

1A. Writing Truth & Reconciliation

Halil Ibrahim Arpa (Karatekin University), 'Can truth unite or will it lengthen the rift?: Facing the Troubles in *The Truth Commissioner*'.

David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* imagines a South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission to face the Troubles. His focus on the relation between power-truth and his awareness of how memory functions by repressing the past or selecting what it needs for the present put forward his talent in literature. His fiction is a hope for reconciliation and admires the South African experience, but it overlooks that the truth is a narration and the past still haunts the collective memory of South Africa where many people reject facing the past. The position one person stands affects his/her representation of the truth and makes it barely articulable. With its singularity, literature presents an alternative way of seeing the world around from its space à la Maurice Blanchot. Literature calls us for empathy and sympathy with the past for imagining a non-identitarian and non-sectarian democratic future without new troubles. Park's *The Truth Commissioner* is after such a dream. His counter-narration from the Post-agreement era has a reconciliatory function as we come to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. The traumatic legacy of the Troubles is haunting the present and by facing it *The Truth Commissioner* imagines healing at least. This study, however, will present another reading of the South African experience to argue how collective responsibility may result in collective catharsis instead of finding villains or subjective narrations for healing. By focusing on the limits to sympathy with Levinas and to unification with Agamben, this study probes many faces of truth including subjective vs. political truths, and argues how a new hegemonic truth after reconciliation may subjugate subjects and creates its own subaltern.

Bio: Dr. Halil Ibrahim Arpa works as an Asist. Prof. for English and Postcolonial Literature at Karatekin University, Türkiye. He has published articles on colonialism, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism, especially on Sudan, South Africa, and the Caribbean, His Ph.D. is on the neo-colonial condition in South Africa. His interest in Ireland is due to his experience with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. He is currently working on his book "Decolonial Historicism: A Literary Subversion of Colonial and Post-colonial Historiographies". He can be contacted via hiarpa@karatekin.edu.tr

Marie Gemrichova (Charles University). 'Private memories in the public eye – addressing the past in David Park's *The Truth Commissioner*'

David Park's novel *The Truth Commissioner* portrays several interconnected stories of characters in contemporary Northern Ireland, all of which become associated with a fictional Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which although discussed (and proposed as recently as 2023), has not been established in the province as yet. In Park's book, the narrative follows both the officers and politicians involved in the commission's organisation as well as several private individuals who become unwillingly swept by its proceedings and portrays some pressing outcomes that influence both public and private lives outside the local communities. Through these characters, Park displays the continuing influence of the Troubles on both private and public consciousness in Northern Ireland.

The paper proposes to look at the intersection between the private and public memory narratives in the span of the novel and at how the community and public demand influence private reflection and memory evaluation. It will discuss the narrative through the lens of memory studies, utilizing primarily Bernecker's terminology of truth and authenticity to discuss how an individual can recount their memory in a public setting (such as a truth commission), where their perception of past may become questioned. The paper will look at how these two concepts interact in regard to the particular characters and their self-representation and what influence a larger, public narrative has on them. By

consulting Bernecker's terms, it will discuss the issue of a correspondence between a past event and a character's experience and memory (authenticity) as opposed to an objective reality (truth).

Bio: Marie Gemrichova is a PhD student at the Centre for Irish Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. Her research focuses on memory narratives in contemporary Northern Irish novel. She is an editor of a student journal, *The Protagonist*, and a PhD representative for EFACIS.

Ryszard Bartnik (Adam Mickiewicz University), 'Glenn Patterson on Northern Ireland's commitment to (declarative) transformation'

Northern Ireland can be read through the lens of a continuous process of identity (re)construction, marked by a socio-political journey from conflict to 'peaceful' coexistence that has been part of the region's DNA for almost 25 years (counting from the 1998 watershed). Among those who have been actively participating both in the process of (re)formation and debates on its effectiveness is Glenn Patterson. Since the beginning of his writing career, this Northern Irish author has been addressing the region's local identity/local mentality. In this regard, he can be perceived as an authority on matters that reach beyond the literary field and touch upon the local social fabric. The aim of my paper would be to present Patterson's judgment on the transitory stage at which Northern Ireland's population finds itself at the beginning of the 2020s. In this analysis, to define the writer's stance, I shall use the 'hunter's paradigm', typical for legal sciences, which consists in "finding signs and deciphering tracks [as they] lead to the apprehension of what passed that way". In other words, the author's perception of an (un)divided Northern Ireland, how it is forged, becomes clearer when we "put together particulars (narrative minutiae) into a meaningful sequence" (Anker and Meyler 2018: 96). Such *modus operandi* provides a founding principle for seeing certain "trivial details" of Patterson's latest novel *Where are we now* as shedding light on a rather (un)satisfactory completion of the twenty-five-year-old peace process, especially when to juxtapose them (the aforementioned details) with other signs and traces placed by the author in his earlier (non-)fiction writing.

Bio: Dr hab. Ryszard Bartnik works as a tenured professor at Adam Mickiewicz University, in Poznań [Department of Literary Studies and Literary Linguistics]. As a teacher and academic, with expertise in the area of contemporary British/English/Northern Irish fiction, he specializes in studying correlations between novelistic writing and socio-political narratives. He is particularly interested in literary thematizations of such phenomena as 'trauma', 'memory', 'violence', 'reconciliation', 'divided societies' or 'fundamentalist thought/ideology'. His very recent book, published in 2017, was devoted to post-apartheid South African and post-Troubles Northern Irish literary narratives, and the ways their authors tried to discuss/heal the wounds of the past. Dr Bartnik's current scholarly interests have been slightly shifted to focus on how Northern Ireland's literature, twenty five years after the end (sic!) of the Troubles, depicts the region's collective mindset; but also on how British literary [non-]fiction and socio-political discourse have attempted to tackle the question/problem of Brexit.

1B. The Woman as Artist

Jie Wang (KU Leuven), 'A portrait of the woman artist in Deirdre Madden's *Nothing is Black*'

Since the late 19th century, important Irish writers such as Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, John McGahern and John Banville have written novels about the development of the artist. The artist novel or *Künstlerroman* has thus become an important tradition in Irish literary history. Irish women writers too have represented artists in their novels, yet their artistic *Bildungsroman* have not received much critical attention. As part of a larger investigation of female artist novels in Irish literature, this paper will analyze Deirdre Madden's *Nothing is Black* (1994) as a female *Künstlerroman*. Claire, the woman artist protagonist of Madden's novel struggles to establish her identity as a woman and as an artist. In this

way, the novel reflects the difficulties of female artists in late 20th century Ireland even as Madden herself negotiates the male-dominated tradition of the artist novel.

The paper first explores how Claire is torn between the gender roles expected of her as a woman and her aspiration to devote herself to an artistic career. In order to develop her career, Claire feels the need to isolate herself from the gender expectations of a patriarchal society and moves to remote rural area of Donegal to live as an artist. Furthermore, the paper demonstrates how Madden depicts Claire's artistic development in terms of the opposition between "Ivory Towers" and "Sacred Founts", which Maurice Beebe described as fundamental to the tradition of the artist novel, thus adapting this male tradition to the requirements of a female protagonist. Finally, I show how in her process of development as an artist, Claire also manages to overcome other tensions: between past and present, memory and reality, artist and muse, self and other.

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

Hedwig Schwall (KU Leuven), 'Maps of gaps: trauma and phantasm in Kerri ní Dochartaigh's *thin places*'

This paper will show how the traumatized protagonist of this memoir learns to articulate past horrors. This allows her not only to take a certain distance from them and to diagnose her problem, but she also finds hidden resources of the kind Christopher Bollas calls "psychic genera". The generative force of these psychic images enables the person to move from a false to a real self. But the narrator goes further: not only does she "undo the fear, to write that new language" (143) that she needs to rebuild her own life but, like Joyce's mouthpiece Stephen Dedalus, she criticizes ideologies which were upheld "in the false name of tradition". Thus encountering time and again "the reality of experience" the narrator uses four kinds of languages to spell out her predicament: the language of skin and gestures, of space, of images and objects. The essay is inspired by (among others) Agamben, Bollas, Winnicott, Schilder and Nancy.

Bio: Hedwig Schwall is emerita professor with formal duties at KU Leuven. She publishes on contemporary Irish fiction and on psychoanalytic interpretations of European art.

Katie Barnes (University of Salford), "'The actress and her overshadowed child": exploring partitions between public and private motherhood in Anne Enright's *Actress* (2020).

The pregnant body in Ireland has always been, and continues to be, a contentious place. Jacqueline Rose states that "In relation to the bodies of mothers, we have come far, but only so far" (Rose, 2018, p.56). As an attempt to push further debate about the pregnant body, this paper examines the partition between public and private motherhood in Anne Enright's 2020 novel *Actress* as explored through how the main character, Katherine O'Dell, relates with and to her daughter. I will theorise Enright's analysis in terms of the figure of suffering Mother Ireland to analyse the divide between Enright's representation of public and private motherhood, questioning how Katherine is perceived as a mother in the differing spheres. It will examine the physicality of the maternal body, looking in particular at the difference in perceptions of women after they become mothers. The paper will also explore the divide in attitudes towards different kinds of mothers, using Enright's representation of Katherine as career-driven to

explore how different methods of mothering are perceived in Irish society. It will argue that the physicality of pregnancy can break down the partition between the public and domestic spheres, exploring how Katherine's attitude to her pregnancy perpetuates traditional Irish attitudes towards motherhood. It will finally look at the changing relationship between mothers and daughters as they age, considering how Katherine's mothering of Norah as a child has affected their relationship as adults and examining how she has both perpetuated and strayed from traditional ideals of Irish motherhood.

Bio: Katie Barnes is a second year PhD candidate at the University of Salford researching representations of Irish motherhood and maternity in contemporary Irish literature. She is particularly interested in the depiction of the physical maternal body as well as the representation of reproductive choice in post-Repeal writing.

1C. The Ulster Crisis

Robin Adams (QUB) and Kyle Richmond (QUB), 'Who signed (and didn't sign) the Ulster Covenant? A case study of Co. Monaghan'

The decade of centenaries has stimulated new research into the experience of marginalised communities during the revolutionary period. This has included renewed interest in the Protestant minority of independent Ireland (Fitzpatrick, 2014; D'Alton & Milne, 2019; Hughes & Morrissey, 2020). A subset of this historiography has focussed on the considerable minority of Unionists who following partition found themselves in counties that bordered Northern Ireland: Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan (Dooley, 2000; Hughes, 2016).

In this paper, we add to that historiography by systematically analysing the 10,479 signatories of the 1912 Ulster Covenant and Declaration in Co Monaghan. We map the spatial distribution of these men and women and, by combining with the 1911 Census, investigate the extent to which they were synonymous with the Protestant population of that county. We ask, for example, whether any Protestants did not sign the Covenant and, if so, what their characteristics were. Similarly, we ask whether any Catholics signed, and if so what characterised them. Among other characteristics, we consider age, sex, socio-economic class, intermarriage, literacy, and location. We also compare this group with signatories of the nationalist Anti-Conscription Pledge (1918), contributors to the Anti-Conscription Fund (1918) and the Dáil's National Loan (1919-20). Finally, we investigate whether there is a correlation between signatories of the Ulster Covenant in a district as a percentage of the Protestant population, and the depopulation of Protestants in that district after independence.

Bio: Robin Adams is a Leverhulme early career fellow at Queen's University Belfast. He completed his doctorate in Oxford University in 2019. His first monograph, *Shadow of a Taxman: Who Funded the Irish Revolution?*, was published by OUP in 2022. He has also published in the *Historical Journal* and the *Business History Review*.

Kyle Richmond is a doctoral candidate at Queen's University Belfast, where his interests include historical demography, economic history and business history. His research has been published in the *Research Data Journal for the Humanities and Social Sciences*.

Luca Bertolani Azeredo (Scuola Superiore Meridionale), 'Na Fianna Eireann and the Young Citizen Volunteers: "boys willing to work for the independence of Ireland" & "responsible citizens with municipal patriotism"'

Early XX century Europe saw the establishment of paramilitary bodies as a reaction to what were considered modern social problems such as strikes, individualism, and the loss of physical culture. In Great Britain, Robert Baden-Powell decided to establish a body of scouts. His idea – in reaction to the imperial and military crisis of the Boer War – was to raise and drill a new stronger generation of

citizens, loyal imperial soldiers for the forthcoming European war. In reaction and in extension to this body, Ireland witnessed the establishment of two young paramilitary bodies: the nationalist Na Fianna Eireann, and the conservative Young Citizen Volunteers. Na Fianna were founded in 1909 in Dublin as a counterreaction to the imperial Boy Scouts to shape the revolutionary generation, rise up, and establish a free Ireland. They managed to expand beyond Dublin, enlisting some thousands of members. The Young Citizen Volunteers were formed in 1912 in Belfast with the aim of continuing Baden-Powell's ideals with the older boys giving them a sense of discipline and municipal nationalism. They failed to expand and were later incorporated into the Ulster Volunteer Force. This paper will analyse and compare the two movements, taking into consideration which role religion, social status, and different backgrounds had in the shaping of the young Irish generations. It will also be considered their establishment, the propaganda and culture production, the members' social backgrounds, the relationship with the later adult paramilitary bodies, and their participation in the Irish Revolution and in the Great War.

Bio: Luca Bertolani Azeredo is a PhD Student in Global History and Governance, at Scuola Superiore Meridionale (Naples, Italy)

1D. Ireland and the Planetary Emergency: Past, Present and Futures.

John Barry (QUB), 'Empire, ecocide and Ireland: the origins of and futures beyond economic growth'

Amanda Slevin (QUB), 'Socio-ecological (in)justice in Ireland'

Sean Fearon and John Barry (QUB), 'No united Ireland on a dead planet: post-growth perspectives on the constitutional future of Ireland'

Damian McIlroy, 'Re-union-ification: constitutional realignments, the climate crisis and inter-isles bioregionalism'

Whether in relation to analyses and interpretations of Irish history or current political, economic and cultural analyses, the interrelationship between human actors, movements and institutions and the nonhuman world, and changes within it, received less attention in scholarship. This panel aims to fill some of those gaps by examining how the modern and ecologically problematic conception of GDP economic growth has its origins in colonial Ireland with Sir William Petty in the 17th century and why in Ireland and other unsustainable and overdeveloped countries, we need to move beyond growth, and indeed beyond capitalism (Barry's paper). This theme is also explored in Slevin's paper examining the multiple ways 'actually existing unsustainability' in Ireland results in social, environmental and economic injustices, from exploitative resource extraction, such as Gold mining in the Sperrins to class inequalities of orthodox liberal policy responses to the climate crisis, such as the regressive impacts of a carbon tax. The panel also examines the disjuncture around current debates on reunification of Ireland that have largely ignored the implications of and for constitutional futures in relation to the climate and biodiversity crisis, and the ways integrating responses to the latter can suggest different institutional pathways for reconfiguring politics, economics and culture on and across the island of Ireland, and between it and the 'other island' of Great Britain and its constituent parts (Fearon and Barry and McIlroy's papers).

Bio: Amanda Slevin is Director of the Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action at Queen's University Belfast. Her research focuses on society-environment interactions, and her research interests include anthropogenic climate change; energy conflicts and just transition; climate praxis and transformative pedagogy.

Seán Fearon is a PhD researcher at Queen's University Belfast in the Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action (SECA). His research is in post-growth political economy and ecological economics,

and specifically in how to measure a transition to a post-growth state using ecological economic policy indicators.

Damian McIlroy is a PhD researcher at Queen's University Belfast. His doctoral research focuses on understanding of the human agency aligned with radical post-growth approaches to just transition and the transformative potential of organised labour and social movements.

John Barry is Professor of Green Political Economy at Queen's University Belfast, and co-chair of the Belfast Climate Commission. He works on post-growth and post-capitalist political economy, low carbon and sustainability transitions and citizen-based and civil society mobilisations on the planetary crisis in Ireland.

1E. Women in a Changing Irish Society

Lauren Ottaviani (KU Leuven), 'Domestic Femininity and the Irish Language Revival in the Writing of Mary E.L. Butler'

This paper will consider the work of writer and Gaelic League advocate Mary E.L. Butler across three turn-of-the-twentieth century periodicals, the United Irishman, An Claidheamh Soluis, and the Lady of the House. Despite her prominent standing within the period as both a writer of fiction and an advocate for the Irish language revival, Butler was been largely overlooked within Irish studies. Building on a small existing body of work focused on Butler's writing for radical papers such as United Irishman and An Claidheamh Soluis, this paper will consider how Butler's style and advocacy differed in her work for the Lady of the House, a monthly women's magazine to which she was a frequent contributor. It holds that studying her writing across periodicals can tell us not only about Butler's own strategies for success as a female journalist and activist in Dublin's notoriously difficult press environment at the turn of the twentieth century, but also about how she approached the tenuous issue of advocating the Celtic revival and 'Irish-Ireland' to a middle-class female readership that likely would not have universally shared her nationalist sympathies.

Bio: 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 domestic ideals and the women's suffrage movement.

Rachel Newell (QUB), "'We will be together, I think": perceptions of marriage, religion and criminality in the trial of a female bigamist, 1909'

The 1911 census enumerator found William and Ellen Blair living happily together in Anne St, Portaferry with their young daughter Edith May. Ellen's mother and step-father lived on the same street while William's parents lived nearby in High Street. However, only a year and a half before the enumerator's visit, Ellen had been charged with bigamy and William with aiding and abetting her. The two were married in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast on 23 August 1909 under false names. Yet they still returned to the tiny coastal town in which they had met, home to both of their families. Their illegal marriage was no great secret from their community. This paper uses witness depositions and newspaper reports from trials to discuss female bigamy in the north-east of Ireland, a more industrially developed and religiously diverse area which produced 60.6% of the Irish female bigamists charged between 1890 and 1919. Moreover, through its focus on Ellen Blair, it will also investigate the intersections between marriage, religion and criminality and how these were perceived by Ellen, her partners and their local community. In a country where divorce was not possible for all but the wealthiest, this paper will also

consider how and to what extent Ellen was able to gain agency in her experience of marriage, religion, the courts and life.

Bio: Rachel Newell is an AHRC Northern Bridge funded PhD student in the school of HAPP at Queen's University, Belfast. Her research focuses on female criminality and society in Ulster, 1880s -1920s.

Suzanne Jobling (QUB): "A matter of public interest": pension rights for women in the Republic of Ireland and UK'

Discussions of equal pay rarely engage with equal pension rights. However, women in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and UK have not always enjoyed pension equality. The rights they currently possess have only been acquired over the last 50 years. Historically, society's prioritisation of male breadwinners impacted women's participation in employment, contributing to a lack of awareness of women's pension needs. Initial equal pay legislation such as the British Equal Pay Act 1970 excluded these rights whilst the ROI Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act 1974 omitted them. EEC membership in 1973 challenged these omissions. The EEC's 1975 Equal Pay Directive included pension rights within its definition of equal pay and the foundational 1976 Defrenne case saw pension rights discussed in the European Court of Justice.

Addressing equal pensions presented a complex challenge for employers and consequently a number of pension equality claims followed equal pay implementation. In the ROI, the foundational 1977 Linson case alongside the 1978 claim by Senator Mary Robinson and her husband relating to Oireachtas pensions raised public awareness of the issue. In the UK, cases such as Garland vs. British Rail (1982) alongside Barber vs Guardian Royal Exchange (1990) challenged the status quo. This paper considers the circumstances and findings of these cases to assess their impact on the fight for pension rights in the ROI and UK, with particular reference to the EEC's influence on women's pension rights.

Bio: Suzanne is a History PhD student at Queen's University Belfast. After pursuing a career in IT consultancy, she returned to education, graduating with an MA in History in 2019. Her research focuses on employment equality legislation in the Republic of Ireland and UK, between 1970 and the early 1990s.

1F. Crossing Borders: Defying Partitions in their Multiple Manifestations

Juan Manuel Rizzo (University of Buenos Aires), 'Conversations and writings on contemporary Ireland'. [via Teams]

María Graciela Eliggi (UNLPam), 'Translating borders, conflicts and crises: an approach to understanding Ireland's socio-historic development'. [via Teams]

Even though we seem to live in an open world, a world where freedom is an asset, a world that "advertises" open minds and policies, conviviality, cooperation, empathy and the like, we could never depart from a world tightened by strict binary oppositions which are still difficult to overcome and which always come handy to express ourselves in reference to so many subjects of daily, social and political life. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; North and South, Catholics and Protestants; us and them; times of prosperity and times of scarcity; the Irish in Ireland and the Irish Diaspora; Irish and English, to name only some of the most relevant.

The central topic of this Conference posits a clear opposition between unions and partitions in Ireland- a fact that cannot be ignored- with the aim, we assume, of provoking moments of reflection that could derive in better understanding first of what happened and what has been done to produce change (history) and second, and perhaps more important, what is currently being done to overcome those recurrent crises of the past that are still part of and even prevail in the present. This panel may seem

disparate in its composition but we will see in the end that our presentations are linked by a common concern: Ireland, its socio-historic-economic and cultural development- especially in the past century and the present- and also a shared interest, namely: how the need to overcome the notion of partition, whether physical, emotional or imaginary is enacted in different ways.

Juan Manuel Rizzo is an Economist, professor, researcher and writer. He studied Economics at the University of Buenos Aires and he is an MA candidate in International Economic Relations (UBA). He developed a research project connecting Trinity College Dublin and the Center for Crossborder Studies. He also gave lectures on the economic relations of subnational entities and the European Union and on Irish studies at Trinity College Dublin. He also carries out research in the National University of La Pampa.

María Graciela Eliggi is a translator and Literatures in English professor at UNLPam who coordinates a research program on contemporary Irish literature, history and the Irish diaspora to South America. She published articles, co-edited/published books. First president and co-founder of AEIS (Asociación de Estudios Irlandeses del Sur). Founder and coordinator of the “Edna O’Brien-Colum McCann” Free Extracurricular Chair of Irish Studies and the Irish diaspora.