

Colloque SOFEIR Irish Exceptionalism

Université de Strasbourg

26-27 Mars 2026 • MISHA



Irish Exceptionalism

Société Française d'Études Irlandaises (SOFÉIR)

26-27 March 2026

University of Strasbourg

MISHA (Maison Interuniversitaire des Sciences sociales et des Humanités d'Alsace)
5 allée du Général Rouvillois, 67000 Strasbourg

Thursday 26 March

9h00: Welcome

9h30, salle de conférence: **Conference opening**

Opening words by **Ambassador Cairíona Doyle** (Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg) and **Hélène Ibata** (director of SEARCH, UR2325).

9h45-10h45, salle de conférence: **Keynote talk: Fionna Barber (Manchester School of Art) "Irish Art as Exceptionalism's Other Story"**

Moderator: Hélène Ibata (U. Strasbourg)

10h45-11h00: Coffee break

11h00-12h45: Session 1

Panel 1A, salle de conférence: Questioning Irish Exceptionality

Moderator: Marion Bourdeau (U. Lyon 3)

Guy Beiner (Boston College): "An Inquiry into the Exceptionality of Irish Memory"

Michael Cronin (U. Maynooth): "What is an 'Irish writer'?"

Rym Lina Mohammed-Azizi (U. Mulhouse): "The Irish Short Story anthologized: Lucy Caldwell's intentional exceptionalism"

Geraldine Higgins (Emory University): "'Seamus Heaney Lived Here': Tourism and Irish Literary Exceptionalism"

Panel 1B, salle de la table ronde: Ireland: a Global Exception?

Moderator: Lara Cuny (U. Lyon 3)

Julien Guillaumond (U. Clermont-Auvergne): "Small But Powerful: Exploring Ireland's Exceptional Influence On The World Stage"

Amanda Crabb (Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts): "The Exceptionalism of the Irish Immigration Reform Movement"

Marie Renault (U. Rennes 2): "Ireland 'at the head of the Celtic world'? When Irish Pan-Celts crossed paths with Irish and Celtic nationalists"

Dobromiła Kasprzyk (Jagiellonian University): "Ireland in the Polish Anti-Imperialist Imagination, 1870-1914"

12h45-14h00: Lunch buffet

14h00-15h30: Session 2

Panel 2A, salle de conférence: Artistic Exceptions

Moderator: Nathalie Sebbane (U. Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Deirdre F. Brady (Mary Immaculate College): ““Knocking on the Door”: Irish P.E.N. Exceptionalism in the International Realm”

Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin (Concordia University Montréal): “Carignan: Irish Musical Exceptionalism in Québec”

Axel Klein (Frankfurt am Main): “A nation lacking its own art music? Irish perceptions and misconceptions about ‘classical’ music”

Taylor Still (U. Rennes 2): “Creative Agency, Cultural Claims: Youth Arts, Education and Irish Exceptionalism”

Panel 2B, salle de la table ronde: Poetry

Moderator: Léa Sinoiméri (U. du Littoral Côte d’Opale)

Maryvonne Hutchins-Boisseau (U. Strasbourg): “Listening to the wind, listening to the tide... Derek Mahon’s Music of the Spheres”

Charles I. Armstrong (U. Agder): “Exceptions and Examples: Vona Groarke, W. B. Yeats, and Irish Poetry”

Dane Holt (Trinity College Dublin): ““A Lost Authority?”: Some Elegies for Seamus Heaney (1939-2013)”

15h30-15h45: Break

15h45-17h00, salle de conférence: History Roundtable

Karina Bénazech Wendling (U. Lorraine), Géraldine Vaughan (U. Lille), Claire Dubois (U. Lille)

Moderator: Pauline Collombier (U. Lorraine)

17h50-19h00, salle de conférence: SOFEIR AGM

Moderator: Hélène Lecossois (U. Lille)

20h00: Conference dinner at Maison Kammerzell

16 place de la Cathédrale, 67000 Strasbourg

<https://www.maison-kammerzell.com>

Friday 27 March

9h15-11h00: Session 3

Panel 3A, salle de conférence: Comparative Perspectives

Moderator: Julien Guillaumond (U. Clermont-Auvergne)

Kenneth L. Shonk (U. Wisconsin-La Crosse): “Ireland’s share of this business’: Irish exceptionalism and Tanzania’s national development, 1975-1979”

Aimée Dion (U. Laval): ““Nos gloires passées et futures”: Exceptionalism and “lieux de mémoire” in French Canadian and Irish WWI Posters”

Nathalie Sebbane (U. Sorbonne nouvelle): “Beyond Irish Exceptionalism: the incarceration and instrumentalisation of women and children in a comparative perspective”

Annalisa Ciano (U. Bologna): “Inventing Irishness: Eugene O’Neill, Bragaglia, and the Fabrication of Irish Exceptionalism in Fascist Italy”

Evi Gkotzaridis (U. Versailles - Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines): “The Elusive Middle Path. A Comparative Analysis of the Colonial Past of Cyprus and Ireland”

Panel 3B, salle de la table ronde: Unsettling Irish Exceptionalism

Moderator: Martine Pelletier (U. Tours)

Audrey Robitailié (Institut Catholique de Toulouse): “Iarlais, Síofra, Changelings: Subversive Characters in YA Literature”

Auxiliadora Pérez Vides (U. Huelva): “Emerald Noir and Cultural Uniqueness in John Banville’s Crime Fiction”

Rachael Sumner (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz): “Challenging the Concept of Irish Exceptionalism in Prophet Song (2023) by Paul Lynch”

11h00-11h15: Coffee break

11h15-12h15, salle de conférence: **Keynote talk: Niamh Wycherley (U. Maynooth): “Inclusivity over exclusivity? Understanding Ireland's medieval past in the 21st century”**

Moderator: Fanny Moghaddassi (U. Strasbourg)

12h15-13h30: Lunch buffet

13h30-15h00: Session 4

Panel 4A, salle de conférence: A Postcolonial Exception?

Moderator: Hélène Lecossois (U. Lille)

Andre Angeline (New York University): “Exoticizing the Self: Orientalism and the Making of an Irish Identity”

Nour Harzallah (U. Picardie Jules): “Irish exceptionalism: an exceptional ex-colony with a peculiar post-primary education system (between 1960 and 1980)”

Sandrine Uwase Ndahiro (U. Maynooth) & **Dr Sean Aldrich O’Rourke** (U. Limerick): ““I am your way out”: Sinners and the Ambivalence of Irish Solidarity”

Annabel Barry (U. of California, Berkeley): “All Promise and No Pay: Lady Gregory and Melatu Uche Okorie”

Panel 4B, salle de la table ronde: Society and Politics

Moderator: Karina Wendling (U. Lorraine)

Timothy J. White (Xavier University): “The End of Exceptionalism in Irish Politics and the Emergence of Left-Right Partisanship”

Anne-Sophie Brian (U. Bourgogne-Europe / U. Lorraine): “Sinn Féin: a transnational exception ?”

Luca Bertolani Azeredo (Scuola Superiore Meridionale): “Migrants in a Divided Land: Italian Communities and the Making of Modern Ireland”

Geraldine Vaughan (U. Lille): “Nineteenth-Century Ireland – an Exceptional Island of Awakened Catholics and Protestants?”

15h00-15h15: Break

15h15-16h45: Session 5

Panel 5A, salle de conférence: Northern Exceptions

Moderator: Charlotte Barcat (U. Nantes)

Florian Kolusniowski (U. Toulouse): “Continuity and Liminality of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland”

Chloe Doherty (U. Sorbonne Nouvelle): “Assessing Power Sharing’s Durability in Northern Ireland’s Post-conflict State Thirty Years after Good Friday Agreement”

Lara Cuny (U. Lyon 3): “Language acts in the British Isles: the Identity and Language Act (Northern Ireland), a comparative perspective”

Nuzha Moritz & Romane Stock (U. Strasbourg): “Linguistic Landscapes and Cultural Identity in 1990s Northern Irish Media”

Panel 5B, salle de la table ronde: Contemporary Perspectives on Irish literature

Moderator: Maryvonne Boisseau (U. Strasbourg)

Lea Sinoimeri (U. du Littoral Côte d’Opale): “(Un)exceptional Matters: Essay writing in Ireland today and Sara Baume’s Handiwork (2020)”

Martine Pelletier (U. Tours): “How exceptionally Irish is Friel’s Dancing at Lughnasa? A challenge from Corsica”

Rosario (María del Rosario Casas Coelho) (U. Burgos): “Transculturality and Transnationalism in Colum McCann’s selected novels”

16h45, salle de conférence: Closing remarks

The SOFEIR conference is funded by SEARCH, SOFEIR, GIS EIRE and IDEA.

