

In-between Islands: Intra-relations between Britain and Ireland

Annual Conference of the Society for the Study of British Cultures
Kiel University, 23 to 25 November 2023

Irish history and culture have long been influenced by the presence of British settlers, landowners and rulers. Considered by some as Britain's oldest colony, the exploitation of Irish labour and Irish land, the introduction of English language and English law, but also the creation of a joined market for arts and literature have transformed life on the island of Ireland. However, Irish people and Irish culture also shaped Britain in major ways: Irish monks Christianized their neighbouring island, Irish workers were central to the building of canals, docks and railways, Irish nurses staffed the NHS, and without Irish immigration there would have been no Beatles and no Kate Bush – and Chloe Kelly wouldn't have scored that goal against Germany in EURO 2022. In recent years, Brexit and the ongoing disputes about its implementation have highlighted once again how intricately connected the politics and economics of the five nations on the British-Irish Isles still are. Northern Ireland, in particular, has become a symbol of unresolved tensions between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. 2023 marks 25 years since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement was signed.

British Cultural Studies, and the *German Association for the Study of British Cultures* specifically, often show a clear bias towards research on England. While Scotland makes a regular appearance, Wales, and especially Northern Ireland feature only rarely at our conferences and in our journal. When it comes to considering the transcultural make up of Britain, similarly, Caribbean and South-Asian cultures are considered far more often than the UK's historically largest ethnic minority: the Irish. To address this oversight, both the British influence on Irish culture and the Irish presence in Britain are to be the focus of the conference.

British cultures are understood here as inter- and intra-related with various cultures near and far, part of a Black Atlantic as much as a Green Atlantic, part of Europe and the Global North. Entangled in economic world systems and global histories of migration, "Global Britain", the UK's slogan for a post-Brexit world, has long been a lived reality, acknowledged or not. In this conference, then, we will examine how British cultures have been shaped by their relation to Ireland, and vice versa, that is, how the flows of people, ideas and goods across the Irish sea have left their mark on all cultures on the British-Irish Isles. We welcome present-day as much as historic examples of such intra-relations.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- **Economic and labour relations:** cultural impact and legacy of seasonal and permanent Irish labour in the UK; for example, in agriculture, mining, construction, factory work, the service industry and working in the NHS. In turn, Ireland as an attractive place of employment and investment for Brits.
- **(Popular) Cultural intra-relations and cross-pollinations:** punk, pop, trad and folk music, English vs. Irish language
- **Canonized and popularized:** intra-relations and representations in British and Irish literatures, poetry, drama and writing
- **Between BBC and RTÉ:** intra-relations and representations in Irish and British media production (Film, TV, Radio, Podcast, Social Media)
- **Pubs and clubs:** intra-relations in Irish and British leisure industries and sports cultures, including football, rugby, GAA, horse racing and boxing
- **Socio-political (intra- and inter-) relations and legal implications:** Brexit etc.
- **Familial relations:** British and Irish intra-relations in biographies, histories and documentaries
- **Green Atlantic affecting British and Irish intra-relations:** from Kennedy to Biden
- **Between and between:** Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain (DUP, Orange Marches, perceptions of terrorism and unification, post-sectarianism)
- **Irish Studies and/as Cultural Studies:** questions of institutionalization, environmental studies, disability studies, transgender studies etc.

Keynote Speakers

Dr Jennifer Redmond (Assistant Professor in Twentieth Century Irish History at Maynooth University)

Patrick Slevin (poet, Manchester)

We are looking forward to receiving proposals for 20-minute papers by March 15, 2023. Proposals should consist of a title and short abstract (no more than 300 words) as well as a short bio (no more than 150 words). Please email these to britcult2023@anglistik.uni-kiel.de

The conference will take place at the Wissenschaftszentrum Kiel.

For more information on the Society for the Study of British Cultures (BritCult) please visit www.britcult.de/. NB: Members of BritCult can apply for bursaries to cover travel and accommodation; details will follow.

Conference Organisers

Victoria Claire Allen and Christian Huck, English Seminar, Kiel University