

JOHN HUME INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL IRISH STUDIES

TRANSFORMING THE STUDY OF IRELAND

Irish Identities from the seventeenth century: cultural and linguistic expression

This theme will explore the emergence of notions of Irishness and identity as expressed in language, text and religious and political discourse.

The seventeenth century in Ireland witnessed the climax of the tensions between competing social, cultural and religious systems which were played out over the next quarter of a millennium. It was a period when all communities in Ireland – the Native Irish, the Old English and the incoming New English – underwent fundamental changes. As the Irish language was slowly replaced, first in legal and administrative legal spheres, then in everyday life and cultural interaction, with the language of the newcomers, everyone in Ireland was forced to view the world with a different perspective.

The dispossession of the Native Irish leaders deprived the traditional poets of patronage and resulted in the collapse of the bardic school system and the demise of the elaborately regulated classical language, which had been honed by the poets and learned classes from 1200 AD on. This standard language was gradually replaced by new forms, which were increasingly influenced by contemporary speech varieties.

The Irish-language strand will study the concepts of individual and group identities, as expressed in the post-classical language of the evolving prose and verse genres of the seventeenth century. Particular attention will be paid to the influence of contemporary continental thought and to interaction between the Irish and English languages. The project will follow the political and aesthetic fortunes of the bardic poets, and examine the transition from the Classical language and syllabic forms of the bardic schools to the later post-Classical language and accentual metres, following them into the eighteenth century. Similarly, it will study the range and function of prose writing. It will address

questions of transmission, the intent of composer and scribe, the nature of audience reception, the physical make-up of manuscripts, their layout and range of content, provenance and distribution, and modern editorial approaches.

Beyond language, the pressures created by changes in land-holding, especially plantation, when combined with religious changes and choices produced a need for a new range of identities on the island of Ireland and for people of Irish origin living abroad. These identities were normally, though not entirely, articulated within confessional boundaries especially from the 1590s onwards.

Shifting identities throughout this period were often characterised by a highly creative use of materials from Ireland's medieval past. A number of contemporary enterprises gave rise to readings of Irish history which proved to be resilient and which underpinned much political, academic and cultural thinking into the 19th century.

Irish identity throughout this period has often been treated as if only relations between Britain and Ireland determined the outcomes. This strand seeks to recover the wider European political, intellectual and religious impact on the island of Ireland and its inhabitants.

Ireland's constitutional status shifted from that of being a component and dependent kingdom within a multiple monarchy in the 17th century to that of a kingdom with mixed sovereignty for much of the 18th century and finally to parliamentary union by the start of the 19th century. These different arrangements, along with accompanying shifts in the legal framework, had a profound effect on the self-perception and self-expression of those living on the island of Ireland.

Job descriptions

Post-doctoral Fellow

The primary task of the Postdoctoral Fellow is to contribute research of international publishable standard on topics connected with the theme under which they are appointed. This work may be a continuation of existing research that the Fellow was engaged in prior to appointment or may consist of new projects. The Fellow may work as sole researcher on project(s), as a member of a research team, or a combination of the two. The Fellow will report to a team leader with whom the schedule of work to be carried and working relationships with other relevant researchers will be negotiated and agreed. The Fellow may be required to contribute to the administration of activities related research on the theme (e.g. organising conferences and seminars) and/or to contribute to either undergraduate or postgraduate teaching. Administration and teaching together will not exceed 20 per cent of the Fellow's working time.

Doctoral scholars

The primary tasks of doctoral scholars will be to participate in course-work and carry out supervised research such as will lead to an award of a PhD in accord with UCD regulations. Doctoral scholars will also normally be required to contribute 20 per cent of their time to teaching.

Appendix: UCD Researchers in the area

Breatnach, Caoimhín

Senior Lecturer, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics

Mac Mathúna, Liam

Professor, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics

Ní Úrdail, Meidhbhín

Lecturer, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics

McCafferty, John

Senior Lecturer, UCD School of History and Archives

Clarke, Danielle

Associate Professor, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

Fogarty, Anne

Professor, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

Meaney, Gerardine

Associate Professor, UCD School of English, Drama and Film