

The Animal in Ireland, Real and Imagined: An International and Interdisciplinary Symposium
University of Würzburg, 21-23 February 2024
Abstracts & Bios (as of February 18, 2024)

Abstracts

Keynote 1:

Martín Veiga, University College Cork, Ireland:

“Nonhuman Animals and Posthuman Restitution in Contemporary Irish and Galician Poetry”

Awareness of the need to enhance the quality of the often complex –and traditionally asymmetric– interactions between human and nonhuman animals has increased in recent years and has perhaps accelerated in the face of the fast-paced environmental deterioration heralded in the context of the Anthropocene. Both the social sciences and the humanities have come to terms with the urgency of creating new vocabularies to refer to this unprecedented catastrophe that has compromised the future of the world as we have known it. Some responses propose discourses and practices that decentre anthropocentric views by recognising the agency of nonhuman animals and restoring their damaged centrality. Following my previous participation in research projects related to ecofeminism and the animal trope, I am currently involved in a new project on posthuman intersections in Irish and Galician literatures. Some of the work carried out as part of these research projects constitute the background to my lecture, which proposes the discussion of representations of human and nonhuman animals in several case studies of contemporary Irish and Galician poetry. The lecture claims the necessity to develop an empathetic posthumanism that is based on interspecies solidarity and that moves from sustainability towards restitution.

Keynote 2:

Kathryn Kirkpatrick, Appalachian State University, NC, USA:

"Animal Poetics and Climate Crisis"

Ireland's National Biodiversity Data Centre reports that 20% of the species assessed in Ireland are currently at risk in this era of the sixth mass extinction brought on by climate crisis. Given the existential threat to all sentient beings, what *is* the role of literary studies in the changing environmental, social, and political climates we all find ourselves living in? This talk explores my own attempts as an Irish studies scholar at creative and scholarly intervention. Amitav Ghosh contends that the enlightenment human subject constructed against the backdrop of a stable climate will not be able to fully address climate crisis. Rather Ghosh, like Vandana Shiva, urges us to retrieve and cultivate other ways of knowing, including a renewed appreciation for the uncanny. As part of an exploration of how we might make meaning differently, I bring together my practices as a poet and a scholar to apply an Animal Poetics to Irish (and sometimes Irish-American) poetry in order to move beyond anthropocentric and human exceptionalist perspectives. Employing poetry's associative, intuitive, and premodern ways of knowing, animal poetics addresses imagined and real Irish animals by taking cues from the actual fox, the actual hare, the actual bear. I'll discuss my work, past and present, following particular species – foxes, rabbits and hares, and now bears – through selected Irish and Irish-American poems, attending to the challenges of following a methodology that crosses national borders and decenters the human as sole agent and maker.

Panel 1: Lyrical Encounters with Irish Animals

Jessica Bundschuh, University of Stuttgart, Germany:

“Enchanted Encounters with Eamon Grennan’s ‘Double-Life Creatures’ in *Plainchant*”

The encounters in Eamon Grennan’s *Plainchant* (2020) with nonhuman subjects—from hares, seals, mares, cows, and lambs, to butterflies, wasps, spiders, ticks, ants and houseflies – lead to unpredictable, multispecies partnerships. Grennan populates his prose poems, situated in Connemara, with a cast of ‘companion species’ dominated by an abundance of coastal birds: larks, starlings, sparrows, gannets, nightbirds, chaffinches, swallows and sand martins, which demonstrate an otherworldly sensitivity for their environment. As the title *Plainchant* suggests, Grennan merges here ‘plain’ and everyday speech with a Joycean epiphany or ‘chant,’ akin to birdsong. In one isolated rendezvous after another, this community of “double-life creatures” (14) emerges fleetingly from Grennan’s narrow columns of poetic prose with justified margins that vary in width in response to the first line, such that the idiosyncratic motions of each nonhuman companion in the ‘real’ world determine the poet’s typography.

These one-on-one encounters in verse project a mood of enchantment, a quality Rita Felski celebrates as “soaked through with an unusual intensity of perception and affect” to offer “rapturous self-forgetting rather than self-shattering” (55). Herein, subjects give into a blurred “sense of autonomy and control” that often transforms into a triadic dialogue in the company of fellow writers, like Elizabeth Bishop (alongside seals) and Samuel Beckett (with endangered birds). On multiple occasions, Paul Celan joins the speaker as a co-witness of blackbirds, wrens and finches and Celan’s epigraph – “*You’re there / with a splinter / of life.*” – establishes the volume’s overarching tone. In “With Ant and Celan,” “this tiniest mite of an ant” literally walks across Celan’s typographic presence to “inspect with its ant feelers ... each resonant syllable of each word” (47). Ultimately, Grennan’s doubly-observed nonhuman companions in *Plainchant* (borrowing from Robert Frost’s pattern in “Two Look at Two”) model for readers a practice of intoxicating enchantment that heightens the present moment.

Eóin Flannery, University of Limerick, Ireland:

“When Species Meet: Animal Encounters in the Poetry of Ciaran Berry”

In her 2007, *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway deals with the longstanding problems raised by myths of human exceptionalism. Eschewing the blunt dualisms that have contoured much rationalist thought and that underpin historical, and extant, socio-cultural hierarchies, Haraway insists that ‘all mortal beings [...] live in and through the use of one another’s bodies’ (Haraway 2007, 79). The porosities implicit in Haraway’s arguments span the physical and the affective, as she alights upon a host of exploitation across species boundaries. And it is in the context of her aforementioned point on the deeply historical and deeply embedded mutualities of the human and the nonhuman that Haraway’s work strikes a useful initial keynote to our analyses of a selection of poems by Ciaran Berry. Berry does not explicitly invoke global warming, pollution or environmental justice in the works scrutinized, the ways in which they attend to the relationships between signifier and signified; human history and natural history; and the intimacies of individual encounters with the natural world and with animals make his works vital eco-poetic interventions. At times Berry’s work is deeply personal and rooted in specific recollected moments of interaction with the natural world, but this does not lapse into a static sentimentality; rather, Berry’s work acknowledges the distance between representation and reality while remaining aware of the indelible links between human and nonhuman ecologies, including animals such as crows, elephants, hares, and birds of prey. Specifically, we will address a series of poems including: ‘Cold Pastoral’ from his 2008 collection, *The Sphere of Birds*, and ‘Polar Bear’ and ‘Darwin in the Galapagos’ from the later volume, *The Dead Zoo* (2013).

Panel 2: Imagined Animals

Kathleen Costello-Sullivan, Le Moyne College, NY, United States:

“Being human never did... any good’: Disability and Empathy in Sara Baume’s *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*”

Sara Baume’s 2015 debut novel, *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*, has been much commented on for its “portrait of the human mind” and concomitant exploration of loneliness, abuse, and despair as it follows the journeys of social outcast Ray and his adopted dog, One-Eye. As Orsolya Szűcs argues, “By spending time with this weird creature, Ray also learns a new mode of experience and starts to view the world animate and inanimate in a peculiar new detail, gaining a beauty that he was unable to find in human society.” Despite the second-person narrative of the novel, however, Ray’s perspective does not occur in isolation; rather, through his observations, the reader is also able to observe the independent moods, desires, and responses of his dog companion throughout the novel.

Taking One-Eye’s agency as a starting point, this analysis argues that *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* challenges the purported focus on narrowly human society as an end unto itself. Arguing that “community is only a good thing when you’re a part of it” (266), Ray despairs; however, his myopic focus on human society is belied by the quality time he spends with One-Eye, the empathetic connection he shares with him, and the camaraderie they enjoy together. While the novel does explore the cost and suffering that human societal exclusion can cause, then, it also proffers an alternative. *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* ultimately argues that a more inclusive society, recognizing non-human as well as human subjects, can provide a healthier and more nurturing alternative grounded in reciprocity, trust, and respect.

Dilara Yilmaz, University of Kiel, Germany:

“Irish Animals in the Anthropocene: Nonhuman Voices in Contemporary Irish Literature”

Just as Irish cultural identity has been closely intertwined with the domestic or farm animal, the island’s wildlife has long been a distinct presence in Irish literature. Recent fiction by contemporary (often emerging) writers put an entirely new and more prominent emphasis of the nonhuman as narrator. Indeed, in novels and short fiction by authors such as Sheila Armstrong (*Falling Animals*, 2023) or Frances Macken (*You Have To Make Your Own Fun Around Here*, 2020), among others, we often encounter a voice that we cannot immediately place only to realize soon enough that it is that of a nonhuman character. These animals native to Ireland, such as seagulls, seals, crows, and others, offer a new perspective on the Irish Anthropocene. While not portrayed as having significant agency and not appearing as a protagonist of any kind, nonhuman characters (which I deliberately label as such) portray a distinct nature-culture dichotomy - and often conflict - in an Irish context, while commenting on wildlife’s (conflicted) relationship to human agents in the Irish landscape and (so-called, but arguably absent) wilderness. Nonhuman voices not only observe, but also criticize the human interaction with nature by (grotesquely or ridiculously) displacing human characters and emphasizing their inadequacy in natural surroundings.

Franca Leitner, University of Mannheim, Germany:

“Haunting Humans? Animals in Tana French’s *In the Woods* (2007) and *Broken Harbour* (2012)”

In his monograph *Writing Animals: Language, Suffering, and Animality in Twenty-First Century Fiction*, Timothy Baker claims that “non-human animals haunt the peripheries of contemporary fiction” (1) – while mostly remaining on the fringes, the fictional animals are ever-present, ‘haunting’ the human world. This claim also applies to the works of contemporary Irish crime writer Tana French, in particular the first and fourth book in her Dublin Murder Squad series, *In the Woods* (2007) and *Broken Harbour* (2012). While animals seldomly play a prominent role in crime fiction – notable exceptions such as the murderous orang-utan in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” aside – they feature prominently as haunting entities in French’s work.

In *In the Woods*, the question is raised whether the unsolved disappearance of two children in a densely wooded area might have been caused by a large, 'monstrous' animal. In *Broken Harbour*, a family is seemingly threatened by a rodent that has found its way into the attic of their newly bought home. And yet, I will argue that while initially perceived as potential threats or dangerous predators, neither in *In the Woods* nor in *Broken Harbour* it is the animal that is posing a threat. Instead, as so often in Irish literature, the animal in French's novels can be read as "a vehicle for the expression of pain and confusion" (O'Connor 172), representing the suffering natural world in Ireland. The novels reveal that the threat ultimately does not lie with the actual animals, but with the metaphorical animal of the Celtic Tiger and the human-made economic system. The haunting presence of the animal can thus be read as a stark critique of the ongoing destruction of natural spaces in what was known to be the 'Green Island' – Ireland.

Maureen DeLeo, University of Galway, Ireland:

"Tá mé ag caint leis na fáinleogaibh/I am talking to the swallows': Animals in Patrick Pearse's Short Fiction"

Patrick Pearse, the Irish educationalist, writer, and, later, revolutionary, was described by his younger sister, Mary Brigid, as being 'most at home' among three things: children, animals, and flowers. Such a portrait of Pearse, who was one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, is at odds with the image of him as a blood sacrifice-obsessed nationalist. Even as he became entrenched in militarism, however, he continued writing about and caring for these three things. His bilingual boys school, St Enda's, held classes on animal and plant care so the boys would become well-rounded men attune to the environment.

Animals appear throughout Pearse's literary canon. 'Eoghainín na nÉan (Eoghaneen of the Birds)' was published in his first short story collection, *Íosagán agus sgéalta eile* (1907) and it revolves around a little boy's love of birds, especially swallows. Pearse's animals are used to convey positive things, like the swallows delivering Eoghainín from a physical death or at the end of 'An Gadaí (The Thief)', when an animal product is given to show the thief's appreciation for not being punished. Animals can also be used to convey layers of morality, like in 'An Gadaí', but especially in 'An Deargdaol (The Black Chafer)' (1916). This story takes its title from the devil's coach horse black beetle (*Ocypus olens*), or the black chafer, and it is closely associated with folklore and Christianity. Taking place in Connemara, a priest banishes a woman and gives her the title 'An Deargadaol', erasing any memory of a human identity and replacing with that of a negatively viewed animal, one which is considered to be cursed. This paper aims to demonstrate the ways in which Pearse's animals are used to reveal information about how people engage with themselves and their secular and religious communities.

Panel 3: The Economy of the Irish Animal

Christian Huck, University of Kiel, Germany:

“The Cow that Drank all the Water”

The cow is probably the one animal most associated with Ireland. From the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, i. e. *The Cattle Raid of Cooley*, to Kerrygold butter, cows play a central role in Irish mythology, history and marketing. The CfP cites John Connell’s best-selling memoir of 2018, *The Cow Book: A Story of Life on the Family Farm*, as the last in a line of works ‘respectfully honouring the nonhuman animal’ in Irish culture with ‘warm familiarity’. So how come that the first Irish secret agrarian society, the eighteenth-century ‘Houghers’, articulated their *social* protest through the practice of maiming cattle? In my talk I want to explore the inter- or intra-relations between Ireland’s most famous animal, and the effects the breeding of said animal has on the Irish landscape and its human population. More specifically, I will focus on the consequences the creation of a cow-friendly environment, for social, political and economic reasons, has on hydrological conditions. My central argument is that the draining of Ireland, which was propelled by the concentration on pastoral agriculture, led to a form of destitution among small-scale farmers which expressed itself in a final act of desperation: *the killing of a cow*, the symbol of power and suppression. In the event, cattle farming survived the attack; the poor farmer did not. More generally, my paper suggests to understand animals as entangled within (agri-)cultured environments, and thus as part of, and actors within, social and economic power coordinates.

Selina Guinness, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire, Ireland:

“Farm Yard to White Cube: Livestock Process in Contemporary Irish Visual Arts”

In Spring 2022, the Royal Hibernian Academy held a group show of seven Irish female artists whose expanded practice explicitly engages with agriculture, primarily focused on livestock enterprises. ‘A Growing Enquiry: Art and Agriculture, Reconciling Values’ restocked the visually over-saturated Irish landscape with the material commodities of agricultural life. A fertiliser spreader, a wire tractor, and various by-products of the meat trade – wool, tallow, straws for collecting bull semen – featured among the exhibits.

This paper is informed by my own experience of farming sheep and writing about them. It investigates how the restaging of pastoral systems in gallery spaces disrupts post-Arcadian, and implicitly patriarchal, stereotypes of Irish rurality. In the performance and sculptural works of Orla Barry, Maria McKinney and Katie Watchorn, the farm animal serves as a modernised labour unit that produces a highly gendered sociology of care. The four green fields grazed by Irish livestock are mapped, funded and circumscribed by the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy. In response to these three artists, this paper considers how a reinvigorated sense of the pastoral needs to resituate the ‘Irish’ animal in this supra-national economic territory, and outlines implications for future [agri] cultural identities.

Laurent Daniel, University of Southern Brittany, Lorient, France:

“The Hare, the Greyhound and the Sport of Coursing”

Coursing, where two greyhounds are released onto a live hare, is the responsibility of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Indeed, according to Heather Humphrey (Minister for Arts and Heritage, 2015), it is “part of the heritage of many rural communities”. However, it is not so much the sport as the hare that earns it this privilege. Indeed, in order to organise its yearly event, the local club has to obtain the right to net and keep hares from the Minister in order to be able to train them to flee in a straight line towards the escape and judge which of the two greyhounds unleashed on her on the day of the knock-out competition is the fastest. However, the greyhound and its sports also have heritage value. Imported by the English, like the concept of modern sport on which the GAA has built its popularity, the killing of hares by greyhounds is not unusual in Irish folklore and has high symbolic value in Celtic mythology. It was mainly in the culturally authentic south-west of Ireland that the sport of the British elite developed at the end of the nineteenth century and acquired its own

specific shape. At the time of writing, the Republic of Ireland is the only western democracy and even country in the world where live-hare coursing is carried out to any significant extent under the aegis of a duly recognized national club acting as keeper of the stud book for all greyhounds in Ireland by Act of Parliament.

Panel 4: Joyce and Animals

Flicka Small, University College Cork, Ireland:

“On the Pig’s Back”

Of all the animals in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the pig figures the most often, either dead or alive or as a metaphor. The pig’s many parts were all used in the diet of the poor Irish, from cheeks to kidneys to crubeens (feet). However, in the “Circe” episode of *Ulysses*, Bloom is turned into a grovelling pig, hunting for truffles at the feet of his cruel master. But in this hallucinogenic chapter, Bloom is also female, the new womanly man, and her master is the madam of the brothel, Bello Cohen. The gender-fluid undercurrents and the misogyny that Joyce plays with are derived from the witch Circe in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Circe’s skills in the culinary art of herbs help her to turn men into pigs and so it is that Joyce’s Odysseus (Bloom) is subjugated, aided and abetted by the moustachioed Mrs Keogh, the brothel cook.

Juliana Adelman argues in *Civilised by Beasts* that after the Great Irish Famine (1845 -50) the concept emerged in Britain that its closest neighbour and colony lived in filth and with its pig. This reinforced the notion that Ireland, already figured as female, and on a par with animals, needed to be subjugated. Thus Bloom, in his new guise, is envisaged as a ‘thumping good breakfast’ of ham rashers, to be enjoyed by the authoritarian Bello.

This paper examines Bloom’s dilemma of being human turned nonhuman, experiencing the guilt of his human fantasies whilst enduring torture and ridicule at the hands of his oppressor.

Panel 5: Animals in Myths, Legends, and Fairy-Tales

Julianna Leibold, SciencesPo Paris, France:

"Concepts of Nature and Culture in Selected Irish Fairy Tales: Selected Irish Fairy Tales as Examples of a Narrative Tradition Documenting Indigenous Learning-with and Becoming-with the More-than-human World"

In order to elucidate the complex interactions between human, animal and nature actants, the proposed paper analyses the three Irish fairy tales *Fior Usga*, *The Salmon of Knowledge* and *The Wooing of Etain*, using Greimas' actantial model combined with Latour's Actor-Network-Theory. Taking an econarratological approach, it aims to highlight the interconnectedness between nature and culture, which shapes the narrative networks. The paper asks how the selected Irish fairy tales portray the concepts of nature and culture and in how far they document Indigenous practices of learning-with and becoming-with the more-than-human world. To answer these questions, the paper first surveys the representation of animals and nature in Irish fairy tales and examines them in light of interdisciplinary approaches to the concepts of human, animal, nature and culture. It moreover focuses on the importance of oral storytelling in the evolution of Irish fairy tales and the preservation and transmission of Indigenous knowledge. It argues that oral storytelling is a means of working against the simplification and categorisation of the nature-culture relationship by incorporating myriad experiences and democratising the discourse on the construction of the nature-culture dualism. The theme of knowledge acquisition through multispecies interactions and entanglement present in the selected fairy tales is emphasised and related to the idea of interspecies co-evolution. Overall, this research aims to contribute to a deeper appreciation of the cultural significance of Irish fairy tales, shedding light on their enduring relevance in contemporary discourse on sustainability, environmental ethics and the preservation of Indigenous knowledge.

Síle Ní Mhurchú, University College Cork, Ireland:

"Animals in the Fionn Cycle of Irish Mythology"

The Fionn Cycle, a body of texts, lore and traditions dating from the seventh century to modern times, is a rich source for depictions of animals. The central character of the Cycle, Fionn mac Cumhaill and his warriors known as the Fianna, are characterised, often with the help of animal imagery, as thriving outside of human society. Animal-human and human-animal transformations are common in the world of the Fianna and the landscape they inhabit is defined by the presences of specific wild animals, one well-known example being the famous Blackbird of Derrycairn. The Fianna are also hunters and boast of a large collection of hunting dogs with whom they have deep emotional ties; Fionn exults in the sound of their barking as they chase deer and is delighted to see blood flowing at the end of a day's hunting. There is thus a great deal of variation in the ways in which the Fianna interact with animals.

In this paper, I will examine a selection of Fionn tales and Fionn lays which feature encounters between the Fianna and animals both domesticated and undomesticated in an effort to find out what the Fionn cycle might have to tell us about relationships between humans and animals, and how ideas about wildness and captivity are conveyed and explored. I will also consider how the imagined animals of the Fionn Cycle have been received by different types of audiences over time, responding to the many profound societal shifts that have occurred in Ireland over the centuries and especially how they might speak to us today in an Ireland where so many real-world animals are threatened by ecological devastation.

Klára Witzany Hutková, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic:

"Cats and Swans: The Symbolism of Animals in Marina Carr's Midlands Plays"

This paper investigates the symbolism behind Marina Carr's use of animals, especially the swan and the cat, in her Midlands Trilogy. All three plays are highly intertextual, combining references to the Western literary canon, Greek mythology, and Irish folklore. Animals are tied to the local landscape, dominated by a body of water. While the presence of swans in *The Mai* (1994) is often interpreted with references to Greek mythology, connection with both the Classical and Irish traditions are made as regards *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998). This paper analyses Classical myth and Irish folklore in its interpretation of the playwright's employment of animal symbolism. It draws on Classical scholarship, as well as the collected folklore material stored at the National Folklore Collection (located at University College Dublin).

Animals in the Midlands trilogy symbolise death, escape, as well as belonging. In *The Mai*, swans live on a lake in which the heroine eventually drowns herself. Their use in the play will be discussed primarily for their potential to foreshadow this event. In *Portia Coughlan* (1996), the main character sees the salmon in the river as representing freedom. *By the Bog of Cats...* opens with the heroine dragging a dead black swan across the stage, soon learning that their lives are tied together. Cats are present through the character of Catwoman, connected closely to the landscape of the Bog of Cats. Both animals are discussed in connection to different versions of the *cailleach* figure, and parallels are made with the *mélusine* legend tradition.

Panel 6: Animalizing the Irish

Dieter Fuchs, University of Vienna, Austria:

“The Animalised Irish and the Early Modern Discourse of the Wetnurse”

This paper focuses on the prehistory of nineteenth century WASP misrepresentations of the Irish as beast-like beings. It will show that, among other aspects, animalistic anti-Irish othering procedures may be traced back to sixteenth century misrepresentations of Hibernian wetnurses as animalised creatures, whose 'brutish' disposition corrupts the 'humanity' of the English aristocratic babies they are entrusted with.

In *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1595/6), Edmund Spenser states that, whereas the milk produced by Irish wetnurses fosters the unruly passions of the infants' bodies in an 'effeminizing' manner, their 'uncivilized' Gaelic idiom corrupts their mental capacities. In this context, three aspects of humanist phallogocentrism have to be taken into account: first, the early modern one-sex model-induced belief that the fully-fledged masculine man created in the Biblical father deity's image represents the norm of being 'human'; second, the belief that it is the ability to speak a 'civilized' language comparable to the Jahwitic father deity's tongue speaking the world into being, which distinguishes humans from other creatures; third, the claim that masculinity attributed to mental capacity and the divine power of the word (*logos*) is constantly challenged by the effeminate principle of the body's unruly passions.

Spenser's anxiety that the English children's human disposition is challenged by their Irish wetnurses is foreshadowed in a sonnet written three years after the beginning of the Tudor Conquest: the Earl of Surrey's "From Tuscan Came My Lady's Worthy Race" (c.1537), which features the Tuscan-English adolescent Geraldine raised by an Irish wetnurse. Although the cultural topography of England and Tuscany is mentioned in detail, Ireland vaguely referred to as "[t]he western isle" rather than by its name escapes cultural representation. Born in a place of nature rather than culture, the (non-)description of Geraldine's unnamed and silenced wetnurse is reduced to the bodily if not to say animal function of the lactating breasts she presents to the English girl as a feeder: "[f]oster'd she was with milk of Irish breast." This diet imbues the girl's body with the animal passions of the "lively heat" of "[t]he western isle" rather than the "ghostly food" for thought available in England: God's pentecostal 'gift of tongues', or *logos*. As Geraldine's human disposition is challenged in this way, the de-humanizing influence of her Irish foster-mother has to be compensated by the 'civilized' counter-world of the English Court of Henry VIII - the phallogocentric sphere of humanist culture, where the divine power of the word - which was in the beginning and spoke the world into being - is articulated by way of a 'civilized' language reflected in the poetic genre of the sonnet.

Teresa Dunne, University of Galway, Ireland:

“Masculine Animality in Liam O’Flaherty and Pádraic Ó Conaire’s Fiction”

Aggressive masculinity is often associated with animalistic qualities, “an idea of *maleness* with which the Irish were also often associated: brutishness, violence, savagery.” (McDonald 73) This gendered animality was part of a racialising discourse that saw the Irish as an inferior race of ‘white apes’. Depictions of animal-like qualities in the male characters of Liam O’Flaherty’s fiction are therefore described as “playing into the hands of those who held stereotypical images of the Irish such as appeared in *Punch*.” (Starr 228) Conversely his animal short stories are often considered the pinnacle of his literary talents providing sensitive portrayals of the non-human animal experience.

Animals were also at the centre of many of Pádraic Ó Conaire’s short stories, including the beloved ‘M’Asal Beag Dubh’ (My Little Black Ass) which recounts the tale of an anthropomorphised donkey. While characters such as Micil Ó Maoláin a disabled man working as a sideshow performer, in Ó Conaire’s novel *Deoraíocht*, are framed as bestial by those around them. Instead of facilitating fear and alienation in the reader, access to Micil’s internal world serves to elicit empathy for his plight in much the same way that O’Flaherty and Ó Conaire’s animal stories give the reader access to the pain and suffering of non-human animals.

Although constructions of Irishness and more specifically Irishmen as animal-like was intended to remove their agency and police what was considered their excessive (feminine) emotions, Ó Conaire and O'Flaherty, use animalistic framings to extend compassion towards men whose agency has been taken away from them. Just as these authors explore the subjectivity of non-human animals in their work, they also reclaim Irishmen's agency as postcolonial subjects, and indeed human-animals, with natural responses to brutalising experiences.

Bios

Jochen Achilles is an Emeritus Professor of American Studies at the University of Würzburg and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Mainz. His book publications include studies on Sean O'Casey and Sheridan Le Fanu. He is the coeditor of several essay collections, among them two studies focusing on the concept of liminality: *Liminale Anthropologien* (2012) and *Liminality and the Short Story: Boundary Crossings in American, Canadian, and British Writing* (2015). His numerous articles reflect his research interests, which include liminal cultural identities, the American short story, African American and Irish drama.

Ina Bergmann is an Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Würzburg, Germany. She is a co-founder of Irish Studies Würzburg (ISWÜ). She has held fellowships with the Rothermere American Institute (RAI) at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom, the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts & Humanities Research Institute (TLRH) at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, and the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens at San Marino, CA, USA. She is the author of two monographs, *And Then the Child Becomes a Woman: Weibliche Initiation in der amerikanischen Kurzgeschichte 1865-1970* (Winter 2003) and *The Nineteenth Century Revis(it)ed: The New Historical Fiction* (Routledge 2021), the (co-)editor of nine volumes of essays and special issues of journals, among them *Liminality and the Short Story: Boundary Crossings in American, Canadian, and British Writing* (Routledge 2015), *Cultures of Solitude: Loneliness – Limitation – Liberation* (Lang 2017), *Intermediality, Life Writing, and American Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (de Gruyter 2018), and *History in Stories: The Irish Past and the Challenges of the Present* (Lang forthcoming) as well as a frequent contributor to peer-reviewed journals and international book projects.

Jessica Bundschuh is a Lecturer in English Literatures & Cultures at the University of Stuttgart. Her publications have appeared in *Review of Irish Studies in Europe*, *Études irlandaises*, *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, *Poetics Today*, *The Paris Review*, *EFACIS: Interfaces and Dialogue and Literary Matters*, with a chapter on Irish poetry in performance in a 2023 volume on *Poetic Forms*. She has a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Houston and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. Her current research project is on the Irish prose poem.

Moya Cannon is an Irish poet. She has published six collections of poetry. Her *Collected Poems* (Carcanet Press, Manchester) was published in 2021 and a new collection, *'Bunting's Honey'*, is forthcoming from Carcanet Press in 2025. She has been a recipient of the Brendan Behan Award and the O'Shaughnessy Award and was Heimbold Professor of Irish Studies at the University of Villanova. She is a member of Aosdána, the state-supported affiliation of Irish artists. In her poems, history, archaeology, pre-historic art, geology and music figure as gateways to a deeper understanding of our mysterious relationship with the natural world and with our past. *Ein Privates Land*, a bilingual selection of poems with German translations by Eva Bourke and Eric Giebel, was published by Offends Feld Press in 2017. Bilingual selections of her poems have also been translated into Spanish and Portuguese. She was born and grew up in Co. Donegal, Ireland, studied history and politics at University College, Dublin, and International Relations at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. She spent most of her adult life in Galway and now lives in Dublin.

Kate Costello-Sullivan is a Professor of Modern Irish literature and the former Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, NY. In addition to a number of articles and book chapters, she is the author of the monographs *Mother/Country: Politics of the Personal in the Fiction of Colm Tóibín* (2012) and *Trauma and Recovery in the Twenty-first-Century Irish Novel* (2018), as well as editor of two critical editions, J. Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* (2013) and Norah Hoult's *Poor Women!* (2016). Kate has served as President of the American Conference for Irish Studies, North

American Rep for IASIL, and has served since summer 2018 as the (first female) Series Editor of the Syracuse University Press's Irish line. Her current research focuses on representations of the nurturing parental body in Irish literature, and she has two book-length, co-edited collections forthcoming.

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