



New Voices – New Directions

International Workshop on Contemporary Irish Literature

8-10 September 2022

Venue: Vortragssaal in der Bibliotheca Albertina, Beethovenstr. 6, 04107 Leipzig

Up until the 1990s, the concept of Irish literature appeared to be fairly unanimous. Literary texts considered to be ‘typically’ Irish were predominantly concerned with the Irish socio-political context, critically reflecting the history and conditions of Irish identity formation: the struggle for independence and its aftermath, the family, the church, and the nation. The social and political changes from the 1990s and early 2000s onwards, initiated by the Celtic Tiger and the decline of the Catholic Church in the wake of the abuse scandal, which fundamentally transformed Irish culture and politics, can also be witnessed in contemporary Irish literature. In the 21st century, the “national obsessiveness, which in Ireland has predominantly found expression in realist and naturalist modes of writing” (5), as Eoghan Smith puts it, has gradually made way for a new and decidedly more open literary scene.

In the wake of these changes, Irish literature has not only started to embrace other *topics*, moving away from its preoccupation with its own history and “the Irish argument” (Tóibín); it has also introduced new forms of *authorship* and new *genres* – new voices and new directions. To name just a few developments: whereas crime writing was virtually non-existent in Ireland prior to the year 1990, the scene today is one of the most vibrant and successful in the whole of Europe, with Tana French and Ken Bruen being among the most original and celebrated authors. Dystopian and speculative fiction was introduced by authors such as Kevin Barry, whose *City of Bohane* (2011) depicts a dark and violent future vision of Ireland completely new to the literary scene. Emilie Pine’s hugely successful *Notes to Self* (2018) transcends the borders of traditional fiction by merging literature with feminist autobiographical and essayistic writing. Adrian Duncan’s *Love Notes from a German Building Site* (2019) experiments with traditional forms of narration by including notes and translations. At the same time, innovation and experiment in the modernist tradition – a mainstay in Irish literature – are thriving as never before, producing new and exciting masterpieces such as *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (2013) by Eimear McBride or *Solar Bones* (2016) by Mike McCormack. Social groups and ethnicities formerly ignored by the literary marketplace, such as Oein deBhairduin’s literature of the Irish Traveller community or African-Irish literature by authors such as Melatu Uche Okorie, have also widened the scope of Irish literature significantly.

This workshop aims at exploring contemporary Irish writing beyond the well-trodden paths, proposing to explore and showcase the scope and variety of the contemporary Irish literary scene. We invite proposals for papers of 20 minutes length. Papers may refer to the literary trends mentioned above or address any other new or newly popular voices, genres, trends or directions perceived in 21st-century Irish literature.

Please send short abstracts (c. 300 words) for papers proposed to Ralf Haekel (ralf.haekel@uni-leipzig.de) and Caroline Lusin (clusin@mail.uni-mannheim.de) by **15 June 2022**.