or is interrupted. *Still Life* is a distillation of the indiscriminate attention to the mindful activity out of which verbal art emerges and the art of perceiving-with-a-view-to-creating. We see the poet looking at things, looking things up, noting things down. Acts of attending become the object of attention, as in "What a book, though. I have it before me, open at this colour plate, / jotting notes / Into a jotter, which I'll work up later into what / you're reading now". In *Still Life* art is everywhere, in the design and patina of what is in line of sight of the mind's eye – a still life of a bowl, a spilt flowerpot, a chemo drip. Working like an applied artist who weaves a carpet that might extend endlessly, not seeking only the outstanding as painters do in choosing their motifs. Poems in *Still Life* manifest the texture of small details and moments of daily life that the poet attends to. As the fine arts create a structure to draw attention to the focus of the work, the applied artist produces the so-called 'infinite surface', in which each element is performed with equal attention.

Biographical note: McIlfatrick-Ksenofontov is a lecturer at Tallinn University, where she teaches literary analysis and anglophone literature. Her research interests include poetry and the poetics of translation, cognitive literary studies, creative process and theories of creativity. She translates Estonian poetry for performance and print publication.

English Studies after Anglophilia: The View from Denmark

Mortensen, Peter, Aarhus University, Denmark

The number of students applying to English studies programs in Denmark has declined steeply in recent years, and 2024 was an *annus horibilis* when only The University of Copenhagen was able to take in as many BA students as expected. In this presentation, I explore some reasons for this drop in student interest and attempt to map some tentative paths forward. The causes of the current decline of English studies in Denmark, I argue, are culturally and historically specific, and we cannot readily extrapolate from the parlous situation for other language subjects or from ongoing debates about the travails of English in other countries such as Britain or America. We can begin to better understand what is happening to English studies in Denmark, I suggest, if we pause to consider

- 1) that English no longer functions as a foreign language within Danish society;
- 2) that contemporary prospective students are considerably less influenced and motivated by Anglophilia and Americanophilia than young people used to be; and
- 3) that the post-philological model underpinning English studies in Denmark no longer provides a compelling way of organizing the field's constituent knowledge domains.

In order to understand where we are and begin to move towards possible solutions, I argue, we must take stock of the changed status of the English language in Denmark (and beyond), the dwindling international prestige and attractiveness of key Anglophone countries, and, not least, our own ingrained ways of understanding and organizing the field in which we work.

Biographical note: Peter Mortensen, Ph.D., The Johns Hopkins University, is Associate Professor and Head of English in the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. He is the author of *British Romanticism and Continental Influences* and the coeditor of *Framing the Environmental Humanities*. His book *Isak Dinesen's Ecological Power* is forthcoming in 2025.

1827: Attention and Ethics in Literary/Cultural History, with Special Reference to the Great Fire of Turku

Rainsford, Dominic, Aarhus University, Denmark

A book about a single year is one way of attending to a specific chunk of cultural history, breaking old connections and establishing new ones. It has become a publishing trend, from Eric Cline's *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed*, through James Shapiro's Shakespeare books (*1599* and *1606*, respectively), to Caryl Christian's *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century*. I am working on 1827: a neglected year which, in a British context, lies in a grey area between Romanticism and Victorianism. As well as a 'year book', this will be a book *about* year books: philosophizing on what it means to define a zone of interest thus. Once, I only knew 1827 as the year in which William Blake died: a man who was just one man, but also (at least to himself) a kind of infinite man or human abstract. But plenty of others died in that year: Beethoven, Canning, and innumerable unfamous people, several of whom shared Blake's common grave. Meanwhile, bigger traumas played out around the globe. The Battle of Navario was one. Another was the Great Fire of Turku. This paper will examine appearances of the Turku disaster in news, public debate, and private correspondence in Britain in the ensuing days and weeks of Autumn 1827. These moments of attention will then be considered in relation to the broader shapes and proportions of international awareness in that year, and to ways in which attention is apportioned, now, in 19th-century studies.

Biographical note: Dominic Rainsford is Professor of Literature in English at Aarhus University and General Editor of *Dickens Quarterly*. He has published repeatedly on the connections between literature and moral philosophy, from Shakespeare to Tahar Ben Jelloun. His most recent book is *Literature in English: How and Why* (2nd ed., Routledge, 2020).

Likes and Learning: Social Media Use and Literacy

Sandhaug, Christina, University of Inland Norway, Campus Hamar, Norway

Learners aged 13 and above are increasingly engaging in social media (Medietilsynet, 2022). Not only does this engagement impact their lifestyles and identity formations, both digital and otherwise, and constitute threats to their digital footprints and privacy, but it also affects their modes of attention. The public narrative on social media use is rather bleak, but we need to understand the dynamics of this impact. If teachers and teacher educators block or ignore pupils' and students' digital lives outside the classroom and lecture hall, they signal that their extramural lives are irrelevant for education and that education is irrelevant for their social lives. This paper explores the impact of social media use on reading skills, focusing on the ways in which attention is affected by contesting forms of exposure. Building on data collected during a series of webinars on the topic of learning in the light of social media use, this paper explores both challenges and possibilities of social media use and address questions of literacy, digital and multimodal reading, creative and interactive engagements with text, and attention, concentration and inspiration.

Biographical note: Christina Sandhaug's research interests are renaissance rhetoric and poetry; theatre and drama; literature and climate questions; and teaching and learning English. She has co-written a book for English teachers, *Engelsk for Secondary School* (2018, under revision) and is part of the research project Literature, Teacher Education and Climate Change.

Changing Criteria in the Discussion of Literature

Sell, Roger D., Åbo Akademi University, Finland

For the purposes of this paper I divide the history of literary criticism into four epoques. These, in keeping with the acceleration of sociocultural change more generally, are of diminishing lengths of time:- Aristotle to Dr Johnson; Coleridge to T.S. Eliot; the Postmoderns; and the Post-postmoderns.

My interest is in the different criteria applied to literature by representatives of the different epoques, and to a large extent I am actually dealing with meta-criteria. In other words, I do say that Aristotle prioritizes mimesis – that he mainly asks, “Is the mirror held up to nature sufficiently lifelike?” – but I also explore the nature of his prioritization here, which turns out to allow mimesis as indeed a major criterion, but one which also allows a plurality of less fundamental criteria to figure as well. The overall story I am telling is that Aristotle’s prioritization was typical of that entire first epoch; that during the second epoch Coleridge and the Coleridgeans developed a very different kind of criterion, which *disallowed* less fundamental criteria in order to achieve a monistic aesthetic whole; that the postmoderns, though rejecting the Coleridgeans’ content and values, were nevertheless metacritically similar, fusing everything into a fierce unity, albeit here a historical or political one; and that post-postmodern communicational critics, in their efforts to rehumanize the institutions of literature and criticism, come full circle to an Aristotelian prioritization, and to the pluralism that went with it.

Biographical note: Roger D. Sell is Emeritus H.W. Donner Research Professor of Literary Communications at Åbo Akademi University. He has published on a wide range of authors from several periods of English and American literature and has developed an account of literature as one among other forms of communication. Books include *Communicational Criticism: Studies in Literature as Dialogue* (Benjamins, 2011); (ed. with Adam Borch and Inna Lindgren) *The Ethics of Literary Communication: Genuineness, Directness, Indirectness* (Benjamins, 2013); and (ed.) *Literature as Dialogue: Invitations Offered and Negotiated* (Benjamins, 2015). From 2011 to 2014 he served as President of the International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures.

The Uncanny Detective: Gothic Space in Miéville's *The City and the City*

Stephan, Matthias, Aarhus University, Denmark

Detective Narratives, in particular the modernist mode exemplified by the police procedural (Stephan 2019), presents itself as verisimilar text, continuing in a mimetic, realist tradition (Chandler, *Simple Art of Murder*). China Miéville's novel *The City and the City* uses this genre as a means of questioning the stability of such boundaries, whether they are national, social, or legal. By setting the reader up to have the expectations of realism, and the generic expectations of a police procedural, Miéville uses the imposition of the 'othered space' or 'thirdspace' both to produce an uncanny effect, making the text itself unfamiliar while familiar, and infusing the entire social space with a type of uncanny anxiety. By making it a Gothic space, laid bare across the city itself, on boundaries that are socially constructed and internally imposed, he destabilizes our perceptions of this realism invoking the nature of the uncanny (in Todorov's terms), in which answers might fall within supernatural (marvelous) territory as easily as in the realistic world of the police procedural. This paper sets out to interrogate that sense of uncanny, one which I suggest depends on the use of space, Miéville's specific presentation of liminal spaces which are in one sense simultaneously reinforced and transgressed, but which, in another sense, don't 'really' exist at all. In so doing, it considers the role of detective fiction in (re)producing a stable underpinning to society. In so doing, it draws on Soja's firstspace and thirdspace logics, Lefebvre's trialectics, and Foucault's notion of the heterotopia.

Biographical note: Matthias Stephan researches postmodernism, its implications in Gothic, sf, and crime fiction, and their intersections in considering global climate change. He is the author of *Defining Literary Postmodernism for the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave, 2019), general editor of *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, and coordinator of the Centre for Studies in Otherness.

Attending to Places in James Bell's Travelogue Depicting Cecilia Vasa's Journey to England

Swärdh, Anna, Stockholm University, Sweden

From September 1565 to early May 1566, Princess Cecilia Vasa of Sweden visited Elizabeth I of England. Several kinds of documents related to the visit survive, among them a travelogue that documents the journey. Oxford-educated rhetorician James Bell's *NARRATIVE ... of the journey of Princess Cecilia, daughter of Gustavus I of Sweden ...* (BL, Royal MS 17 C XXIX) was probably written during the visit, and it is best understood as an encomium, celebrating Elizabeth as legitimate Protestant monarch, sought out by the admiring foreign traveller. The description of the journey itself is framed by addresses to Elizabeth, but the manuscript also contains a four-page list of place-names and distances, charting the ten-month journey from 'Stockehollome' to 'Caleys' (due to Sweden's war with Denmark, the party had to travel via Finland). This paper will focus on the list of places, and places mentioned in the narrative, in an attempt to understand the functions such attention to place and mapping serves, in the narrative, but also as part of a manuscript addressed and probably gifted to the Queen. To do so, inspiration will be taken from the academic fields of travel literature and cartography, and the travelogue will be placed alongside letters and reports related to the journey and the travellers, thus drawing attention to on the one hand the literally border-crossing attention paid to places that are made both international and local in the process, and on the other hand the polyglot and transnational communities needed for this kind of mobility to happen at all.

Biographical note: Anna Swärdh is a Docent (associate professor) at the Department of English, Stockholm University, specializing in the early modern period. Her work covers drama, poetry, and prose genres, but she has also published on historical and contemporary productions of Shakespeare. Most recently, she has focused on early modern exchanges between Sweden and England.

Attention and Ethics in Charlotte McConaghy's Novel *Migrations*

Sundman, Alice, Stockholm University, Sweden

In a time when animals are going extinct due to large-scale human-induced climate change, the protagonist in Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations* “decided to follow a bird over an ocean” from Greenland to Antarctica (3). Paying close attention to the sounds and movements, but also absence, of the world's last Arctic terns, to the ice-cold water of the ocean in which she submerges her body, and to the interactions between terns and seas in food catching as well as in migrations, the protagonist's first-person descriptions invite the reader to imaginatively experience a future world in which the effects of climate change are no longer distant scenarios but happening here and now.

Antony Fredriksson and Silvia Panizza (2022), building on the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Iris Murdoch, propose that *attention* holds “ethical value” (37). Distinguishing between two interrelated attitudes of attention, namely, “‘attention’ as an intentional act” and “‘attentiveness’ as an act of receptivity,” they point to ethical aspects inherent in both: an “unselfish, unbiased and world-disclosing quality of perception” is crucial to attention's ethical value, while “a receptive passivity” is central to the ethical dimension of attentiveness (38). According to these ideas, attention and attentiveness have ethical value in relation to the attending subject. Does literary portrayal of attention also hold ethical potential in relation to the reader? In her theory of hermeneutic narrative ethics, Hanna Meretoja points to the “power” of literary narratives to, among other things, “cultivate our sense of the possible” and “provide an ethical mode of understanding other lives and experiences” (2018, 89–90).

Inspired by these ideas, this paper investigates attention, including the interplay of intentional attention and receptive attentiveness, in McConaghy's text and explores to what extent these portrayals hold ethical potential in suggesting (new) ways of perceiving and understanding the interaction of avian life and seas in climate-changed environments. By extension, then, the paper asks if and how the novel's portrayal of attention to the world's dwindling populations of seabirds has the potential to impact ethical attitudes in a real world facing the consequences of the Anthropocene.

Biographical note: Alice Sundman holds a PhD in English literature from Stockholm University. Her current research focuses on literary portrayals of water in Anglophone fiction thematising climate change. She recently completed a postdoctoral project in

which she explored literary portrayals of intermediate places of water and land in relation to the Anthropocene. Her monograph *Toni Morrison and the Writing of Place* (Routledge, 2022) is based on her PhD thesis, and explores the creation and presentation of Toni Morrison's literary places.

Introducing a Nordic Model for Sustainable Multilingualism: A Critical Futures Approach

Yaghouti, Samira, University of Turku, Finland

This research explores the evolving role of English in the Nordic region and its implications for linguistic diversity, education, and business communication. Applying Futures Studies methodologies, the study introduces the Nordic Model for Sustainable Multilingualism, a forward-looking policy framework that balances English's global influence with the sustainability of national and regional languages. While English proficiency provides economic and educational advantages, its growing dominance in higher education, research, and corporate sectors raises concerns about domain loss and linguistic equity. This study examines how Nordic countries can develop sustainable language policies that integrate English without undermining national linguistic identities. Using the Six Pillars of Futures Studies, this research employs expert interviews, policy document analysis, scenario development, and Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to explore long-term policy pathways. The findings will provide policy recommendations for governments, universities, and businesses, ensuring multilingual practices that align with equity, accessibility, and global engagement. By offering Nordic-specific solutions for sustainable multilingualism, this study has broad applicability for other multilingual societies facing similar linguistic challenges. The results will be disseminated through academic publications, policy briefs, and direct stakeholder engagement with Nordic and European policymakers, businesses, and educators. This research contributes to shaping future-ready language policies, ensuring that the Nordic Model for Sustainable Multilingualism becomes an adaptable framework for maintaining linguistic diversity in an era of increasing global interconnectedness.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Futures Studies, Language Policy, Nordic Model, Digitalization, Sustainable Linguistic Diversity, Causal Layered Analysis, Scenario Development.

Biographical note: Doctoral Researcher at Finland Futures Research Center, Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.

Abstracts EFACIS

Beckett's Attention to Old Age in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*

de Angelis, Irene, University of Torino, Italy

This essay offers an examination of Beckett's depictions of old age in two plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, both of which deal, albeit in different ways, with forms of stasis, confinement and disability. Beckett's interest in the body, especially the old body, never wavered in his work. He put the ageing body on stage in twenty-three out of his thirty-two plays, so to ignore age in our readings of his work is to miss a crucial part of his artistic vision, for he emphasised "the futility of being born into bodies that are doomed to fail" (Swanson 2015, 232). The pain and exhaustion experienced by the characters is linked to their growing vulnerability, and their impairment reinforces the notion of this "grey" realm of life, where nothing seems to happen, or at least the days are endlessly postponed. The decline experienced by the four couples is both physical and mental, and follows the inexorable exhaustion of the entire universe, a state from which it is impossible to escape. Infirmary, repetition, doubt, failure, frustration and redirection are all part of the process, in a form of representation that is anti-naturalistic and that Michael Davidson's has defined as 'invalid modernism', an aesthetic of the disabled, alienated body and the alienated mind. Indeed, the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon reminds the audience of dementia and symbiosis, while the disabled Hamm and Clov are tragically co-dependent (Davidson 2019, 85).

Biographical Note: Irene De Angelis is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Turin. She is a board member of EFACIS and a member of the Steering Committee of the Interdepartmental Centre for Irish Studies CISIrI. Her publications include a monograph in Italian on the international outlook in Derek Mahon's poetry (2010); a monograph on W.B. Yeats's Noh Plays (2010) and *The Japanese Effect in Contemporary Irish Poetry* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012). She co-edited with Joseph Woods *Our Shared Japan. An Anthology of Contemporary Irish Poetry* (The Dedalus Press, 2007). She has also published essays and book chapters on authors as varied as Derek Mahon, Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Samuel Beckett and Marina Carr; Rudyard Kipling, W.S. Maugham, Aldous Huxley and Alan Bennett. In 2019 she

published an Italian translation of Mahon's *The Rain Bridge*, with drawings by Sarah Iremonger. Her research interests include East-West Studies, Ecocriticism, the representation of ageing in Literature, Literature and the Visual Arts.

Sensing Pedagogical Attention in Maria Edgeworth's Short (Non)Fiction

Armour, Hannah, University of Stuttgart, Germany

In the educational text, *Practical Education*, Maria Edgeworth co-wrote with her father, she stresses the importance in striking a balance between “cultivating the power of attention” in children without causing “fatigue”. Using terms laid out in their chapter ‘On Attention’, i.e. “abstraction” (“the power of withdrawing the attention”) and “transition” (“the power of turning attention quickly to different subjects”), this paper examines how Edgeworth utilizes these methods to prevent a fatigue of attention in her short fiction. Using ‘The Purple Jar’ as an access point, this paper investigates how Edgeworth alternates between senses within the short story to both “abstract” and “transition” reader’s attention to prevent fatigue. The narrative engages with dynamics of the gaze as the protagonist, Rosamund, is asked to choose between “a purple jar” and a replacement for her “quite worn out” shoes which “hurts me very much”. To make her decision, her mother encourages her to wait “till you have examined it more attentively”. Within the narrative, Edgeworth bounces between senses: Rosamund’s aesthetic focused gaze (sight), the physical pain she is in (touch), the “smell of new leather”, and, to lend an audible quality, repetition and staccato dialogue. From here, the paper engages with Edgeworth’s other short fiction and non-fiction, including ‘An Essay on Irish Bulls’ (which contains one chapter that concludes: “we beg to relieve the reader's attention, which must have been fatigued”) to discuss Edgeworth’s role as a forerunner in early 19th century Irish and English pedagogical attention studies.

Biographical note: Hannah Armour is a PhD student at the University of Stuttgart. Her thesis looks at the correlation between attention and the emergence of short fiction forms during the 19th century. She holds a Master’s degree from the University of Oxford and a BA from Royal Holloway, University of London.

In Attention To: The Ekphrases of Ciaran Carson's *Still Life*

Armstrong, Charles I., University of Agder, Norway

Ciaran Carson's final poetry volume, *Still Life*, was published posthumously in 2019. The poems of the volume enact encounters with visual artworks in the context of Carson's treatment for terminal lung cancer. This paper will address the distinctive ways in which these poems perform acts of attention. *Still Life* shows a form of heightened attentiveness related to the aestheticism formulated in Walter Pater's conclusion to *The Renaissance*. The latter claimed that "we are all under sentence of death", and that the logical result of this condition is the embrace of art, which "comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass". As for Pater, a particularly keen and quickened form of attentiveness is the result of Carson's sense of mortality. Also linked to the aesthetic, which in its traditional formulation resists conceptual closure, is the digressional form of Carson's viewing, which tends to blur oppositions between foreground and background, centre and periphery. In part, this is a form of stream of consciousness strongly linked to memory: "Because when looking at a thing we often drift into a memory of something else, / However tenuous the link" (17-18). Also essential to how *Still Life* sets this to work, is a strong consciousness of spatiality. It will be argued that Carson enacts a dislocation of space by crossing the divide between the home, the museum, and the virtuality of the internet, in the process enacting a particularly fluid and transitional form of ekphrasis.

Biographical note: Charles I. Armstrong is a professor of English literature at the University of Agder. He is the author of three monographs and the co-editor of seven essay collections, including *The Edinburgh Companion to W. B. Yeats and the Arts* (2024). He is currently the president of the International Yeats Society.

Framing Military Resistance: The Press and the Irish Home Rule Crisis

Azeredo, Luca Bertolani, Scuola Superiore Meridionale, Naples, Italy

The emergence of Na Fianna Eireann, the Young Citizen Volunteers (YCV) and the Enniskillen Horse marked key moments in the Irish Home Rule, embodying a militarized readiness to defend or destroy the Union. This paper explores how these early paramilitary groups were portrayed in the British, Irish, English, and foreign press, focusing on the press's role in directing public attention toward specific events and narratives surrounding Unionist resistance. Through analysis of coverage of key events—such as the formation of these groups, their public parades, and their declarations of intent—this study examines how the press framed their activities in ways that polarized public opinion. According to the political ideology behind it, the press highlighted paramilitary groups as symbols of order, emphasizing their disciplined readiness as a bulwark against the perceived chaos of Home Rule or critiqued these movements, portraying them as harbingers of sectarian conflict and obstructionist defiance of democratic processes. This paper will interrogate how media outlets shaped perceptions by selectively emphasizing or obscuring aspects of Irish paramilitarism, constructing narratives that directed readers' attention toward either the legitimacy or the threat posed by these groups. The analysis also considers how press coverage influenced wider public discourse, both within Ireland and abroad, on the crisis of Home Rule. By focusing on the interplay between specific events, paramilitary activity, and media representation, this paper contributes to understanding the role of attention in shaping political and cultural responses during this pivotal period.

Biographical note: 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.

The Body in the Bog, *Crá*, and Historical Memory

Barton, Ruth, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

In 2024 a new Irish-language thriller *Crá* was launched on BBC Northern Ireland and the Irish language TV channel, TG4. Set in Donegal, the series opens with the discovery of a body in a bog. The dead woman is soon identified as local detective, Garda Conall Ó Súilleabháin's (Dónall Ó Héalai) late mother, Sabine, who has been missing for 15 years. The remainder of the six-part series is devoted to revisiting the events surrounding her disappearance, with old enmities soon emerging along with a fluctuating list of potential suspects. Overtly referencing the successful 'Nordic Noir' thriller genre, *Crá*'s commercial, transnational ambitions are evident. However, unlike many of the recent police procedurals and gangster dramas emanating from the national broadcaster, RTÉ, *Crá* evokes a strong sense of the local and the national through its cinematography and its use of the Irish language. In this paper I discuss the significance of place and time in this series. Specifically I consider the motif of the body in the bog as a discursive strategy for recalling a history of buried bog bodies and of missing people. The burial recalls the concealment of bodies, 'the Disappeared', during the Troubles, and equally the presumed murder and disposal of a number of female victims over the past decades. Equally, the setting of the border county, Donegal, often considered a 'forgotten county', alongside the revival of the Irish language, creates a series of palimpsests that invoke pastness and forgetting.

Biographical note: Ruth Barton is Professor in Film Studies at Trinity College Dublin. She has written widely on Irish cinema. Her most recent monograph, *Irish Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*, was published in 2019 by Manchester University Press. She has written critical biographies of Hedy Lamarr and Rex Ingram and is a regular film critic on RTÉ Radio's arts' programme, Arena.

“Not one of those type of Muslim”: Religious Violence and Stigma in *Hani and Ishu’s Guide to Fake Dating* by Adiba Jaigirdar

Borges, Esther Gazzola, University of São Paulo, Brazil

In the novel *Hani and Ishu’s Guide to Fake Dating* (2021), Irish-Bangladeshi author Adiba Jaigirdar explores the diasporic experience of sapphic characters in Irish contexts and the feeling of living between two cultures. As a consequence, the main characters face similar experiences of marginalisation, mostly regarding their religion, sexuality and ethnic background. More specifically, the character Humaira (Hani) has her sexuality denied by her Irish peers due to her following the Islamic faith and suffers multiple microaggressions under their hands due to her religious background. The character is pigeonholed into boxes and socially reprimanded whenever trying to step out of it, due to a lack of understanding and social empathy which can be traced to not only a lack of overall representation of Islamic Queerness but also an overarching project of restricting non-white heteronormativity that helps settle the current post-colonial status quo of queer iconography and identity within their own cultural heritage and their present life as immigrants to a foreign land. Hani is, thus, fighting not only to assert her identity, but in a permanent state of rejecting imposed standards that even their peers have come to internalise and, in that way, reproduce the fear to manage the “normality” she has grown to yearn.

Biographical note: Esther Borges is a PhD candidate at the University of São Paulo. Her dissertation focuses on Queer Diaspora in Irish literature and is financed by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP). Esther is an associate member of the Brazilian Association of Irish Studies, (ABEI), the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) and the Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses (AEDEI).

“Prick[ing] holes [...] in a very large and very tall fence”: European Literature and Cultural Exchange in Mid-Twentieth- Century Irish Periodicals

Boumans, Phyllis, Stockholm University, Sweden

Mid-twentieth-century Irish literary culture is often characterised as inward-looking, isolated, and somewhat separate from literary trends and developments gaining ground in continental Europe. Most prominent periodicals of this period, such as *The Bell*, *The Dublin Magazine*, or *Ireland To-Day* are often read in this way, as predominantly concerned with questions of nationhood and Irish identity or with creating a specifically Irish national literature for the newly-independent Republic. This paper, however, will show that in seeking to shape a national modern literature, many of these periodicals looked abroad, either in search of inspiration for possible new directions Irish literature could take, or to contemplate the place of Irish literature within a wider European literary framework. The magazine *Envoy*, for example, regularly surveyed European literary trends in articles such as “German Prose Fiction of To-Day” or “Modern Spanish Poetry”, often published criticism that drew parallels between Irish and European writers as in “Kavanagh and Baudelaire”, and translated work by writers as diverse as Anton Chekhov, Martin Heidegger and Gertrude Stein. *The Bell*, in turn, published several international issues which featured translated fiction from German, French, Greek, Hungarian, and frequently reviewed works by European writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Louis Aragon, Mario Soldati or Franz Kafka. This paper maps the attention for European literature in two mid-century magazines – *The Bell* (1940-1954) and *Envoy* (1949-1951) – and explores the ways in which the cultural mediation of European writing was used to serve these magazines’ wider literature-shaping agenda. In this way, the paper contributes to ongoing scholarly efforts which seek to position mid-century Irish literature in a transnational framework and makes a case for literary magazines as fertile platforms for cultural exchange in these middle decades.

Biographical note: Phyllis Boumans works as a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Stockholm University. She holds a PhD from KU Leuven and her research focuses on mid-twentieth-century Irish literature, periodical culture, short fiction studies, and literary radio studies. She has published in journals such as *Irish University Review* and *New*

Hibernia Review, and is co-editor of *The Edinburgh Companion of Irish Literature and Periodical Culture* (EUP, 2025).

Panel: Irish SF: Attending to the Irish Socio-Cultural Imaginary

Boller, Alessandra, University of Siegen, Germany

Sarah Joy Link, University of Wuppertal, Germany

This panel will investigate how contemporary speculative fiction from Ireland attends to the country's sociocultural imaginary. As a genre, Irish speculative fiction has drawn very little scholarly attention to date. This panel will pay special attention to the genre's subversive impetus, and explore the ways in which Irish speculative fiction employs unruly temporalities and thereby contributes to Ireland's cultural and political imagination. When examining temporalities, Ireland makes for an ideal subject of investigation because the country underwent a rapid but strained and incomplete transition from a predominantly rural, agricultural society to a modern, capitalist economic power in the late twentieth century. Furthermore, non-linear readings of Irish history reveal both frequent disruption and dislocation of space and time in what Christopher Morash calls the "fabric of the Irish experience of space and time as a culture that was in some respects pre-modern came into collision with modernity" ("Spectral Ireland" 13). Rather than viewing this development in established dichotomies, this panel focuses on the functionings of unruly temporalities by which we understand entanglements of past, present and future that run counter to traditional (for instance linear or cyclical) models of structuring temporal experiences. Through a number of case studies, we aim to demonstrate how the SF genre plays with temporalities to provide critical access to both Ireland's locally specific sociocultural imaginary and the genre's entanglement with politico-cultural transnational phenomena.

"the world is more here than it was before": Queer SF Temporalities in David Hayden's Short Fiction

Alessandra Boller, University of Siegen, Germany

The proposed talk introduces some basic theoretical ideas on "unruly temporalities" along the lines of spatio-temporal dislocation and notions of queer temporalities. It combines the general politics of such queering – as 'making strange' – with culture- and genre-specific reflections on the effects of non-linear temporalities in sf narratives. As I want to

point out, the defamiliarizing effects of queer temporalities in Irish sf mirror the effect a disruption of the western (grand) narrative of progress Irish society – or at least Irish nationalism – had traditionally been sceptical of (Morash, “Tantalized by Progress”) until the Celtic Tiger years. To illustrate these ideas, I will read two short stories from David Hayden’s *Darker With the Light On* through this lens. Hayden’s modernist short story cycle can hardly be classified in generic terms due to its inclusion of fantastic, dystopian and utopian tropes, among others. Based on the ideas of queer temporalities, I will outline the various forms of sf – as speculative fiction but also as a Harawayan speculative feminism and string figure game – which Hayden’s stories offer. I want to argue, firstly, that the spatio-temporal dislocations of these stories are produced through queer sf temporalities and, secondly, that the form invites a critical reading of Ireland’s socio-cultural narratives in the early twenty-first century.

Biographical note: Alessandra Boller is the author of one monograph (*Rethinking ‘the Human’ in Dystopian Times* (2018)) and the co-editor of various collective volumes. She has published widely on her diverse research interests, which include (queer) feminist approaches to speculative fiction, the Irish novel since the 1990s and Irish short fiction.

“Tommib and silence and rain and violence”: Myth and Temporality in Danny Denton’s *The Earlie King and the Kid in Yellow*

Sarah Joy Link, University of Wuppertal, Germany

This paper uses Danny Denton’s dystopian novel *The Earlie King and the Kid in Yellow* as a case study to explore the intricate connections between myth and temporality in Irish (speculative) fiction. Denton’s novel presents a compilation of fragmented documents – such as tape recordings, a play script, allegorical intermissions – that introduce the reader to the myth that has formed around the novel’s protagonist, the kid in yellow. While Irish fiction frequently employs mythological material as a means to assert unity and continuity – the Irish Literary Revival movement is a case in point – Denton’s novel subverts this trend through its fragmented representations of temporality. Through its mosaic structure and its characters’ beliefs, the text superimposes mythological signification on (storyworld) history. The temporal inconsistencies that result from this move, however, draw the reader’s attention to contradictions, oversimplifications and the forced constructedness of the myth around the kid in yellow. Through its temporal

entanglements, the novel thus ultimately resists the unifying allure of myth as an ideological force and subverts conservative nationalistic ideologies that rely on mythological continuity.

Biographical note: Sarah Joy Link is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Wuppertal's Center for Narrative Research. She is the author of *A Narratological Approach to Lists in Detective Fiction* (Palgrave, 2023). Her research interests include sensation and detective fiction, popular culture, narratology, Irish literature, and representations of time and temporality.

The Nation in the Last Years of Famine (1849-1852): Attending to Ireland's Agrarian Issues

de Bouvier, Anne-Catherine, University of Caen Normandy, France

When Carles Gavan Duffy re-issued *The Nation* in September 1849 as sole editor, Ireland was still in the throes of Famine, a massive demographic and social change was under way, and no further relief measures were to be expected from London. Until his final departure from Ireland in 1852, Duffy geared his editorial work towards calling Ireland to attend to her own regeneration, by assessing what resources were left to be mobilized for that end in the country, and striving to rebuild a national movement. During those years, following his “humble beginnings” approach in the new *Nation*, Duffy endeavoured to draw upon what signs there were of remaining/recovering tenant-farmer agency to establish a nation-wide tenant movement, in the hope of bringing Ireland's agrarian question to the fore in post-Famine politics in due course – in Ireland, and in the UK. Based on a study of *The Nation*, this paper will outline Duffy's editorial progress, from the assessment of the tenantry's predicament and resources, then through the organization of a national tenant-right movement, until his despair at seeing the establishment of a truly all-Ireland movement, and at securing the political attention he considered due to Ireland's agrarian predicament.

Biographical note: Anne-Catherine de Bouvier, Associate Professor in Irish and British history at the University of Caen Normandy, France; head of the research group in Irish Studies (GREI) and deputy head of the interdisciplinary research unit on the British Isles and North America (ERIBIA). A specialist of 19th century Ireland, with a focus on politics and the history of ideas, she has co-edited journal issues on the Famine and on Home Rule.² She is currently researching the treatment of the Famine in *The Nation*, Ireland's most widely read newspaper then, and the template for later nationalist periodicals.

² *La Question du Home Rule, 1870-1914. Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, special issue XXIV-2, 2019. Co-edited, and Introduction written with, Pauline Collombier-Lakeman (University of Lorraine). Chapter as author: « Isaac Butt: a Singular Political Path ».

La Grande Famine en Irlande 1845-1851. Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique, special issue XIX-2, 2014. Co-edited, and Introduction written with, Christophe Gillissen (University of Caen Normandie). Chapter as author : « L'échec programmé de la Loi sur les pauvres ».

Performing Authorship: Irish Writers and the Public Sphere

Brady, Deirdre F., Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland

Irish intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century continue to be a limitless source of new ideas about the world – the investigation into the creative lives of professional writers’ rupture historical narratives by unearthing new understandings of history, politics, literature and society. The issue of human rights, rationality and gender equality and the perception of writers of the period as the conscience of the world and protectors of freedom of expression, were ideas fermented, distilled and disseminated through intellectual circles and communicated through the medium of public spaces. For those engaged in the publishing industry, spatial organisation was critical for capturing the attention of their readers and shaping author identity. Writers utilised public forums such as government buildings, luxury hotels, city-based cafes, restaurants, and theatres, to cultivate the image of the writer, while at the same time, forging powerful relations within the book industry. This performance of authorship in high-profile venues challenges the perspective of the artist as a solitary figure and the often-over-valued perception of authorship as a private occupation. This paper will illustrate how writers and intellectuals in the Women Writers’ Club and Irish PEN regarded public spaces as landmarks of political and culture exchange and as hybrid sites of human and economic relations. Theorising the field of literature as a social space where literature creates and attracts economic and symbolic value suggests new ways of conceptualising narratives of authorship and the shaping of influence in the literary marketplace.

Biographical note: Deirdre F. Brady is the author of *Literary Coteries and the Irish Women Writers’ Club (1933-1958)*, published by Liverpool University Press. International journal publications include articles in *English Studies*, *The New Hibernia Review*, *Estudios Irlandeses*, *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*, *Bibliologia*, and contributions to *The Irish Times* and *Fortnight*.

Panel: Irish Women's Writing (1880–1920): Forgotten Irish Women's Voices: Late 19th Century Irish Women Writers and Periodical Print Cultures

Brassil, Geraldine Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland

Tara Giddens, University of Limerick, Ireland

This panel attends to under-researched Irish women writer's voices from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. We analyse periodical print cultures, the opportunities that became available within publishing, and the impact women writers had on Irish publications. Our panel investigates the work of women such as Sarah Atkinson (1823-1893), Rosa Mulholland (1841-1921), Charlotte Grace O'Brien (1845-1909), Mary Banim (c1847-1939), George Egerton (1859-1945) and Charlotte O'Connor Eccles (1863-1911). Tracing these diverse voices, we highlight Irish women's concerns and consistent engagement with contemporary social and political issues. Recognising Irish women writers and their work, we aim to demonstrate how they capitalised on periodical spaces to engage in popular debates. In addition, these women acknowledged and created spaces for other professional women.

Irish Women Writers and Nineteenth-century Print Media

Geraldine Brassil, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland

Connecting to a vibrant field of interest in nineteenth-century print culture and contributing to the recovery of mid-to-late nineteenth-century Irish women's writing, this paper takes Catholic-orientated periodicals and newspapers of the period as a central framework. Paying specific attention to gaps and absences of the female voice, the work of women such as Sarah Atkinson (1823-1893), Rosa Mulholland (1841-1921) and Mary Banim (c1847-1939) is investigated. Recovering the neglected work of these extraordinarily mobile literary ancestors and examining the diverse and often hybridised range of genres with which they engaged, what emerges are distinct voices and opinions. Female agency is implicit in the act of writing: Atkinson capitalised on the fluidity of genre to comment on a variety of subjects in her meticulously researched essays, biographical sketches, literary reviews and travel writing (the *Irish Quarterly Review*, *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine*, the *Irish Monthly*). Mulholland's fiction (*Duffy's*

Hibernian Sixpenny Magazine, the *Irish Monthly*) was purposeful, suggesting possibilities around women's role in society while Mary Banim's travel writing (*Weekly Freeman*) allowed her to present a positive image of Ireland and to correct what she saw as misunderstandings of a country and its people under the imperial gaze.

Biographical note: Geraldine Brassil holds a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship (2024). Her work focuses on the study and recovery of nineteenth-century Irish women writers. Published articles include, 'Women's Collaborative Literary Processes and Networks: Mary and Matilda Banims' Ireland', *English Studies* (2023) and 'Feminist Networks Connecting Dublin and London: Sarah Atkinson, Bessie Rayner Parkes, and the Power of the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press', *Victorian Periodicals Review* (2022).

Recovering Charlotte O'Connor Eccles' Journalism and Influence in *The Lady of the House*

Tara Giddens, University of Limerick, Ireland

Charlotte O'Connor Eccles (1863-1911) is a remarkable Irish woman journalist, editor, novelist, and translator who, despite her prolific career, has been nearly forgotten. My research works to amend this neglect of Eccles and her journalism. With a career spanning over twenty years, Eccles is mostly known for her article "The Experience of a Woman Journalist" (1893) published in *Blackwood's Magazine* early in her career. She wrote for several periodicals including the *Irish Monthly*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, and *The Windsow Magazine*. However, this paper will focus on her often ignored work for the Irish magazine *The Lady of the House* (1890-1924). My research analyses her influence on the ladies' magazine including her regular column, "Distinguished Irishwomen in London" (1890-1893), where she brings attention to other Irish career women and provides them a space to voice opinions on contemporary social and political issues. In addition, my paper will bring attention to Eccles' influence within the magazine as a possible sub-editor which accounts for the magazine's early focus on the activities, careers, and publications of several Irish women. Both the magazine and Eccles broke the mould in Irish magazine publishing, by constructing radical new role models for educated Irish women and have become an archive of forgotten Irish women's voices and texts.

Biographical note: Dr Tara Giddens is currently a Teaching Assistant with the School of English, Irish and Communications at the University of Limerick. She researches Irish women journalists from the nineteenth century and her article “Promoting Professional Networks: Charlotte O’Conor Eccles’ Journalism and Fiction” was published in a special issue for *English Studies*.

Situated and Multisensory Attention in Maeve Brennan's Dublin Stories

Bundschuh, Jessica, University of Stuttgart, Germany

The short stories set at 48 Cherryfield Avenue – where the Dublin City Council unveiled a commemorative plaque in 2023 in honor of Maeve Brennan's childhood home – construct a sense of partial and obscured vision to highlight the adjacency of the visible and the invisible; thus, Brennan's Dublin stories acknowledge the implicit dishonesty of any sensory knowledge that presumes to be unobstructed, detached and roaming. First published between 1953–1955 in *The New Yorker*, these autobiographical sketches of displacement and exile (especially “The Morning after the Fire,” “The Day We Got our Own Back,” “The Devil in Us” and “The Barrel of Rumours”) bind Brennan's backward-looking adult perspective to the localized gaze of a child protagonist embedded in Ranelagh during the 1920s and mid-1930s. In an effort to grant agency to a subject, too often powerless against a privileged, ‘unmarked’ focalizer (of the state or the church), Brennan's stories find their truth(s) in a form of situated and multisensory attention in which ‘proximity senses’ (smell, touch and taste) ground the ‘distance sense’ of sight. Studies on attentional capture support Brennan's aesthetic championing of a multisensory attention spread across modalities, more trenchant than unisensory attention, even if led by the dominating sense of sight. Following Donna Haraway's “Situated Knowledges” this contribution approaches Brennan's limited, subjective and disrupted vision as part of a long-standing feminist discourse that bequeaths hospitality and attention to multiple senses to disrupt the distant gaze of surveillance widely in effect in the early years of the Irish state.

Biographical note: Jessica Bundschuh is a Lecturer in English Literatures & Cultures at the University of Stuttgart with publications in *Review of Irish Studies in Europe*, *Ecozon@*, *Poetics Today*, *The Paris Review*, *EFACIS: Interfaces and Dialogues*, *Literary Matters & Études irlandaises*. She is co-editor of *Handbook on Poetic Forms* (forthcoming in 2025).

‘Revealing coldly what there is of chaos’: The Sea and Derek Mahon’s Re-Focusing of the Environment as Poetic Subject

de Búrca, Stephen, Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

The North Atlantic has been a source of inspiration in Irish literature from the earliest times – imaginatively, economically, politically and more recently, environmentally – and is a significant presence in many poets’ works. Irish poet Derek Mahon (1941-2020) wrote extensively about the environment, both in poetry and prose, and the sea appears consistently throughout his poetry. His perceptions, however, shifted dramatically in the early 2000s after a so-called ‘eco-turn’. Before this, he wrote *through* the environment where the sea was a metaphysical space in which he considered the self, life and mortality. In his later poetry, he wrote explicitly *about* the sea and environment in the context of the climate crisis – wildlife extinction, effects consumerism and pollution, global warming, etc. – to such an extent that Mahon is one of the first major Irish or British poet to write with a ‘sustained, direct engagement with climate change’ (Sam Solnick). But what is the cost of such a turn, of such a shifting in how we attend to the natural world? Can we continue to look out to sea and project oneself onto it without acknowledging the deep human damage to it, when such a space is a ‘natural burying place for contaminated rubbish’ (Rachel Carson)? Does poetry – and art in general – suffer as a result when it becomes more explicit? This paper will explore, through Mahon, this change in poetic attention and perception, and examine its wider implications to poetry and to our relationship with the natural world as an ‘imaginative resource’.

Biographical note: Stephen de Búrca is a poet, translator, and PhD candidate in Creative Writing (Poetry) at Queen’s University Belfast. His research is funded by the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council via Northern Bridge. His writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *PN Review*, and elsewhere.

Attending to Time and Space in *Falling Animals*

Böttcher, Carolin, Trier University, Germany

A dead man found on the beach immediately draws the reader's and the characters' attention in Sheila Armstrong's *Falling Animals* (2023). However, the dead man remains unnamed and locally unidentified until the end of the novel. *Falling Animals* demands the reader's attention at every turn. The novel's form shifts and turns the narrative's and the reader's attention from one character to the next, from one moment in time to the next. Like the tides, the chapters return to characters in various connections before receding again. In this paper, I argue that Armstrong's novel—ostensibly a murder mystery—grabs the reader's attention and holds tightly on to it not in uncovering the dead man's identity. Instead, the novel's form, setting, and chronology claim our attention to piece the different parts of the narrative together. I offer a reading of *Falling Animals* that casts the beach on which the dead man is found along with the coast and the surrounding village as simultaneously a chronotope and a heterotopia. Armstrong uses the dead body to draw the characters' attention to themselves and their surroundings in this remote village that is continuously cast as a glocal center. My reading can thus be situated in larger discussions of ecocriticism, of narrative time, and of historical time. It is no wonder that the novel ends with a chapter from the perspective of the dead, transcending both space and time that characters experience.

Biographical note: Carolin Böttcher is currently Jeanne Baret Fellow at Trier University. After receiving her PhD from UC San Diego, she has worked as a researcher and lecturer at the Universities of Munich and Jena. Her current project engages with an ecocritical approach to Irish literature and the coast.

Attending to Sound: Animals and Aurality in Early Irish Poetry

Coilféir, Máirtín, Université Concordia, Montréal, Canada

This paper offers a re-reading of some of oldest works in the Irish poetic tradition by attending to its descriptions of sound. Taking as its focus the alliterative and syllabic verse of the early medieval period, as well as its modern translations, its point of departure is the preponderance of animals at the very beginnings of Irish letters. In fact the poetry of 600 CE and subsequent centuries presents a veritable catalogue of the island's fauna: birds toot notes from trees as the scribe writes al fresco; cats hunt mice as the scholar studies his texts; bees and chafers hum in the ears of the hermit; red stags gallop over moorland, pursued by madmen. Pest and beast alike are documented by the Irish poets and chief among the traits described are the noises they make. Reflecting on these sonic dimensions of medieval verse, this paper suggests that certain early Irish poems might fruitfully be read in the light of modern theory on orality/aurality and the hierarchy of the senses. Taking as its springboard Walter Ong's oft-referenced schemata of the sensorium (or sense pyramid) in oral cultures, it attempts to open up an evocative but often opaque body of verse to some wider contexts of thought and perception. P.S. If accepted to the conference and should the organisers wish to assemble an Irish-language panel, I'd be happy to present this paper in Irish. A translation of the title would read: "Léamh Nua ar an tSean-Fhilíocht? Athchuaire ar na hAinmhithe i bhFilíocht na Meánaoise".

Biographical note: Máirtín Coilféir is Assistant Professor at the School of Irish Studies, Université Concordia, Montréal. He is the author of the monograph *Titíle* (LeabhairComhar, 2019) and his poetry has been anthologised in *Calling Cards* (Gallery Press, 2018). He writes on Irish-language literature and translation.

Bogland Narratives and Agencies in Recent Irish Non-fiction

Conan, Catherine, University of Western Brittany in Brest, France

Catherine Conan analyses the representation of bogland in recent Irish non-fiction, whether nature writing or popular environmental science by authors such as, among others, Gwen Wilkinson, Padraic Fogarty, Manchan Magan or Eoghan Daltun. The aim is to assess the extent to which awareness of ecological crises and the crucial importance of bogs worldwide ecologically (and therefore Ireland's potentially leading role in defining climate policies) but also culturally and symbolically has brought about a reappraisal and evolution of the classic heaneyesque metaphor of the bog as collective memory. Rather than centripetal, "bottomless" holes, can bogs, once one is aware of their ecology, be reconceived as places of creative entanglements with the more-than-human?

Biographical note: Catherine Conan is a senior lecturer in literature and Irish Studies at the University of Western Brittany in Brest, France. She has published articles on contemporary Irish literature read through the lens of political ecology and the critical posthumanities. She is the author of *La littérature irlandaise au XXI^e siècle: matière, espace, environnement* [*Irish literature in the 21st century: matter, space, environment*], published in 2021 with the Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

The Politics of Attention in Irish Great War Posters 1914–1918: Controlling the Narrative of Martial Violence through Visual Culture

Dion, Aimée, Université Laval, Quebec City, Canada

War posters were pivotal in shaping perceptions of the Great War in Irish civil society. Visual narratives shown in these tools of propaganda expose the politics of attention in wartime Ireland by steering focus both towards and away from the conflict's violent nature. How did iconography dictate what was seen and left unseen during the war? Imperial propaganda downplayed the conflict's violence to safeguard morale. By portraying military heroes and civilian victims, these posters crafted sanitized imagery designed to keep the bloodshed out of the public eye and mind. To shield Ireland's war involvement from criticism, posters distracted from the harsh realities faced by soldiers on the battlefield while spotlighting rumours of German atrocities against Belgian civilians to rally support for mobilization. Republican counter-propaganda challenged this narrative and highlighted the war's brutality to frame the war, the Rising and conscription as embedded in Ireland's historic struggle against British colonial rule. This rebuttal redirected public attention towards the violence against Irish soldiers and civilians, depicting images of martyrs and suffering to strengthen popular resistance against Britain's war and fuel aspirations for independence. Through iconographic and discursive analysis of Irish Great War posters, this presentation will explore the intersection of visual culture and violence and examine how (counter-)propaganda fought for public opinion by producing narratives that (re)directed Ireland's perception of the war. Drawing attention to and away from the war's brutality, tactics of representation and diversion aimed to control what civil society saw—and didn't see, about the war, its violence and its political implications for Ireland.

Biographical note: Aimée Dion is a PhD candidate and part-time lecturer in History at Université Laval. 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.

This Exercise in Attentiveness: Ciaran Carson's Models of Intention and Attention

Dunne, Cian, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

In his 2007 essay, Ciaran Carson, winding his way in writing through the Belfast streets of his youth, turns his attention to the etymological and historical origins for their naming. Through physical and metaphorical 'wayfaring,' Carson transports himself and the reader back in time in search of, not definitive answers, but rather, multitudinous connections to be made between that which he discovers and his own personal lived experience. It is through close attention to, firstly, his own physical sensations, and secondly, linguistic, geographical and historical contexts, that Carson manages to bridge the distance between past and present, for both himself and the reader. I interpret this tension between Carson's mediated experience and phenomenal perception through the lens of Piotr Blumczynski's definition of translationality— 'the experience of connecting with another reality across temporal and spatial distance through material, sensory mediation, may be a distinctly individual matter.' Drawing too on Tim Ingold's distinction between 'intentional and attentional models of action,' I argue that it is a combination of close, concentrated attention, and a more playful, associative openness to serendipitous happenstance, which allows for Carson to make such variety of connections as evidenced in his essay. To that end, I draw further connections between complimentary anthropological and translational theories of Ingold and Blumczynski— their arguments for 'becoming knowledgeable' and 'ubiquitous translation' respectively. In so doing, I suggest Carson's essay as an example of the 'wisdom that lies in attending to things.' Keywords: Attention; intention; wayfaring; translationality; knowledge

Biographical note: Cian Dunne is a first year PhD student in Translation at Queen's University Belfast. He is currently Co-Editor-in-Chief of *The Apiary*, having previously served as its translations editor while completing the MA Translation at Queen's. During his undergraduate degree at Trinity College Dublin, he was Editor-in-Chief of the *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*, Ireland's only journal dedicated exclusively to translation.

Attending to Mary Lavin's Uncollected Short Stories

D'hoker, Elke, University of Leuven, Belgium

In a career spanning five decades, Mary Lavin (1912-1996) wrote and published two novels and more than 100 stories. The majority of these stories were placed in magazines before being included in one of Lavin's collections. Yet some fifteen stories remain uncollected and can only be read in the periodicals or anthologies in which they first appeared. Some of these stories are children's stories: e.g. "Watching the Clock" (*Good Housekeeping*, 1940) or "Bubby" (*Homes and Gardens*, 1945). Other of these unpublished stories are more sketch-like than Lavin's mature stories, e.g. "The Old Pensioner" (*Envoy*, 1950) and "The Lady with the Umbrella" (*Blarney Annual*, 1950). Yet others seem very close in theme and form to Lavin's collected stories, e.g. "The Rabbit" (*American Mercury*, 1943), "The Handkerchief" (*Harper's Bazaar*, 1943) or "The Summer Snow" (*Cosmopolitan*, 1960), which makes it harder to decide why Lavin chose to leave them out of her collections. In this paper, I will consider these forgotten stories and try to assess why Lavin never chose to republish them. Reading these stories next to Lavin's collected stories and the very few statements she made about the form of the short story in interviews and essays, this paper will investigate what these uncollected stories can tell us about Lavin's poetics of the short story more in general.

Biographical note: Elke D'hoker is director of the KU Leuven Centre for Irish Studies. Recent publications include *Irish Women Writers and the Modern Short Story* (2016), *The Modern Short Story and Magazine Culture* (ed. with Chris Mourant; 2021), *Ethel Colburn Mayne. Selected Stories* (2021), and *The Writer's Torch. Reading Stories from The Bell* (ed. with Phyllis Boumans and Declan Meade, 2023). She is vice-president of EFACIS and an editor of *RISE*.

Irish Women and Marginality in Quebec's *Maison Sainte-Madeleine* (1850–1924)

Francoeur, Julie, Université Laval, Quebec City, Canada

In January 1850, the *Maison Sainte-Madeleine* was founded in Quebec City to shelter young women labeled as “wayward” and help them regain an “honest” place in society. Entrusted to Marie-Josephte Fitzbach, a devout Catholic widow, the institution emerged at a time when private charitable organizations struggled to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. While similar redemption houses proliferated in North America, France, the United Kingdom, and Ireland throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, *Maison Sainte-Madeleine* distinguished itself through its longevity and deep roots in Quebec City's urban landscape. My presentation examines the significant representation of Irish women at the *Maison Sainte-Madeleine*—a trend that parallels their equally disproportionate presence in Quebec City's common jail, where many sought refuge during harsh winters through “self-convictions.” This phenomenon reflects the extreme socioeconomic precariousness faced by Irish immigrants within the migratory context of the early 20th century. I will explore how the establishment of institutions like the *Maison Sainte-Madeleine*, including recent efforts to house sex workers, marks the early recognition of prostitution regulation as a societal “problem” in the 19th century. By examining the intersections of gender, migration, and institutionalization, I aim to shed light on systemic vulnerabilities that shaped Irish women's pathways to reform institutions and incarceration.

Biographical note: Julie Francoeur, PhD student at Université Laval under Johanne Daigle and Donald Fyson, researches women's social transgressions in Quebec and Philadelphia (19th–20th centuries). Her dissertation explores Magdalen asylums, institutions reforming “fallen women” to fit societal norms. Her 2018 master's thesis examined Quebec City's Women's Prison (Refuge Notre-Dame de la Merci).

An Exploration of Attention and Perception in the Relationship between the Host and the Immigrant in Bisi Adigun's *Not So Long Ago* (2006)

Gömceli, Nursen, University of Klagenfurt, Austria

As widely known, in its recent history, particularly during the mid-twentieth century, Ireland has repeatedly experienced large-scale mobility in the form of mass emigration, often resulting from economic recession. However, starting with the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' era in the mid-1990s, which was a time when the Irish economy was growing at a historically unprecedented rate, Ireland has started to witness mobility in the form of mass immigration. This unique period in Ireland's more recent history has instantly put Ireland into the position of a country which has started to host thousands of economic immigrants from diverse continents across the globe. A play that was the product of this particular period in the history of contemporary Ireland, Bisi Adigun's one-act play *Not So Long Ago* (2006) depicts the intercultural exchanges between the Irish and the (African) immigrants, while underlying the necessity for the development of a new understanding of Irishness that would be more inclusive and have the capacity to respond to the requirements of a culturally diverse society. Within the context of this play and within the frame of attention theory, this paper will aim at exploring to what extent the immigrant receives the necessary (cultural, personal) attention from the host, i.e. the Irish; how the immigrant and the host perceive one another in their intercultural exchanges; and in what ways this interaction influences and shapes the actions and identity of the two parts interacting.

Keywords: attention, migration, perception, Irishness, *Not So Long Ago*, Bisi Adigun.

Biographical note: Nursen Gömceli is Senior Lecturer at the University of Klagenfurt, Department of English, where she teaches in the fields of British and Irish Studies. Her research interests are in the areas of modern and contemporary British and Irish drama, feminist drama, suffrage drama, postdramatic theatre and literary linguistics. She has internationally published on the works of leading British and Irish playwrights such as Harold Pinter, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Kay Adshead, J.M. Synge, and Enda Walsh. Major publication: *Timberlake Wertenbaker and Contemporary British Feminist Drama* (Palo Alto, California: Academica Press, 2010).

Agitating for Attention: The Emergence of the Irish Land Reform Movement, 1847–1848

Gray, Peter, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

The years of the Great Famine are often regarded as a nadir of political activity in Ireland, with the partial exception of the ill-fated Young Ireland rebellion in summer 1848. However, the later 1840s witnessed the emergence of a quite a different mass political movement, the tenant-right campaign that would take on a national form with formation of the Irish Tenant League in 1850. Unlike both the endemic secret societies seeking to impose a localised 'agrarian law' and the would-be revolutionary Irish Confederation of 1848, the tenant-right movement aimed explicitly to draw the attention of Westminster to Irish agrarian grievances through non-violent mass action and through building political alliances in hope that these could be addressed through legislation. While unsuccessful, the movement embodied the development of a new form of politics in Ireland, one which would eventually attain much greater success with the Land League and United Irish League in the 1880s-1900s. The movement of the late 1840s-early 1850s also, remarkably, overcame intense religious differences in Irish society in pursuit of a common social objective, at least for a time. This paper places this emergence of this new form of politics in its political and socio-economic contexts, relating it to the stimuli and constraints imposed by the famine catastrophe, by focusing on the crisis years of 1847-8.

Biographical note: Peter Gray is Professor of Irish History and Director of the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University Belfast. His publications include *Famine, Land and Politics: British Government and Irish Society, 1843-50* (1999), *The Making of the Irish Poor Law* (2009) and *William Sharman Crawford and Ulster Radicalism* (2023).

Irish Patriotism in Maria Edgeworth's *Ormond* (1817)

Haataja, Aino, Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland

In this paper, I examine Maria Edgeworth's *Ormond* (1817) as a prelude to Irish cultural nationalism. In my doctoral thesis, I argue that Edgeworth's *Vivian* (1812) and *Patronage* (1814) address contemporary debates over the possibility of public virtue as associated with patriotism or country ideology. In contrast with *Vivian* and *Patronage*, which are set in England, Edgeworth's Irish novels do not thematise political patriotism to the same degree. Although they include some characters who are politicians, all of the protagonists of *Ennui*, *The Absentee*, and *Ormond*, are landowners and country gentlemen. Yet, attending to the theme in *Ormond*, a reading of it ought to temper an interpretation of the novel where the protagonist is viewed as a British or English figure who "is a personification of loyalty to the English crown", as Brian Hollingworth claims (Hollingworth 1997: 197), or as an allegory of the superiority of Anglo-Irish rule. I argue that in the description of the Black Islands which are the (imagined) kingdom of Cornelius O'Shane, the novel in fact implicitly represents Irish separatist patriotism neutrally and that Harry Ormond stands for an Englishman who is a naturalised Irishman, and so I join scholars such as Marilyn Butler and Clara Tuite who have emphasised Edgeworth's Irishness instead of seeing her as representing colonial power. In critiquing the corrupt politicking of the protagonist's guardian Sir Ulick O'Shane and a proud English identity that views the Irish as inferior, the novel partakes in Irish Patriot discourse.

Biographical note: Aino Haataja is a final-stage PhD candidate whose thesis research focuses on explaining why fashionable elite society or "what is called the world" is negatively valued in Edgeworth's fiction. Her wider research interests include women's writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and moral philosophy and sociability in literature.

Our Final End: Novels and Statehood in the Irish Free State, 1930–1939

Harkin, Keelan, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

In a 1941 essay, Sean O’Faolain remarked that the novel did not flourish amongst his generation of Irish writers in part because of a perceived social instability within the still fledgling independent Irish state: “All or most writers have hated their country as much as they simultaneously loved it. The difficulty of the Irish novelist is one of an adjustment of sympathy: he cannot make up his mind as to what to love and what to hate” (Kent 139). For O’Faolain this instability led to novels which were too topical, and thus uneven in execution, to stand up to the great traditions of France, England, and Russia. Yet that topicality, and even stylistic unevenness, need not simply be understood in terms of failure; reading the works of the 1930s reveals that Irish writers often turned to the novel specifically to deal with the politics of a fracturing modernity. This paper introduces a new SSHRC-funded research project which focuses on the way that Irish novelists in the 1930s attempted to negotiate ongoing debates over Irish statehood through their fiction. These novels suggest that the public imagination around such debates was informed by the ideas and movements being seen across the European Continent, which complicates the long-held perception of Irish cultural and political isolationism in Free State period. This paper will use a reading of Kate O’Brien’s *Pray for the Wanderer* as an example of the broader argument being explored in the project. As much as O’Brien’s novel is about the constricting and illiberal failures of the Irish censorship regime, it presents that critique through parallels to the political extremism found in fascist movements like those of Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco.

Biographical note: Keelan Harkin is Assistant Professor of Irish Literature at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. His forthcoming first book examines how Irish novelists have reimagined the definitions of good citizenship since the establishment of the Constitution of Ireland in 1937. His current project, which examines how Irish novelists circulated ideas about statehood in their fiction of the 1930s, has been awarded an Insight Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Keelan has published articles on Anne Enright, Tom O’Flaherty, Kate O’Brien, Mary Manning, and William Trevor in journals such as *Textual Practice*, *Irish University Review*, and the *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*.

Poetry, technology, and the ethics of attention in the work of Leontia Flynn, Nick Laird, and Paul Muldoon

Karhio, Anne, University of Inland, Norway

This presentation focus on attention in the poetry of Leontia Flynn, Nick Laird, and Paul Muldoon through the relationship, or tension, between attention and distraction, particularly in poems engaging with present-day media technologies and online environments. Leontia Flynn contrasts the single-minded narrative of “half-crazed pursuit / of ‘progress’” with the in-between zones of literal and figurative platforms and waiting rooms of train stations, digital environments, doctors’ surgeries and virtual meeting spaces, the present moment a border zone for anticipating the future (“On Platforms and in Plate-Glass Waiting Rooms”). Yet a poem can invite focus on this bracketed moment in time: “[the] border / in this poem [...], reader, / is you”. For Nick Laird, the ethical questions raised by technological production and consumerism are tied to the borders of material interfaces and environments in which they are embedded. The human body “interfaces” with the world when children mine the minerals needed for mobile screen interfaces that hide the digital economy's reliance of exploitation, and the speaker's complicity in the process. But lyric poetry's traditional gravitation towards a reflective centre, I suggest, can be re-employed as a means of resistance towards distraction as attention to the demands of generating data: in the 1998 essay “The Point of Poetry”, Paul Muldoon described the pull of unexpected, underlying meanings or curious etymologies of words like “focus”, from the Latin for “hearth”. Muldoon's own poetry, so often criticized for a lack of focus that constant slippages between words suggests, also demonstrates how associative connections are held together by “rhyme [as] a potent tool in the business of attracting and holding our attention”. The “business” of poetry thus challenges the “business” of industrial labour practices and the monetization of time. As Jonathan Crary has argued, the idea of “modern distraction” is crucial for understanding its “reciprocal relation to the rise of attentive norms and practices”. If, in the 19th century, poetry and art challenged the mechanical processes of the modern industrial economy through what Crary describes as “subjective withdrawal” as “inattentiveness and reverie”, in the 21st century network economy poetry faces the challenge of reclaiming our attention as agency and responsibility by bracketing the fragmented continuous present for critical and reflective freedom.

Biographical note: Anne Karhio is Associate Professor of English Literature at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. She has also lectured and held research positions at the University of Galway in Ireland, the University of Stavanger and the University of Bergen in Norway, and Université Rennes 2 in France. She is the author of *'Slight Return': Paul Muldoon's Poetics of Place* (Peter Lang, 2017) and co-editor of *Crisis and Contemporary Poetry* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). She has published widely on contemporary Irish poetry, digital literature and art, and the aesthetics of space and landscape in literature across media. She is also the President of the Nordic Irish Studies Network.

Female Expression and Demonic Possession in Frank Carney's *The Righteous Are Bold* (1946)

Kerski, Eva, University of Wuppertal, Germany

Irish drama of the mid-twentieth century has often been condemned for its lack of ingenuity. Only recently have aspects other than the portrayal of the bleak living conditions of postindependence Ireland drawn scholarly attention. Frank Carney's play *The Righteous Are Bold* attracted a large audience when it premiered at the Abbey Theatre in 1946 with its sensational display of an exorcism performed on its protagonist, Nora, who is possessed by a spirit. The plot involves blasphemous provocations, and the eventual death of the exorcising priest. While most interpretations read the play as reinforcing a conservative agenda—emphasising a return to social order with women as guardians of the home where the Irish nation is reproduced—I build on Mary Burke's analysis that Carney "disrupts any absolutely conclusive reading of the play's conservatism". My paper examines how Carney's play explores the intersection of discourses such as the discourses on gender, race, religion and (female) mental health through the Nora/spirit complex. In particular, I pay attention to the themes that Nora expresses in her state of possession, even though they were otherwise censored on the mid-twentieth-century Abbey stage. Although silenced at the end of the play, this character confronted contemporary audiences with strong atheist arguments and challenged predominant notions of femininity.

Biographical note: Eva Kerski. is a PhD candidate at the University of Wuppertal and former EFACIS communications officer. She researches family concepts in mid-20th century Irish drama. Other research interests include motherhood studies and editorial scholarship. Her work with the Walter Macken archive in Wuppertal has produced several publications.

Attention to Detail: Heinrich Böll's "Children of Eire"

Korthals, Thomas, University of Applied Sciences (HSHL), Lippstadt, Germany

Few people have shaped German perspectives on Ireland like Nobel-prize laureate Heinrich Böll. His travelogue 'Irish Journal', written in the 1950s, portrayed a peaceful island, unharmed by the second World War and full of lovable individuals, untouched by materialism or other evils of modern life at a time when a war-torn Germany began moving towards the economic miracle, a time full promises of new wealth. A few years after the publication of the 'Irish Journal', Böll wrote the script for 'Children of Eire' a documentary film about Ireland, and also later travelled to Ireland when the film was produced in the summer of 1960. In it, attention to detail was shown on many occasions when Böll shows the different aspects that made Ireland so lovable for himself and which he wanted to get across to his fellow countrymen, too. It is a very personal film, especially when viewing it through the lens of the earlier book. In my paper I will present Böll's film as an interesting historical document of Ireland in the early 1960s and take a closer look at the loving attention to detail he shows in his depiction of the country he was so fond of. The reception of the film in both Germany and Ireland will also be included, as they tell a lot about the different audiences. Finally, I will try and point out the specific point of view of Böll, which he managed to embed so deeply into the German collective imagination.

Biographical note: Thomas Korthals teaches English at the University of Applied Sciences (HSHL) in Lippstadt and as a secondary school teacher in Germany. Since 2000 he has spoken at various conferences of IASIL, EFACIS and NISN on a range of different topics. His research interests include the relationship of history and literature as well as German views on Ireland.

Surveillance and Responsibility in the Irish Poetry of the Economic Crisis (2008–2018)

Kruczkowska, Joanna, University of Łódź, Poland

The paper will explore the work of selected Irish poets who wrote about the economic crisis, including Cork poets Billy Ramsell and Thomas McCarthy, a poetess from Co. Roscommon, Alice Lyons, and others. Ramsell's main focus has been the surveillance of citizens by machines and corporations, though his work, similarly to Conor O'Callaghan's, also demonstrates fascination with technology in times of boom and bust. In the undercurrent of this fascination lies the anxiety of control, while the speakers' everyday life is subject to remote processes ("distant fears") involving virtual financing (debt, plastic money, online transfers), the standardising jargon of economy and the power of mysterious "men in grey suits." McCarthy and Lyons comment on the rampant construction business that provided the foundation for Irish prosperity but turned out to be unreliable, leaving behind ghost estates, ruined environment and unstable migration patterns. Economy infiltrated and deeply transformed Irish society, family life and identity (the new Irish "quantitative selves"), while those who should have borne responsibility for the post-crash Pandemonium (bankers, developers) arbitrarily shifted the burden of their private debt onto the average taxpayer. The poets in question also touch upon the illusory character and "conspiracy" of the Celtic Tiger, whose narratives verge on the metalanguage of literature ("all the gold was gorse, / And all investment was storytelling"). By doing so, they showcase the ambiguous and fragile relationship between writing and economy in times of the crisis.

Biographical note: Joanna Kruczkowska works as Associate Professor at the University of Łódź and specialises in comparative poetry in socio-political contexts, travel writing, ecocriticism and translation. Her publications include the monograph *Irish Poets and Modern Greece: Heaney, Mahon, Cavafy, Seferis* (Palgrave Macmillan 2017) and the edited volume *Landscapes of Irish and Greek Poets: Essays, Poems, Interviews* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018). Currently she is working on the poetry of the economic crisis in a comparative Irish-Greek framework.

Blind Spots, Liminality, and Invisibility: Representations of Homelessness in Sarah Carroll's *The Girl in Between* (2017) and Méabh de Brún's "Liminal Bus Café" (2017)

Leitner, Franca, University of Mannheim, Germany

In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery Gordon claims that "[t]o write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories" (17). This paper will focus on two literary texts which feature one of the most excluded and invisible communities in contemporary Ireland: homeless youth. While a recently conducted exit poll by the *Irish Times*, RTÉ, TG4 and TCD showed that housing and homelessness were the most important issues for Irish voters in the general election of 2024, people experiencing homelessness still suffer from a lack of attention and representations of homelessness in contemporary Irish fiction literature remain scarce. It seems that despite the calamitous situation and the ever-growing number of people experiencing homelessness or stuck in emergency accommodation, homeless people in Ireland remain in a liminal place, overlooked and invisible. Invisibility, in this context, can be understood as what Esther Peeren calls "social invisibility", which "refer[s] not to an inability to be visually apprehended but to a lack of social recognition" (82). Focusing on Sarah Carroll's young adult novel *The Girl in Between* and Méabh de Brún's short story "Liminal Bus Café", this paper will argue that both texts employ conventions of the ghost story to mirror feelings of invisibility and liminality, thus formulating a strong social critique of the marginalisation of the homeless community and drawing attention to what can be seen as one of contemporary Ireland's major blind spots.

Biographical note: Franca Leitner is a PhD candidate in Irish Studies at the University of Mannheim. 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 contemporary Irish fiction of the post-Celtic Tiger period.

Gendered, National and Conscripted: The Policing of Attention in Anna Burns's *Milkman*

Levin, Yael, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Anna Burns's 2018 Man Booker prize winner, *Milkman*, depicts a young woman whose community labels her "beyond the pale" because of her predilection for reading-while-walking. She asks a friend: "Are you saying it's okay for [Milkman] to go around with Semtex but not okay for me to read *Jane Eyre* in public?" (200). Her friend replies, "Semtex isn't unusual [...]. It fits in – more than your dangerous reading-while-walking fits in" (201). The retort suggests that, within the context of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, inattention is more offensive to local sensibilities than bomb-making. The passage offers two insights that will be central to this paper. First: the attention of human subjects is always under scrutiny; it is policed and regulated by the communities and groups with which individuals are affiliated. Second, attention is often the tool that allows the subject to escape the limitations and punishments that such communities enforce. The anchoring of this paper in the concept of attention dovetails with a long-standing critical interest in ways in which we define attention at the interface between literature, phenomenology and culture. Much work has been done on the ways in which attention informs human interaction with technology and media; critical studies have likewise been devoted to consumerist expressions of attention. This paper addresses the literary, social and psychological expressions of attention and the ways in which they are dynamically interconnected in the representation of the tensions between national and personal trauma.

Biographical note: Yael Levin is Associate Professor of English and Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is author of *Tracing the Aesthetic Principle in Conrad's Novels* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008) and *Joseph Conrad: Slow Modernism* (Oxford UP 2020). She is also the editor of two forthcoming volumes on attention: *The Evolution of Attention* (Magnes) and *Literary Attention (Poetics Today)*.

From “What a bloody awful country!” to “Hi Gerry, Hi Martin”: Examining the Shift in British State Discourse and Posturing on Northern Ireland throughout the Troubles

Lelourec, Lesley, Université Rennes 2, France

In 1970, Reginald Maudling, the incumbent British Home Secretary, famously uttered the words “What a bloody awful country! Bring me a large Scotch!” on returning by helicopter from his first visit to Northern Ireland. Such a reaction arguably marks a low point of engagement in Northern Irish affairs, and demonstrates alienation and estrangement. 27 years later, however, the New Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, would strike up a seemingly astonishing rapport with the leaders of Sinn Féin and title chapter 5 of her memoir “Hi Gerry, Hi Martin”, evincing a clear shift in approach to engaging with protagonists, from demonizing to humanizing, and from exclusion to inclusion. This paper will examine the attention – or lack of attention – that the British state has paid to Ireland in general and Northern Ireland in particular since the beginning of the Troubles in 1969. Drawing on press reports, official state relations, government policy and discourse, it will look at how the knowledge or ignorance of various UK governments regarding Ireland has impacted policy and subsequent events in the North of Ireland.

Biographical note: Lesley Lelourec has been a Senior Lecturer at Rennes 2 University since 2008, and was Vice President for International Relations from 2015 to 2023. Following on from her thesis entitled ‘La Perception anglaise de la question d'Irlande: enquête auprès de 39 habitants de Nottingham’, her work focuses on the representation of Northern Ireland and the conflict in Great Britain and Anglo-Irish relations. She has published on the media representation of Northern Ireland’s protagonists in the English press and the effects of the IRA bombings in England: ‘The Bad and the Ugly: Good guys after all? English media representations of Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley’, *Estudios Irlandeses*, Issue 4, p. 32-44, 2009. She has contributed to the only book devoted to the impact of the Troubles in Britain, ‘Responding to the IRA bombing campaign in mainland Britain: the case of Warrington’, in *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories*, eds. Graham Dawson, Jo Dover, Stephen Hopkins (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2016). She has also co-edited two books (with Grainne O’Keeffe-Vigneron): - ‘Ireland and Victims: Confronting the past, forging the

future', *Re-imagining Ireland Series*, volume 45 (Peter Lang: Oxford, 2012), and 'Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement: building a shared future from a troubled past?', *Re-imagining Ireland Series*, volume 90 (Peter Lang: Oxford, 2021).

Between Attention and Attachment: The McCourt Brothers and the Stylistic Imprint of the Return Motif

Levy Valensi, Sarah, University of Caen Normandy, France

How do the McCourt brothers' frequent journeys back to Ireland shape their literary style, and what do these returns reveal about their relationship with their homeland? This leading question will serve as a breadcrumb trail, guiding us back to the morpheme 'attend' in both its literal and figurative senses. Furthermore, the *-ing* suffix should not be overlooked, as it conveys a notion of ongoing action — a concept also present in the definition of the term. First, we will examine the McCourt brothers' relationship with Ireland, questioning whether it is rooted in attentiveness (a cognitive or observational engagement) or attachment (a deeper bond reminiscent of the concept of affect). Then, the second section will situate the brothers' frequent returns to Ireland within Mircea Eliade's theory of return. Eliade's concepts of sacred time and space provide a lens through which these journeys can be understood as more than mere physical travels. Finally, we will unpack the brothers' simultaneous love and aversion for Ireland, revealing an ambivalence that manifests in both their emotions and their literary styles. This duality profoundly shapes their writing, allowing the McCourtian corpus to serve as a rich site for exploring themes of identity, memory, and the enduring influence of Ireland on its diaspora.

Biographical note: Sarah Levy Valensi is a third-year PhD student at the University of Caen Normandie, France. She is a member of the doctoral School 'Normandy Humanities' and the ERIBIA research group. Sarah organises the doctoral seminars for ERIBIA and serves as a PhD student representative in the laboratory, the doctoral school and EFACIS. Additionally, she is in charge of teaching tutorials. Her PhD thesis, supervised by Mr. Bertrand Cardin, professor of Irish contemporary literature at the University of Caen Normandie, is entitled "Mirror Effects in the McCourt Brothers' Autobiographical Texts."

Art in an Unending Present: Depression and Ekphrasis in Sara Baume's *A Line Made by Walking*

Li, Ye, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

In the first chapter of Sara Baume's *A Line Made by Walking* (2017), the protagonist, Frankie, expresses her frustration with the homogeneous representation of cancer and depression on television, with only one exception, the millionaire speaker, who describes his bodily and perceptual sufferings in a kind of poetic manner that Frankie finds unexpectedly genuine and original. Like him, Frankie is dedicated to using a unique way to speak the complex feelings of being deeply afflicted by depression. This is particularly evident in how she interweaves her knowledge and practice of contemporary visual arts into her narration. Examining the use of ekphrasis, including Frankie's persistent verbal representation of contemporary artworks, various media, along with her accompanying description of ten photographs about deceased animals, this paper argues that her artistic engagement reflects an ongoing tension between life and death, self-preservation and self-devastation, nostalgia for the past and anxiety about the future, all while capturing the persistent suffering of an unending present. In addition, I highlight that through the innovative and diversiform use of ekphrasis, Baume, in fact, expands the novel's narrative form, rendering the ineffable torment and decay being experienced by those suffering from depression not only articulable but also perceptible.

Biographical note: Ye Li is a Ph.D. candidate at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), funded by an NTU Research Scholarship. Her research interests are Irish literature and art forms in modern and postmodern fiction. Her current research is to investigate the aesthetic and formal function of artist-narrators in recent experimental Irish writing.

National Myth, Ecology and Intertextuality in Biddy Jenkinson's *Mise, Subhó agus Maccó*

Markus, Radvan, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

The past few decades have witnessed a shift in attention to a number of Irish traditions, including the Irish language, medieval literature and folklore, which are no longer seen primarily as tokens of nationhood, but rather as an intellectual, emotional and symbolic resource for ecological thinking. One of the authors prominently engaged in this endeavour is the poet, short-story writer and playwright Biddy Jenkinson. Her one-act play *Mise, Subhó agus Maccó* (2000) ostensibly tells a touching story about three rather eccentric homeless characters, who, however, carry multiple layers of literary and mythic resonances. While *Subhó* is a modern-day reincarnation of the mad king Suibhne, *Mise*, whose name is taken from Patrick Pearse's famous poem "Mise Éire", clearly acts as a personification of Ireland. Unlike her predecessors such as Cathleen Ni Houlihan or the *spéirmná* of 18th-century *aisling* poetry, though, she takes a more active role, impersonating also numerous forceful women from medieval and early modern narratives, such as Mis, Derbforgaill, Medb or Macha Mongrua. The play's characters are deeply connected to the environment, taking care of four shrubs or trees in a city park, reminiscent of Ní Houlihan's "four green fields", but also of the *bili*, venerated trees of the *dindsenchas* tradition. The symbolic woman (and the whole tradition from which she stems) thus no longer represents nationhood only, but rather the land itself, including its non-human inhabitants. The play is an accusation of the economic reductionism of Celtic Tiger Ireland as well as a plea for a move away from exploitation towards guardianship.

Biographical note: Radvan Markus is senior lecturer in the Irish language and literature at Charles University, Prague. He is the author of *Carnabhal na Marbh: Cré na Cille agus Litriocht an Domhain* (Leabhar Breac, 2023) and has published widely on modern(ist) Irish-language prose and drama. He also translates from Irish to Czech.

Attending to Education in Northern Ireland: A Dialogical Approach

McAleer, Ryan, KU Leuven, Belgium

While the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement of 1998 brought an end to three decades of political violence in Northern Ireland, religious sectarianism still marks many aspects of the regions society. The education system regularly comes under particular criticism for hampering progress in the promotion of a shared society, since Protestants and Catholics remain, largely, educated separately. With little prospect of structural change and no appetite on the part of faith-based schools to question the status quo, this paper tentatively explores an approach that could begin to reimagine how Catholic education is delivered in the current, socio-cultural context. Recognising dialogue as an essential category for theology today can help recontextualise Catholic education in Northern Ireland in a way that embraces the challenges of a post-secular, post-Christian context, while also actively contributing to the aspirations of the peace process. Lessons from the model of the ‘Catholic Dialogue School’ practiced in countries like Belgium, Australia, and parts of the USA, can enable Irish Catholic school leadership to engage more directly and sincerely with current debates on education. Building upon this model for a post-conflict, religiously divided society such as Northern Ireland can also challenge school leadership to be open to alternative structures that are potentially more culturally and politically plausible. Far from threatening the valuable place of faith-based education or advocating for so-called ‘neutral’ educational institutions, a *dialogical approach* to education can attend to the formation of religious-cultural identity but in spaces that positively engage with the religious-cultural other.

Biographical note: Ryan McAleer is a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven. A member of the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies, his research explores the systematic theological-philosophical foundations for a vision of the ‘Catholic Dialogue School in the post-secular, post-Christian, and post-conflict context of Northern Ireland.

The Battle for Attention in *Kavanagh's Weekly*

Mills, Elliott, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

When *Kavanagh's Weekly* released its final edition on 5th July 1952, its extended editorial attacked not only its enemies but its friends in the form of readers and supporters. In Patrick Kavanagh's estimation, this category of reader did not collectively amount to 'a serious reading public'. 'Week after week they bought our publication', Kavanagh continued, 'enjoyed it, but in no way co-operated, never wrote in or showed their interest'. Thus *Kavanagh's Weekly* started with a criticism of the 'victory of mediocrity' in which an inattentive public opinion was shaped by a 'false materialism' not based 'based on realities' but on salaries, and ended its run three months later by locating resituating the same diagnosis towards its own readership. This paper will explore how *Kavanagh's Weekly's* idea of creating an attentive readership – 'a few thousand people the power to think critically before it is too late' – contains a subconscious concession (in 'before it is too late') that its philosophy of complete independence within the commercial marketplace of weekly print publishing necessarily runs counter to its aim of fostering that same readership in the long run—only by initiating an interplay with what Kavanagh considered to be unthinking mediocrity would a paper such as this been able become a sustainable operation and thus have been able to foster an attentive readership, which it seemed from the outset paradoxically determined to enliven whilst being unconvinced of its existence.

Biographical note: Elliott Mills is a Research Ireland Postdoctoral Fellow at Trinity College, where he also completed his PhD. He is currently editing a book of essays titled *Irish Writers and State Bureaucracy* (to be published by Liverpool University Press) and completing his monograph, *Flann O'Brien and His Media: Writing in Mid-Twentieth Century Ireland*.

Turning the Bogs into Discursive Places: Peats and Socially-engaged Art Practices

Morisson, Valérie, Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3, France

Valérie Morisson explores these creative engagements with the bog, starting from early 20th century paintings, where turf-cutting was pictured as a traditional and wise usage of the soil. Later artworks conjured up the polychrony and mystery of the bogs; the materiality of their geological singularity was often superseded by poetic metaphors. As industrial peat extraction and mechanical turf-cutting are nowadays held responsible for the loss of valueless peatlands and biodiversity, recent conservation policies have been implemented and have changed the perception of the peats. Several contemporary Irish artists have responded to this shift. Deirdre O'Mahony's participative project, *T.U.R.F* (Transitional Understandings of Rural Futures, 2012–2013), Rosalind Lowry's residency at Lough Neagh, Co. Tyrone, (2019-2020), Monica de Bath's project *Plot/Ceapach* or Helen Flannagan's activist collaborations with the Friends of the Ardee Bog approach wetlands as social and discursive places. This paper intends to show how these new artistic praxes derived both from socially-engaged art and environmental art allow for a new understanding of bogs as multi-faceted biotopes whose resilience depends upon an acknowledgement of human/non-human entanglements. We hope with this panel to draw attention to an often disregarded and undervalued component of material-cultural entanglements, as well as encourage further comparative studies linking the cultural and symbolic environments of Ireland and Finland.

Biographical note: Valérie Morisson is a professor of British and Irish cultural history at Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 (UPVM3). She is a member of EMMA (Études Montpelliéraines du Monde Anglophone) and co-director of the Sensitive Ecologies axis of the GIS EIRE. She has written extensively on Irish and British visual culture with a specific emphasis on artistic praxis and field work. Many of her publications have explored the complex relation between art and national identity. Her latest book, *Locating the Self / Welcoming the Other in British and Irish Art 1990-2020* (Peter Lang, Oxford, 2022) investigates the way contemporary artists respond to the issue of belongingness; it addresses space and artistic praxis as relational and dialogical. Her recent research focuses on environmental art and the artists' intimate relation with the landscape or habitat. Her

latest publications and conferences investigate the way artists have moved away from landscape and approached the vegetal realm through new ontologies and praxes.

The presence of Ireland – Its History and Literature, Land- and Townscapes – in Vona Groarke's Poetry

Olinder, Britta, Gothenburg University, Sweden

Vona Groarke has a unique voice and a very Irish voice, grounded in the Irish landscape, in its history and its literary works. Particularly in her early collections we are confronted with the movement of the river and the sea on the west coast as an element of her own passion. As a description of an Irish townscape a special place in her poetry should be given to “Athlones,” a six-page poem of the many different towns to be seen in this central Irish place in the course of one day – a kind of Ulysses in shorter poetic form? In Groarke's attending to Ireland her versions of two Irish poems, both written by women in the eighteenth and ninth century respectively, should also be considered.

Biographical note: Britta Olinder has published on Restoration, Canadian, Australian, Indian, and Irish literature, including essays on John Hewitt, James Joyce, Anne Devlin, Christina Reid and Deirdre Madden. She is the co-editor of *Re-Mapping Exile: Realities and Metaphors in Irish Literature and History* (2006), and *Place and Memory in the New Ireland* (2009).

‘It isn’t a husband I want, my dear, it’s a friend’: Women’s Bonds and Heterosexual Marriage in the *Lady of the House*

Ottaviani, Lauren, KU Leuven, Belgium

This paper will explore the attention given to women’s friendships in the *Lady of the House*, Ireland’s foremost women’s magazine at the turn of the twentieth century. A growing body of scholarship in both gender and literary studies has foregrounded women’s homosocial and homoerotic relationships. For Sharon Marcus, Victorian female friendship was actually constitutive of heterosexual marriage; her extensive analysis of both women’s life writing and novels of the period concludes that ‘Victorian society, in which marriage between men and women was a supreme value, did not suppress bonds between women but actively promoted them.’ Though Marcus fruitfully applies this hypothesis to the Victorian novel, less attention has been paid to the place of female friendship in the Victorian women’s magazine. The subject nevertheless holds potential for investigation, especially given the well-established relationship between women’s magazines and period gender ideals. Reading across features including advice columns, nonfiction profiles, and short and serial fiction, this paper will aim to determine how the *Lady of the House* attends to bonds between women. It will hold that women’s bonds are central to the magazine’s construction of Irish bourgeois femininity and that these bonds can exist alongside – and, in rare cases, even replace – the institution of heterosexual marriage within its pages.

Biographical note: Lauren Ottaviani is an FWO-funded PhD student in English literature at KU Leuven, where her research deals with middlebrow English and Irish women’s magazines at the turn of the twentieth century. Working under Professor Elke D’hoker, her particular focus is on the confluence of domestic ideals and first-wave feminism.

Watch What You Eat: The Spectacle of Consumption in Anne Enright's Fiction

O'Leary, Ellen, University of Oxford, UK

This paper centres on the politics of spectatorship and consumption in Anne Enright's fiction. With particular attention to her novel *The Forgotten Waltz* and her short story "Little Sister", I investigate Enright's engagement of the body in modes of excess and privation. Through characters' illicit appetites, Enright exposes the ambiguities of pleasure and perversity. In doing so, she raises questions about desires and the right to pursue them. These texts highlight the problem of being a person and a thing, of having a mind and a body; Enright activates this quandary acutely through dysfunctional consumption. Where does the line between a person and their desire—or their illness—reside? From here, I examine the effect that observation (from the self and by others) has upon characters as they satiate various hungers. I examine the objectification intrinsic to disordered eating, pulling from the work of Guy Debord and Martha Nussbaum, among others. Enright tracks the grotesque spectacle of the body in flux, and I contend that asking readers to attend to this spectacle has moral and metaphysical implications. As a final turn, I examine readerly complicity. Enright creates visceral feelings of shame, amusement, and disgust, and these involuntary reactions are the concluding focus of my paper. I argue that Enright's work demands consideration of the voyeuristic possibilities intrinsic to the practice of reading.

Biographical note: Ellen O'Leary is a second-year DPhil student in the University of Oxford's English faculty. Her research centres on the consuming body in contemporary Irish fiction. She received her MFA from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and her BA from Harvard University.

Defining “Ireland and Northern Ireland”: The Terminology of Exclusion

Ó Dochartaigh, Pól, University of Galway, Ireland

The Southern Irish state formally gave itself the name “Ireland” in the 1937 constitution, and it has kept it ever since. In 1937 the name was justified by the claim that “The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas.” That claim was abandoned in 1998 under the 19th amendment to the constitution, which followed from the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, but the all-encompassing name of the state remained. A consequence of the Southern Irish State’s retention of the name “Ireland” is that the use of the formal titles of the two jurisdictions in Ireland leads to such contorted and ambiguous phrases as “Ireland and Northern Ireland”, which semantically includes the North twice but politically implies that “Ireland” stops four miles north of Dundalk. It also leads to confusion in various other contexts about what is meant by “Ireland”. There is little case law internationally around the question of how states name themselves, so that this paper does not make any statements about the legitimacy of any state or its name. Rather, by drawing on comparators with the position of Germany before and after unification, and by examining the semantic shifts in meaning of the terminology around Ireland as a whole, it addresses the specific question of the moral and ethical implications for both inclusion and preparedness for constitutional change of the Southern State’s insistence that it is “Ireland”.

Biographical note: Pól Ó Dochartaigh, MRIA, is Established Professor of European History at the University of Galway and was formerly Professor of German at Ulster University. He has lived and worked or studied in West Germany, the GDR, united Berlin and both Irish jurisdictions, as well as Great Britain.

Attending to/Attending through Spoken Word Poetry in Ireland

Palzer, Claire, University of Vienna, Austria

Attention in the study of Irish poetry has long been directed towards the lyric as the dominant mode of poetic production, with other poetic practices being largely marginalised (Falci, 2020), with some notable exceptions (cf. Mulhall, 2020; 2021; Swanepoel, 2021; Bundschuh, 2022). My research is part of an ongoing attempt to redress this discrepancy in attention by focusing on the vibrant spoken word scene. This paper begins by discussing the foundations of poetry performance research as an interdisciplinary field and the alternate modes of attention and specific methodologies required to attend to poetry performances. I elaborate on the difficulties emerging out of the lack of a historical attention to poetry performance while acknowledging the archival work done by individual organizers in Ireland that makes it possible to do analytical work now. Further, I outline the different approaches needed for the analysis of poetry that not only evokes orality but is oral. Finally, I turn to the objects of study themselves and outline both the generic conventions and medial opportunities that frequently allow spoken word poems to bring attention to societal, political, and cultural difficulties and injustices. Adapting work from the US and UK contexts, I explore the ways in which spoken word poetry in Ireland has functioned uniquely within the socio-political movements in Ireland in the past decade. Overall, I argue that spoken word poetry in Ireland requires more and different forms of attention from academic discourse, based on both its aesthetic potentials as well as its ongoing contributions to important conversations in Ireland.

Biographical note: Claire Palzer is a PhD researcher at the University of Vienna in the Poetry Off the Page. Her work focuses on spoken word poetry in Ireland from the 1990s to the present day, with particular attention to voice and place. Other interests include EFL pedagogy and contemporary historical fiction.

Attention to Things Silent in the Poetry of Derek Mahon

Pietrzak, Wit, University of Łódź, Poland

Although Derek Mahon's poetry can exude an aura of worldliness, especially in such poems as "The Hudson Letter," it tends to feel most at home in desolate places: disused sheds, abandoned garages or, increasingly, in woods or beaches far from the hustle and bustle of the modern world. For it is such derelict spots, he remarks, that "invite us to mine, to mind, our human resources and put ourselves in order" (Mahon, *Selected Prose* 17). Minding is here used as both caring for and heeding, and throughout his work, Mahon seeks to do just that: to care for and attend to what we so frequently fail to apprehend in our daily lives. His poetry is thus contemplative in the sense given to the term by Kevin Hart, who argues that contemplation differs from consideration or fascination in that it "commends us to look at something, not through it [...]" (87). Such a contemplative attitude characterises a lot of Mahon's poems, from "The Banished Gods" through "Ode to Björk" all the way to his last poems, he entreats us to "Darken our blinding light a bit / and turn the volume down so we can hear / ourselves thinking," for "even now the obscure silences might survive / where an original thought can thrive" (Mahon, *Washing Up* 43). In my presentation, I will focus on those instances in Mahon's work that evoke quietness as a contemplative mode in order to show that he strives to capture in the formal arrangement of the verse the communications from the seemingly silent world.

Biographical note: Wit Pietrzak is Professor of British Literature at the University of Łódź, Poland, he specialises in modernist and contemporary Irish and British poetry. His recent publications include *The Critical Thought of W. B. Yeats* (2017), *Constitutions of Self in Contemporary Irish Poetry* (2022) and *'All Will Be Swept Away': Dimensions of Elegy in the Poetry of Paul Muldoon* (2023).

Elizabeth Bowen's Attention to Ireland

Ramusino, Elena Cotta, University of Pavia, Italy

The purpose of this paper is to examine the attention that Elizabeth Bowen bestowed on Ireland in her production. Her attitude towards the country was varied in her non-fictional writing if compared to her fiction. While in the former she wrote about Ireland throughout her career, in the latter Ireland had a more limited position and her view of it was more complex, even if during the war years it represented a form of stability in a time of chaos. Her non-fictional writing on Ireland is multi-faceted, ranging from customs or aspects of the country explained in 'lighter' articles for magazines to more serious essays devoted to key issues such as the one on the Big House published in *The Bell*. Furthermore, the many pages devoted to the nature of (her own) Anglo-Irishness represent a crucial point in her relationship with Ireland, without forgetting her reports on Ireland during the 'Emergency' for the British Ministry of Information. After experiencing the war in London devastated by bombing, though, her view of Irish neutrality, at first fully supported, somehow changed. When writing about Ireland she mainly wrote about her class, whose position was losing ground over the years in the new country that had developed after independence. Much work has been done on the subject, especially by the late Eibhear Walshe, yet some ground is still open to reflection. For this reason, I would like to focus on her consideration for Ireland in her non-fictional writing.

Biographical note: Elena Cotta Ramusino teaches English literature at the University of Pavia. She has written on Yeats and Heaney; she has also worked on autobiography. She has studied contemporary translations from the classics and worked on the short story and the Gothic. She is a member of the editorial board of *Studi Irlandesi*.

The Evolution of Postmodern Futility: Examining Postmodern Techniques within Contemporary Irish Short Stories

Remes, Charlotte, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

What is the point of it all, this life? Beginning from this question, this paper intends to elucidate the significance of postmodern futility within contemporary Irish short stories.

Specifically, this paper aims to examine the aftermath of various historical events in Ireland upon its literary landscape. It will do so by tracing the way in which postmodern futility has evolved through the lenses of various contemporary Irish short stories. By examining the shifts in the narrative treatment of futility between the blurred transition from postmodernism to the contemporary, the paper establishes that the genre of Irish short stories is essential in reflecting the impact and effect of the socio-economic periods the writers' lived through. The stories that will be focussed on include the works of Samuel Beckett ("First Love") and Flann O'Brien ("John Duffy's Brother", "Scenes in a Novel") and will be paired respectively against the works of Kevin Barry ("Wifey Redux"), Cathy Sweeney ("Blue") and Yan Ge ("How I Fell in Love with the Well-Documented Life of Alexander Whelan"). I will thus be tracing the development of postmodern futility by observing the ways contemporary Irish writers have sought to innovate and develop 'traditional' postmodern techniques – namely self-reflexivity, absurdism and metafiction – when drawing attention to modern-day themes like mental illness, loneliness amidst connectivity, and diasporic identities. In particular, this paper seeks to observe the ways lived experience is not only futile, but perhaps made even more so by contemporary society's reliance on superficiality.

Biographical note: Charlotte Remes is currently pursuing her postgraduate studies at NTU Singapore, with particular interest in Contemporary Irish Literature. She recently graduated from NTU with her Bachelor of Arts in English. Her final year paper focuses heavily on the development of postmodern techniques within the contemporary landscape of Ireland.

Attending to the Self and the Other: The Rescaling of Friendship and Love from the Early 20th to the 21st Century in Novels by Katherine C. Thurston, Edna O'Brien and Sally Rooney

Rennhak, Katharina, University of Wuppertal, Germany

In the 21st century, narrative fiction as well as cultural and literary criticism interested in the construction of identities, have arguably shifted their attention from the single individual to its entanglement in social structures. In this context, theories of structures of desire and sexuality abound. The concepts and key terms of our critical discourse may have changed but Ronald A. Sharp's observation about critical and literary studies in the 1990s still rings true today: "Ask any English professor for a list of works that deal with love, sex, or marriage, and you will hear a dozen rattled off without a pause. But ask the same question about friendship and, after the first couple items, you are likely to hear a loud silence" (*The Norton Book of Friendship* 1991, p. 31). In my paper, I will argue that 'friendship' has, for a long time, been a crucial concept for Irish novelists whose works attend to social relations in order to renegotiate normative forms of attachment. More specifically, I will show how Katherine Thurston's *Max* (1910), Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960) and Sally Rooney's *Conversations with Friends* (2017) negotiate their protagonists' attachments to others by – more or less rigorously – disrupting the (traditional philosophical) binary between friendship and love. In doing so, and in restructuring the affective field of social attachment, they criticize the historically specific forms of patriarchy in which the novels and their characters are embedded and sketch alternative structures of attachment.

Biographical note: Katharina Rennhak is professor of English Literature at the University of Wuppertal. She has published widely on British and Irish Romanticism and contemporary fiction. Among her co-edited collections is *Walter Macken: Critical Perspectives* (2022). She also co-edited *Perspectives on the Irish Border*, vol. 6.2 of *RISE: Review of Irish Studies in Europe* (2023). She is president of EFACIS, and a member of the Executive of IASIL.

Attending to Work: Visible and Invisible Labour in Conor McPherson's Monologue Plays

Rohleder, Rebekka, Europa-Universität Flensburg, Germany

In line with the EFACIS 2025 call for papers, this paper will look at “how political and cultural narratives direct our attention to some aspects of society while creating blind spots elsewhere”. The blind spot in question will be work, which, as Kathi Weeks observed in 2011 in *The Problem with Work*, is often culturally represented only in an outdated manner, if at all, despite being central to most people's lives and livelihoods. Both the non-representations of work and labour and their outdated representation do crucial cultural work in their own right. It is therefore useful to analyse the ways in which a literary text shows some types of work and leaves others to be inferred only from their results, but makes the actual process invisible. In this paper, I will look at the ways in which two of Conor McPherson's monologue plays represent work, and the aspects of it to which they do and do not direct the audience's attention. *Rum and Vodka* (1992) shows the workplace as a problematic space of masculinity for the protagonist, who is in this instance also a narrator, while his wife's household work remains invisible. Work-related roles and situations are represented as very traditional, if not already outdated. On the other hand, *Port Authority* (2001) attends to a changing world of work which the three narrating protagonists are expected but not able to adapt to, leading to conflicts about in- and exclusion that are also conflicts about who receives and does not receive attention in the Celtic Tiger economy.

Biographical note: Rebekka Rohleder teaches at Europa-Universität Flensburg's Department for English and American Studies. Her research interests include British Romanticism (especially Mary Shelley and her circle), literary space, and representations of work in contemporary British and Irish culture.

Surveillance and Countering Surveillance in the Irish Land War 1879-82

Rynne, Frank, CY Cergy Paris University, France

Surveillance and policing were essential government tools in mid-Victorian Ireland. During the Fenian crisis of the mid 1860s the Dublin Metropolitan Police became the first police force in the world to use photographing prisoners as a standard practice. Intelligence led policing in Ireland was a core factor in the governance of Ireland in the mid to late 19th c. However, the ability the government to observe, control and indeed analyse their intelligence was severely challenged during the Irish Land War 1879-82. Faced with a cadre trained in revolutionary methods both in Ireland and the USA and further complicated by a changed theatre of operation from the urban based Fenian movement of the 1860s to a rural mass agitation from 1879, the government was generally on the back foot in this period.

This paper will examine the nature of intelligence policing during the Irish Land War drawing from archival sources including government papers, police intelligence reports and Irish revolutionaries' documents to explore the shadow war and counter strokes in the battle for supremacy during the Irish Land War.

Biographical note: Frank Rynne is a Senior Lecturer in Irish History and British Studies at CY Cergy Paris University and a Visiting Research Fellow attached to the Department of History, Trinity College Dublin. He is a member of (EA 7392) CY Agora research group at CY Cergy Paris and an associate member of (EA 4398) Primes/Erin at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle. He recently curated The Year of the French exhibition at Centre Cultural Irlandais and the extended online exhibition to mark the 225th anniversary of the French participation in the 1798 Rebellion.

The Image of the Irish Immigration in British National Archives: A Study of the Representation of the Irish Population in Britain between 1921 and 1937

Salmi, Kamel, Sorbonne Nouvelle University, Paris, France

Speaking about the subject of “attention”, this presentation explores how British authorities monitored Irish immigration. Since the Great Famine of 1847, Ireland experienced massive emigration, with over 500,000 Irish citizens and descendants living in the UK by its independence. For the Irish diaspora in England, the period between the creation of the Irish Free State and the drafting of the Irish Constitution in 1937 represents a pivotal stage regarding the laws that would later regulate Irish emigration to Great Britain. This was mainly due to the transformation of the status of Irish immigrants from “subjects of the empire” to that of citizens of an independent territory regulated by the Alien Act. Aware of the many studies on this crucial period of Irish history, this paper will aim to analyze a wide range of archives highlighting the discussions that took place between British authorities on the question of Irish immigration. The representation of the Irish population in the British National Archives during this period underwent three key phases. Before the Irish Free State’s creation, the British authorities categorized the Irish by social and political status, such as “paupers” or “workers,” but after 1921, they began using terms such as “natives of the IFS (Irish Free State).” However, when the political situation evolved towards a complete independence for Ireland, phrases like “immigration from Ireland” emerged, reflecting the shifting political context. Amidst political ambiguity, Ireland's role as a crucial source of labor exemplifies how attention to economic needs shaped immigration policies in the United Kingdom. Reflecting on this period highlights the importance of acknowledging Ireland's historical contributions to workforce dynamics and the laws that emerged in response.

Biographical note: Kamel Salmi ED-625 CREW (Centre for Research on the English-speaking World). Ph.D. student at Sorbonne Nouvelle University, currently conducting a comparative study of diasporas in the English and French-speaking world. My research focuses generally on the question of immigration, but also covers topics such as coloniality, national identity, assimilation and integration. Thesis title: *France and the United Kingdom, lands of exile: a comparative study of the Algerian and Irish diasporas post-independence.*

Attention to Nature in Contemporary Irish Writing: Sara Baume, *A Line Made by Walking*; Kerri ní Dochartaigh, *Thin Places*; Manchan Magán, *Thirty-Two Words for Lost Fields: Lost Words of the Irish Landscape*

Schaff, Barbara, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany

In this paper, I aim to explore the attention to Irish nature, particularly the interconnectedness between nature, a human subject position, and the experience of loss in three contemporary texts. Baume, ní Dochartaigh and Magán highlight how attention to nature is affected by moments of crisis: personal challenges like illness, loss, displacement as well as political catastrophes. Jonathan Crary has observed how the modernist crisis of the subject is closely related to new regimes of attention that no longer privilege the equation of vision with knowledge. Similarly, these works negotiate the perception of nature in new ways: as a probing experience and investigation that decenters the human subject position.

In these works, Irish nature is represented not as a backdrop or setting but as an active force that shapes the narrative, influences the characters' mental state and mode of expression, thus creating a dual experience of observation and writing. The protagonists navigate family dynamics and family heritage, cultural and linguistic identity, and a sense of belonging through their engagement with the Irish natural world. Attention to nature allows for a rich and lyrical language that immerses readers in the protagonists' emotional and sensory experiences. This focus on nature marks a radical departure from pastoral, naturalist, and humanist traditions, centering on a critical reflection of humanity's position within the natural world, as well as an acknowledgment of both nature's vulnerability as well as resilience. And most importantly, the emphasis on the linguistic and mythological Irishness of Irish nature reclaims the Celtic heritage for Irish nature writing.

Biographical note: Barbara Schaff is Professor of English Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Göttingen. Her main research interests are British literature and culture since the 19th century, with special interests in travel and new nature writing, literary tourism and gender studies.

When Attentions Overrule Intentions: Megan Nolan's *Ordinary Human Failings* (2023)

Schwall, Hedwig, University of Leuven, Belgium

Looking at recent Irish fiction reveals many kinds of attention: slow or quick-flitting, feminine or masculine, to inside and outside worlds. While Sara Baume's work and Kerri Ní Dochartaigh's *Cacophony of Bone* (2023) are of the former kind, Michael Magee's *Close to Home* (2023) is quick; but Megan Nolan's *Ordinary Human Failings* (2023) occupies a rich in-between field. Starting from Michael Baxandall's study of attention (which finds superb examples in eighteenth-century painting) this paper wants to analyse how Nolan aptly manages *literary* forms to calibrate forms of attention. In her first novel (2021), the eponymous "acts of desperation" were a result of unwanted attention from social media; in *Ordinary Human Failings* (2023) the unwanted attention is institutional, coming from the gutter press. Yet while the novel opens as a tale of Two Nations (poor families without any 'nous' versus a shrewd journalist) it turns out that people in both groups excel at keeping levels of awareness in themselves separate from each other. As the novel focuses on matters of agency and on the effect of life and death drives, intentions fall by the wayside as attention to people's deeper selves reveals unexpected inner worlds.

Biographical note: Hedwig Schwall is Emerita Professor with formal duties at the University of Leuven. She runs the EFACIS Book Club and, as EFACIS project director, is now starting on the third Kaleidoscope project, this time on "Faith, spirituality and art: new perspectives for the twenty-first century?". She teaches a course on Emotions in European art and is preparing a publication on mother-child relationships in contemporary Irish Fiction.

Identifying Future Economic Opportunities for Ireland in the Benelux Region

Sels, Annabel, KU Leuven, Belgium

Bas van Aarle, KU Leuven, Belgium

This study investigates opportunities for trade and investment flows between Ireland and the Benelux. First, we look at the trade flows between Ireland and the Benelux countries in the context of Ireland's global trade. We zoom in on the relative share of the Benelux as an export market for Ireland and the distribution of exports over industries. Subsequently, we study the foreign direct investment inflow from the Benelux into Ireland with a focus on greenfield investments. Next, an overview of the impact of the Brexit on trade between the UK on the one hand and Ireland and the Benelux countries. In addition, the potential effects on trade and investment of two recent important EU policy initiatives, the Green Deal and the Digital Single Market are highlighted. Finally we focus on two case study sectors, namely tourism from the Benelux in Ireland and the hydrogen industry in the Benelux.

Biographical note: Annabel T. H. Sels is a Professor in International Business and Strategy at the Faculty of Economics and Business of KU Leuven, Belgium. Her research interest within international business focuses on cross-border mergers and acquisitions, within Europe and from emerging market economies. Besides, she is interested in the antecedents and consequences of greenfield investment in European countries and the role of institutions such as investment promotion agencies in stimulating the attractiveness of investment locations.

Bas Van Aarle is a senior researcher at the Leuven Institute for Irish Studies, KU Leuven. His research interests include most areas of theoretical and empirical macroeconomic research, in particular applications to European integration issues.

New Speakers' Accommodation towards and Dissociation from Irish English

Shimada, Tamami, Meikai University, Chiba, Japan

O'Sullivan, Joan, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland

The linguistic environment of Ireland has undergone major change in recent decades due to net immigration, with twenty percent of the usually resident population born outside Ireland (2022 Population Census). This paper focuses on Irish English (IrE) (the variety of English spoken in Ireland) as perceived by both native speakers of this variety and by 'new speakers' (i.e. those who were born and raised outside Ireland and have become resident in Ireland). The term 'new speaker' in this context is associated with later acquisition of a particular language or a variety. This paper examines identity-making in discourse by new speakers of Irish English. The examination is undertaken in two aspects: (i) the examination of sociolinguistic attitudes by analysing frequent words in conversation-style interviews, and (ii) the examination of linguistic performance in terms of self-representation by analysing the agreement/disagreement as regards self-reported features representing 'Irishness'. According to Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles et al 1987), speakers may converge to another speaker's way of speaking in order to gain their social approval or in order to identify with a particular speech community. Our data, still limited, reveals that newcomers vary in the commitment to or dissociation from IrE. The paper further discusses factors impacting the difference in attitudes. Overall, it highlights the indexical effect of the features perceived as Irish on identity-making in interactions within the speech community of IrE.

Biographical note: Tamami Shimada is Professor in English Linguistics at Meikai University, Japan. She has been undertaking linguistic fieldwork in Ireland for over twenty years. Her current project is entitled "Linguistic knowledge and language change: Testing and forming a theory of social meaning formation based on Irish English usage data" [JSPS_20K00611].

Joan O'Sullivan is a Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland. Her research is predominantly in Irish English, including the discourse of Ireland's Travelling community and the linguistics of Irish radio advertising. Her monograph, *Corpus Linguistics and the Analysis of Sociolinguistics Change* (Routledge) was published in 2019.

Attending to the Ordinary: Mike McCormack's Ecology of Attention

Sinoimeri, Lea, ULCO – Université du Littoral et de la Côte d'Opale, France

This paper borrows its title from Yves Citton's book *The Ecology of Attention* (*Pour une écologie de l'attention*, 2014). Drawing on Citton's idea of attention as a collective resource, situated at the intersection of a complex net of social, political and aesthetic relations, it proposes a reading of Mike McCormack's narrative work, notably his two novels *Solar Bones* (2016) and *This Plague of Souls* (2023) as fictions of attention, in the double sense of attentive ('attentif') and considerate ('attentionné') narratives that invite us to rethink our place in the world and reflect on our shared conditions of life. In their great difference of tone, setting and style, the two novels attend to the ordinary, the unremarked and the seemingly mundane in similar ways. While Ireland emerges in the background of both novels as an uncertain country shaped by multiple economic, social, political and historical fractures, McCormack seems to shift his narrative focus away from monumental events, historical ruptures and extraordinary characters. In *Solar Bones*, he initiates an attentive investigation of the nuanced, imperceptible transitions of daily life and the common 'non-events' that shape the routines of ordinary experience. This renewed interest in the complexities and ambiguities of the everyday is paired with a decentered perspective - away from urban streets and public spaces, and into coastal, rural and domestic settings - and with a heightened interest in formal experimentation. *This Plague of Souls* continues this journey, while building an 'ecology of attention' inside a much darker and apocalyptic imaginary world. The paper will seek to address the complex forms of aesthetic attention that McCormack's invents in his novels by laying bare the stuff of everyday existence while insisting on the pressure to generate meaning and value from the rhythms of ordinary life.

Biographical note: Lea Sinoimeri is a Senior Lecturer in Anglophone Studies at ULCO, Université du Littoral, Côte d'Opale. Her research interests lie in Irish literature of the 20th and 21st centuries, with a focus on the intersections between philosophy and literature, the work of Samuel Beckett and contemporary experimental narrative forms. She has published several articles on Samuel Beckett and other modernist and contemporary authors. Her current research investigates the notion of the ordinary and everyday aesthetics in contemporary Irish literature.

“As though he was meeting himself there”: The Resetting of Personal and Collective Perception in *Small Things Like These* (2021) by Claire Keegan

Strusi, Valeria, University of Sassari, Italy

In the weeks preceding Christmas 1985, Bill Furlong is repeatedly ambushed by his reflected image and the increasingly hard-to-ignore significance of details, habits, and situations he has always thought too small to heed. Plunged into pockets of contemplation about himself and the life he has been living, Furlong grows in (self)awareness to eventually challenge the code of silence and the Church control over what takes place at the local convent. Tracking Furlong’s path from absentmindedness to attention to action in order to highlight how new perspectives engender acts of both questioning and caring, this paper endeavours to explore two lines of enquiry. First, the correlation between Furlong’s personal journey towards awareness and Ireland’s own collective process of “meeting itself” with regard to the Mother and Baby Homes. Second, Keegan’s “attending to Ireland” via a Dickensian novella that, in revealing the hypocrisies of a society which enabled systemic injustices, reflects about literature’s role in matters of personal and collective responsibility throughout Ireland’s past, present and future.

Biographical note: Valeria Strusi is a PhD student at the University of Sassari. Her research centres on affective responses to climate change (with a focus on ecological grief) in contemporary, anglophone nonfiction and poetry from the Anglo-Irish Archipelago, with particular emphasis on the negotiation between uncertainty and hope.

Attention to Ireland's Past and Present in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*

Tallone, Giovanna, Independent Researcher

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* was published in 2007 and was welcomed as the novel of the Celtic Tiger for its detailed and sensitive insight into the changes occurring in the country in the early 21st century. The image of the Luas that opens the novel highlights the attention to modernity that underlies the text and its focus on transport, landscape, communication and affluence, while the changes in the patterns of Irish society are exemplified by workers and immigrants from Eastern Europe. However, loosely rewriting Tolstoj's *Anna Karenina*, *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* interlaces attention to modernity and to tradition in an extended sense, in particular to Ní Dhuibhne's academic background in folklore. In fact, her novels, short stories and plays draw on the richness of Irish folklore and also *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* displays overt and implicit folkloric references. The novel is thus a form of continuity in Ní Dhuibhne's mode of writing, in which her awareness of the Ireland of the past interlaces with concern with contemporary Ireland, following the *files rouges* between tradition and modernity that characterize her fiction.

The purpose of this paper is to take into account thematic exploration of the attention to past and present, tradition and modernity in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, making also reference to her postmodern rewriting of traditional folk and fairy tales, which can provide a reading key to similar patterns in her fiction at large.

Biographical Note: Giovanna Tallone has a degree in Modern Languages from Università Cattolica, Milan and a PhD in English Studies from the University of Florence. An independent researcher, she has published essays and critical reviews on Irish women writers and contemporary Irish drama. She is a member of the editorial board of *Studi Irlandesi*.

Field Work: Northern Poets on the Move

Theinová, Daniela, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

The opening poem in Alan Gillis's debut collection, *Somebody, Somewhere* (2004), starts by ostensibly defining itself against the pastoralizing tendencies of twentieth-century Northern Irish poetry, thereby drawing attention to a landscape of nostalgia and violent divisions. Indeed, what the ironically titled 'The Ulster Way' achieves is a sense of cohesiveness among poetic generations, while emphasising a continuity between the observing self and the general matter of the world. This paper explores the mobile perspective – traditionally favoured by the poets from the North, regardless of whether it is provided by the car or some other kind of travelling situation – and asks how its affordances have changed in the post-conflict context and with the worsening climate crisis. The territory that appears with cinematic fluidity through the window of the moving vehicle is not all 'out there' but refers us to a 'locus of desire' construed from within (Lippard). Situated on the intersection between the nomadic impulse and the more sedentary 'field work', these landscapes of the mind demand not just responsiveness, but responsibility and accountability. I attend to road and railway poems by Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Leontia Flynn and Padraig Regan and argue that these mobile structures have made it possible for the poets to both include and overcome the disrupted lyric subject associated with the twentieth century (Rabaté). 'Everything is about you. Now listen', concludes Gillis's poem, implying that – in Northern Ireland and a post-natural world – words like 'I', 'you' and 'us' can only be used self-consciously and ironically.

Biographical note: Daniela Theinová teaches at Charles University in Prague. She is the author of *Limits and Languages in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). Her recent contributions include essays in *Études Irlandaises*, *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* and *The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Irish Writing*. She is member of the editorial board of *RISE* and, together with Brian Ó Conchubhair, edits the Pangur Bán Series at Wake Forest University Press.

New Trends of Irish Studies in China in the Resurgence of Area Studies

Wang, Zhanpeng, Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

The debates about the disciplinary identity of Area Studies provide new impetus for the Irish Studies in China in the second decade of the 21st century. As area studies was finally accredited in 2022 as a first-tiered (inter)discipline in the national catalogue for postgraduate education, the Irish Studies has shown several new trends. First, apart from the multidisciplinary Irish Studies Centre at BFSU and several centres mainly engaged in Irish literature, a dozen Irish studies centres or postgraduate programmes have emerged from more diverse disciplinary backgrounds such as finance, and economics. Second, studies in Irish literature and culture has gained dynamic in the new academic community. Growing studies on more contemporary writers provides insights on the changing Irishness in the aftermath of the crises in the 21st century (e.g. European debt crises, Brexit, refugee crises). Ireland's political and cultural landscapes are more and more embedded in the country's literature. Third, Brexit and other drastic changes in international political economy has led to greater academic interest in Ireland's global role, for example its relations with China, Britain, and the US. These developments have converged with new endeavours in Global Irish Studies to link and reflect on the national past and present (such as the decade of centenary commemorations). Chinese scholars have taken the opportunity of the creation of the new disciplinary subject to better understand the complexities of the evolving Irishness. The paper will also make a case study on how the Northern Ireland Issue is examined in China from an interdisciplinary and comprehensive perspectives.

Biographical note: Wang Zhanpeng is Professor and the Associate Dean of School of English and International Studies, and vice dean of Academy of Country and Area Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). He received the Presidential Distinguished Service Award of Ireland in 2022 as the founding director of the Irish Studies Centre at BFSU.

Attending to Consent: The Politics of ‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ and Obscenity in Joyce, Pine, and Coetzee

Witen, Michelle, Europa-Universität Flensburg, Germany

In J. M. Coetzee’s 2003 novel, *Elizabeth Costello*, the titular character rose to fictional fame as an author when she wrote the novel, *The House on Eccles Street*. Here, to quote her interviewer in the first “Lesson,” Elizabeth Costello “take[s Molly Bloom] out of the house on Eccles Street, where her husband and her lover and in a certain sense her author have confined her [...] and turned her loose on the streets of Dublin” (Coetzee 13-14). Moving beyond Molly, Gerty McDowell has also provided unexplored fodder for Coetzee, as one can see in Lesson 5, “The Humanities in Africa” when Costello rebrands and recontextualizes the ethics of sexual violence upon a male victim. Another novel that makes use of a Ulyssean context is Emilie Pine’s *Ruth & Pen* (2023). This more recent interpretation of the female flâneur depicts the titular characters in their day-long journey through the mental and physical space of Dublin. While there are, again, clear intertextualities with/ quotations from Molly Bloom, there are also questions raised around consent and sexual violence that echo “Nausicaa.” Using Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*, Pine’s *Ruth & Pen*, and Joyce’s *Ulysses* as its textual constellation, this paper demonstrates how all three authors converge around the politics of consent, and by extension, obscenity and sexual violence. Reading Joyce’s “Nausicaa” episode as a form of sexual assault will provide the baseline for this analysis. I will then examine how subtexts of the same are highlighted in Coetzee’s and Pine’s reworking and reinterpretation of “Nausicaa.”

Biographical note: Michelle Witen is Jr Professor of English and Irish Literature and Director of the EUF Centre for Irish Studies at the Europa-Universität Flensburg. Recent publications include *James Joyce and Absolute Music*, the *James Joyce Quarterly* co-edited Special Issue on “Joyce and the Nonhuman,” and the co-edited collection, *Modernism in Wonderland*.

Late Modernism: Character ‘Husks’ in Brian O’Nolan and Henry Miller

Wolke, Kevin, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

The nineteen-thirties were the walking corpse of literary modernism. Somewhere between Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby and Céline’s Ferdinand Bardamu, the excess of existence came to an apocalyptic halt. New ways to accept the horrors of everyday life were deemed necessary, with one world war survived and another, absurdly, looming on the horizon. Brian O’Nolan’s *At-Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) employed humor, fragmentation, and topical nonsense to counter the modernist hubris about a potential to evoke change. Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) was as sarcastic about its merit and can be read as a ruthlessly self-serving, autobiographical fiction. While O’Nolan stresses his novel’s artifice throughout, Miller suggests some degree of personal truth. Yet, through a late modernist framing, both novels become intelligible as insecure about their own aims. Both *Birds* and *Capricorn*, albeit in differing ways, assassinate the author, conceptualize modern literature, and develop mosaic anti-novels without heroes. Plot also becomes irrelevant. While O’Nolan is often described as an early postmodernist (e.g. Borg & Fagan 2017, Cornwell 2016, Cohen 1993), I intend to relate him to Miller’s status as a late modernist (e.g. Stevenson 2020, Clegg 2018, Gifford 2014). Methodologically, I will construct O’Nolan’s and Miller’s literary theories from their own writings, whether or not applicable to the fiction surrounding them, to put them into dialogue with late modernist theory. The authors’ helpless, externally controlled characters will become intelligible as phenomena without essences, even if the remaining modernist sensibilities in O’Nolan and Miller try to uphold essentiality. My literary approach incorporates philosophical concerns, which I find crucial for understanding the late modernist period.

Biographical note: Kevin Wolke is a PhD student in English Language and Literature at Åbo Akademi. He develops existentialist approaches to the American writers Henry Miller and Hubert Selby Jr. His newest article is titled “The Schopenhauer-Cioran Lineage: From Mysticism to Sainthood in Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*”.

Badgers, Oysters, Lobsters and Birds: Animacies and the Implicated Subject in Seamus Heaney's Animal Poems

Zirra, Maria, Stockholm University, Sweden

In concert with a number of studies on Seamus Heaney's ecological imagination (Farrier, Auge, Xie, Reddick) as well as Lucy Alford's *Poetics of Attention*, I propose an analysis of what I call the 'diffractive gaze' of animacies between human and nonhuman in his many animal poems ("Badgers", "Bone Dreams", "Away from It All", the "Sweeney" cycles, "Oysters", "The Otter", "The Skunk"). Animal subjects and the human/nonhuman contact zones recur across several of his early and mid-career volumes, including *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Field Work* (1979) and *Station Island* (1984). I borrow the terms 'animacy' from Mel Chen's exploration of processes of materialization, race and the nonhuman to explicate the way in which animals come to signify a point of ethical engagement and profession of political and cultural implication in Heaney's work shifting his poetic relationship with the unfolding Troubles. At the same time, the contact zones between human and nonhuman subjectivities create a series of diffractive (Barad, Harraway) poetic moments that ultimately accommodate a stratified new materialist model of cultural memory – a frank contemplation of violence and an ethics of implication (Rothberg). On account of the animacies of the lyrical gaze, Heaney continues a project of 'visual poetic memory' and ekphrastic vision that I have explored in my previous research.

Biographical note: Maria Zirra is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department of English at Stockholm University. Her current project funded by Ahlström Terserus Foundation analyzes visual verbal periodical forms in Caribbean literary magazines. Her previous postdoctoral project focused on visual artist and writer collaborations in periodicals from Southern Africa (VR). Maria's upcoming monograph *Visual Poetic Memory: Ekphrasis and Image-Text in Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott and Wopko Jensma* deals with postcolonial poetic writing about visual art and its aesthetic, political and material implications. She has published work on contemporary ekphrastic poetry, new materialism, multidirectional memory and complicity in Anglophone poetry.

Inheriting Attention: The House as a Mirror of Memory in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*

Zvoníčková, Andrea, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

In Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, the ancestral home called Mount Morris becomes a charged space that foregrounds themes of attention, inheritance, and identity. Although the novel is primarily set in wartime London, the journey to Ireland marks a critical shift for Stella and Roderick, compelling them to "attend" to the estate and its complex layered history. The house, steeped in memory while also marked by a lingering sense of disconnection, mirrors both characters' struggles to reconcile their present selves with the weight of the past. Drawing on Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, this paper aims to examine how Mount Morris acts as a repository of memory and a site of deferred responsibility. Initially a distant abstraction, the house demands an active engagement that disrupts the characters' tendencies toward avoidance and inattention. Stella's journey, in particular, challenges her romanticised perception of the estate, forcing her to confront its complexities as both a symbol of personal loss and fragment of Irish cultural inheritance. The paper will argue that Mount Morris represents an epicentre of both attention and inattention, a conduit for exploring themes of history and memory, as well as an inescapable burden of inheritance, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense. As the characters confront the house's complexities, they are forced to reckon with their personal histories, shaping their understanding of identity, responsibility, and the ties that bind them to the past.

Biographical note: Andrea Zvoníčková is a PhD student at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Charles University in Prague. Her doctoral research focuses on British and Irish literature, particularly examining the role of space and consciousness in the works of Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen.