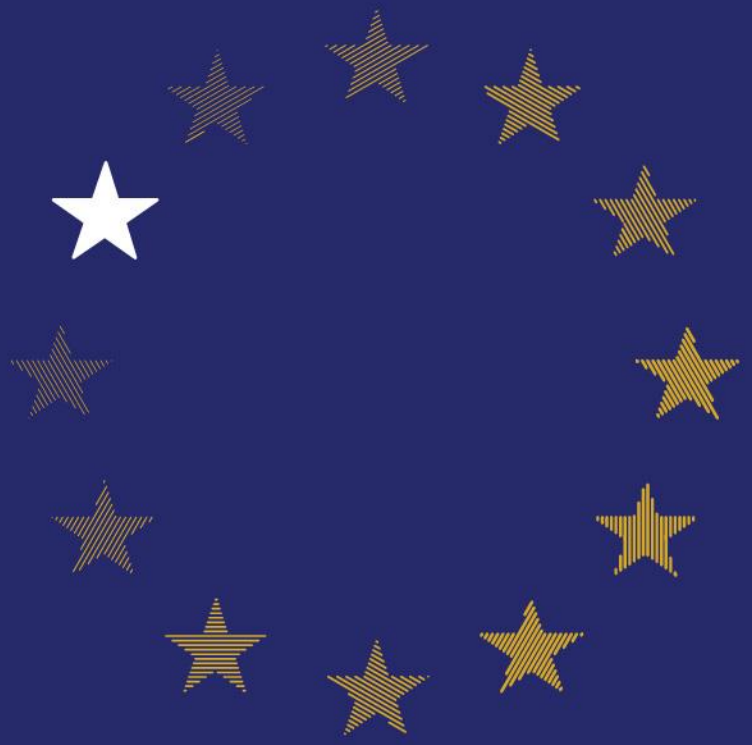

EVENT REPORT

BEYOND MARKETS

The Cultural Case for Ireland in Europe

22nd May 2018. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin

Alliance Irish Humanities

Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin

UCD Humanities Institute
Institiúid don Léann Daonna UCD

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This event was hosted by the Irish Humanities Alliance, the Humanities Institute UCD, and the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, TCD.

The event was kindly supported by the French and the German Embassies.

Brexit raises many important issues for Ireland and its future, north and south. To date, the debate has been excessively narrow with excessive focus on economic and institutional issues to the neglect of the deep cultural and historic links between Ireland and Europe. This seminar – hosted by the Irish Humanities Alliance, the Humanities Institute UCD, and the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, TCD and with support from the French and the German Embassies – aimed to address this lacuna.

Contributors addressed the social and cultural dimension to Ireland's membership of the European Union and considered the implications, for Ireland, of Brexit. Among the myriad topics for discussion were: identity in Northern Ireland; multiculturalism; education; language; food and sport. The seminar also identified the cultural challenges of Brexit and explored ways of developing an inclusive and diverse post-Brexit European identity.

Contributors recognised that the common EEC/EU membership of Ireland and the United Kingdom since 1973 had been critical to the success of the peace process. It had helped many in Northern Ireland to no longer think of themselves as part of the two binary communities – unionist or nationalist and had facilitated the accommodation of both communities' aspirations. The seminar reflected on what Europe today means for contemporary Ireland, north and south, and considered the singular risk that Brexit posed to that process of healing.


BEYOND
MARKETS
The Cultural Case
for Ireland in Europe

Introductions

Professor Michael Cronin, Chair of French, TCD, opened proceedings by welcoming everybody to the Royal Irish Academy. He thanked his fellow organisers of the event: Professor Anne Fuchs, Professor Noel Fitzpatrick and Dr Mel Farrell. The organisers were especially grateful to the French and German embassies for their support of the event. Professor Cronin then outlined the rationale behind 'Beyond Markets'. The UK's Brexit vote had brought the debate about Ireland's place in Europe into much sharper focus. Regrettably, the discussion has been excessively narrow with an almost exclusive focus on economic and institutional issues. Ireland's connections to the continent are historic and run deep and yet the debate has been framed around the concept of 'The Market'. Failure to foreground the cultural dimension to Ireland's membership of the European Union is to ignore something fundamental, what former President of the European Commission Jacques Delors put his finger on when he declared that 'you don't fall in love with a Common Market'. Today's contributors would explore the cultural implications of Brexit while making a broader case for Ireland's place in Europe.

Professor Noel Fitzpatrick, Dean of GradCAM DIT and Chair of the IHA, was delighted to introduce the two ambassadors, H.E. Deike Potzel Ambassador of Germany to Ireland, and H.E. Stéphane Crouzat Ambassador of France to Ireland. The title of today's event – 'Beyond Markets' – reflected a theme that was very close to those of us working within the humanities. The Irish Humanities Alliance was established in 2013, within a difficult, post-crisis context for the humanities disciplines. The very nature of these fields was challenged by the demand to satisfy an increasingly market-orientated university system. President Michael D. Higgins, in his speech at the recent launch of the Cambridge History of Ireland, had articulated the challenges facing the humanities. The President spoke about metrics in higher-education as an 'ideological fad' and referenced the 'mediocrity of a neo-utilitarian research agenda'. This has come at a time when the historical, critical, philosophical, linguistic and cultural perspectives of the humanities are central to understanding the major questions of the day. The questions posed by Brexit are fundamental to understand what the European project is, and the humanities are essential to the process of reflection needed.

H.E. Ambassador Deike Potzel, Ambassador of Germany to Ireland, was delighted to be present for today's event. This was, she declared, an opportune moment to have a conversation about the cultural case for Europe. She described language and culture as the blocks on which our common European values are based. Today's event was a significant one. It was essential to develop a sense of Europe that is broader than markets and institutions. Her Excellency the Ambassador recognised the unique challenges that the United Kingdom's exit from the EU posed for Ireland, particularly in relation to the border. The outcome of the Brexit referendum had come as a shock in Germany just as it had come as a shock all across Europe. We are losing an important EU partner. However, events such as this one showed that Brexit was a starting point for us in Europe to reflect and to act on how we can ensure there is a diverse and inclusive future for the European identity.

H.E. Ambassador Stéphane Crouzat, Ambassador of France to Ireland, believed that today's programme addressed fundamental issues. He stressed the benefits of the flagship Erasmus programme which had been critical to the development of a multi-lingual Europe, cultural enrichment and the forging of a European identity. He noted that a large number of French students participate in Erasmus exchanges here in Ireland while a significant proportion of Irish students choose to study in France. At any given moment, there are over 2,000 French students studying in Ireland and some 600 Irish students in France. Ambassador Crouzat also referenced EU programmes that provide finance for culture, protect heritage and support the creative industries. In the Brexit deliberations there had been little discussion as to how the UK would manage without EU funding culture and creativity. Between 2014 and 2016 the Creative Europe programme had provided funding to 283 British organisations and media. Such funding would not be available to them after Brexit.

Professor Anne Fuchs, Vice-Chair of the IHA, then introduced keynote speaker Professor Nicholas Boyle. Professor Boyle had demonstrated considerable intellectual leadership since the June 2016 Brexit referendum and had written extensively on the implications of the UK's proposed withdrawal from the European Union. Professor Fuchs described Professor Boyle as an internationally renowned scholar of eighteenth-century German literature and thought with an encyclopaedic knowledge of European philosophy and culture. His multi-volume biography of Goethe is internationally acclaimed as a work that sets new standards for all biographers to follow. Professor Boyle is a Fellow of the British Academy, a Corresponding Fellow of the Göttingen Academy, and holds an honorary degree from Georgetown University. In 2000 he received the Goethe medal of the Goethe Institute and in 2106 the Gold Medal of the International Goethe Society. Full keynote is available at https://www.irishhumanities.com/assets/Uploads/Beyond-Markets-Prof-Boyle-Keynote-Final.pdf and on YouTube at https://youtu.be/EDthMIyKI94.

PANEL DISCUSSION:

The cultural case for Ireland in Europe

CHAIR

Professor Marian Lyons

PANELLISTS:

Noelle O'Connell, European Movement Ireland
Peter Millar, Journalist
Dr Mary Canning, Royal Irish Academy
Prof. David Johnston, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Marian Lyons, introducing the panel discussion, said that she hoped this session would tease out the concepts and questions that were touched on in the stimulating keynote lecture that we had just heard. She was struck by Professor Boyle's description of the border as a 'shared wound' that had begun to heal with the accession of both the UK and Ireland to the EEC in 1973. Professor Lyons observed that, collectively, the four speakers we would soon hear from offered four quite distinct perspectives on the questions of culture and identity and how these relate to the current challenges of Brexit.

Peter Millar focussed on culture and identity, illustrating the point with reference to his formative experiences in Northern Ireland, Great Britain, Ireland and Europe. He began by discussing his own background in Northern Ireland. One side of his family came from quite a strict Ulster Unionist background and he remembered being taken to Finaghy Field as a six-year old child, in an Orange sash. While there, he heard barnstorming speeches that denounced the pope as the 'harlot of Babylon'. During his teenage years he had also witnessed the 'Troubles' at close quarters before becoming aware that the concept of 'Europe' was something that attracted him.

He was eighteen-years old when the UK and Ireland's acceded to the original EEC in 1973. An enthusiastic supporter of EEC membership, this cemented the designation 'European' as a new and inclusive identity that he could embrace: Irish and European. He studied French, German and Spanish before embarking on his career as a journalist. The EEC/EU has been at the heart of his career in journalism. In 1976 Reuters dispatched him to Brussels as a reporter. In subsequent years he reported on Poland's Solidarity Movement, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in Eastern-Europe.

Returning to Northern Ireland, as he grew up, Peter came to realise that he had a lot in common with Catholics and that the conflict in Northern Ireland was not really about religion – as it sometimes seemed – but about questions of culture and national allegiance. Whereas people in England, Scotland and Wales used the British marker as an add-on to their own, distinct national identities in Northern Ireland, unionists embraced the British label as an expression of what they were not: Irish. Europe, was not just about markets. It was about common interests and for that reason he was deeply concerned about the implications of Brexit in Northern Ireland.

Dr Mary Canning, noted that the European Social Survey of 2016 showed that the Irish, more strongly than the European average, appreciate the cultural benefits – migration in particular – of EU membership. The most recent census data shows that about 10% of the population was born outside Ireland and yet there has been no anti-migrant backlash here on the scale that we have seen elsewhere. While Dr Canning believed this was a phenomenon that requires further investigation and analysis she proposes that culture, in this sense, is the glue holding us together. Culture, in the Irish context, was not the badge of reaction that it become in other parts of the world.

Dr Canning believed that clues can be found in Irish history. Historically in Ireland, there was a relationship with continental Europe that was distinct. In the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, Salamanca, Rome, Paris and Louvain were the lifeline to the culture of Europe and this, of course, was not the culture of our closest neighbour. Historically, and now through membership of the EU, the relationship with Europe had helped Ireland feel that it was, culturally, not just an island behind an island.

Addressing the cultural benefits of Ireland's membership of the European Union, Dr Canning agreed with Ambassador Crouzat that the Erasmus programmes had been a major EU success. Ireland had benefited greatly from the cultural exchange that is enabled via the Erasmus programme. Ireland had benefited immensely from the flow of European students to Irish universities while Irish students had benefited from culturally enriching experiences across the continent. At the European level, research grants had enabled Irish academics to collaborate with their European counterparts. The benefits of this European funded research flow through, not just this society, but Europe more generally. However, in many respects, Europe had inadequately explained itself. In Hungary and Poland she had gained a first-hand perspective on the way that EU membership had benefited those post-communist societies. Given the emerging threat to European values in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, Dr Canning asked those in attendance to consider what we could do to address the illiberal threat to European values.

Professor David Johnston identified with Peter Millar's contribution. As an eight-year-old child he too had been brought to the Finaghy Field and, although he did not understand what was happening, his childhood self knew that that was where he belonged and that while they may have frightened him, the men in the bowler hats would protect him. That was the Northern Ireland of his childhood and he did not have the opportunity to meet or interact with any Catholics until he went to university.

Discussing the question of identity, Professor Johnston stated that 'we become ourselves in the mirror of others'. What others think of us matters. He was struck by Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in which Fanon describes becoming aware of 'the fact of blackness' when he meets white soldiers from metropolitan France and they confirm his sense of identity to him. Identity, in Northern Ireland is changing. It was constructed along binary oppositions that had a dyadic unity: communities that do not know each other but have created each other in resentment, fear and apprehension. In that context, he described multiple identity as a richness of self that emerges from our encounters with all the things beyond us that we are not. Europe had brought a sense of something different from outside to the question of identity in Northern Ireland. As figures like John Hume and those from the cultural sector who were involved in the Field Day Theatre Company recognised, Europe brought an opportunity to tear apart that dyadic unity that had kept people imprisoned within their separate identities in the North.

The Good Friday Agreement – or the Belfast Agreement or the 1998 Agreement depending on your persuasion – had as its guarantor the presence of Europe. Europe made the Good Friday Agreement happen. Many in Northern Ireland no longer think of themselves as part of the binary communities. A growing number in Northern Ireland – 48% according to one recent poll – identify as neither unionist or nationalist and had pulled away from the two, different sets of mind and ways of thinking about each other. That growing middle ground had, so far, been largely ignored in the discussions within the UK government about the future border. Brexit risks leaving them behind and puts the border back as a conscious place. For these reasons, Professor Johnston was deeply apprehensive about Brexit. He is particularly concerned that it has brought the border back to our imaginary and as a possible physical location. He fears that Northern Ireland could be isolated from the creative, cultural and political projects that European funding seeks to sustain and develop.

Noelle O'Connell outlined the findings from the recent opinion poll that revealed an increase in pro-European sentiment among the Irish electorate. Polling company RED C were commissioned by European Movement Ireland (EMI) to interview a random sample of 1,000 adults aged 18 or over from across the country between the 15th – 21st March 2018. This polling was designed to gauge where people perceive Ireland's place in the European Union given the wider discussions around Brexit. Interestingly, this year, support for Ireland's continued membership of the European Union reached 92%. This is the highest pro- EU sentiment has been since these polls began in 2013, which clearly demonstrates that there is very little support, contrary to the best efforts of some, for the idea that Ireland should follow the UK out of the EU. On the contrary, this data clearly shows that the Brexit referendum and its aftermath have enhanced Ireland's sense of Europeanness. This sense of Europeanness was evident at the regional Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe which EMI hosted around the country in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, spearheaded by the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD. Interestingly, Brexit didn't feature in the round-table discussions as much as might have been expected. Instead, the themes that the Irish public brought up most frequently were the importance of opportunities such as the Erasmus+ programme, and the need to promote language learning within Ireland to equip our youth as much as possible to travel and work within the EU.

Noelle also believes that schemes like the Blue Star Programme underline what we do well in terms of participatory democracy. This programme is an initiative that aims to foster a better understanding and knowledge of the European Union and how it affects the lives of Irish citizens among primary pupils. This is accomplished through classroom projects and activities that communicate Europe in a curriculum friendly manner. Since 2012 over 90,000 primary school children have participated in the programme. On a recent visit to her former primary school in rural Cork, she observed the benefits of the scheme with children learning about different European cultures. In recent decades this school has become multi-cultural with parents and children from a wide range of backgrounds talking about and sharing their culture. These initiatives are creating an integrated, open and multi-cultural Irish society.

The designation of 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage is unanimously supported by both the EU institutions and the member states. This is now a time of significant political momentum for collaboration on culture. In recent Euro-barometer surveys, 41% of respondents felt that EU member states are distant in terms of values. However, culture topped the list of factors likely to create a sense of community among citizens. It was apt, therefore, that today's event was making that cultural case for Europe. Given the benefits of EU membership for Ireland – not forgetting the ways in which the EU itself benefits from having Ireland as a committed and constructive member – it behoves all of us to make the positive case for Ireland's continued membership. If there is any silver-lining to Brexit, it is that it forces Ireland to assert its own place on the European stage with confidence and commitment.

WORLD CAFÉ DIALOGUE

Addressing the major cultural challenges, for Ireland, of Brexit

HOST

Professor Michael Cronin

Roundtable One

This table teased out what we mean by culture and how it might be perceived in a post-Brexit context.

- The group acknowledged that, for many people, culture is an abstract concept, and this was a challenge.
- It was felt that these issues concerning culture could be addressed through primary and secondary education with adjustments to the curriculum.

The group discussed the extent to which 'Europe' was a lived reality and how we make cultural connections in our everyday lives.

- As mentioned in earlier sessions, the role of the flagship Erasmus Programme in cultural enrichment. Important to Ireland in a post-Brexit context.
- Members of the group discussed the need to draw out the genealogical ties that knit the continent together: A "Who do you think you are" with a European flavour was suggested.
- How much do Europeans know about each other? It was suggested that cultural connections serve as a hook to help us learn about other Europeans. The group provocatively suggested using national stereotypes for this purpose: "Who do you think they are?"; "Is that who they really are?".
- Many young people become acquainted with Europe by interrailing. The development of Euro trails would help us to get to know the continent.
- The group also identified mobility as one tangible benefit of EU membership.

Next, the group turned its attention to food and drink, and the way that we – sometimes unknowingly – ingest European cultures. Do we realise how European our eating habits are and how do we draw out those links?

- The arrival of a 'foodie' culture in Ireland largely coincided with accession to the EEC in 1973. This was particularly evident in terms of cheese and wine.
- European cuisine is increasingly a staple of the Irish diet.
- European bake-offs; and European Masterchef were suggested as ways to underline these cultural influences.

The need to celebrate the achievements of European integration was also discussed.

- Celebration of European integration is important given the peace, prosperity and cultural enrichment that have flowed from it.
- The group discussed 'Europe Day' and concluded that most Europeans are quite possibly unaware of it. How to make it a more meaningful event. Playing of 'Ode to Joy'?
- How about a distinct, 'European Unity Day'?
- Was there a need for a more continent-wide celebration with festivals and performance to celebrate the ideal of Europe?
- The group also suggested popular, Europe-wide mobilisation to address issues that are of paramount importance across the generations: a Europe-wide mobilisation on Ecology/Green issues was suggested as a first step in this direction.

Guests attending this table also discussed populism and Eurosceptic politicians. There was a need to address the emotive arguments put forward by the Eurosceptic organisations. These were usually stories based on very little evidence.

- These 'arguments' by Eurosceptics were usually stories that were based on no evidence. The facts didn't matter to Eurosceptics if the story could be sold. On both sides of the Atlantic this was posing a very serious problem.
- The group agreed that myths should be challenged. However, there was concern that the triumph of evidence in these debates cannot be taken for granted.
- Therefore, it was vital that we challenge the thinking. Or that we tell an equally compelling narrative about Europe as a positive development.

Roundtable Two

The discussion here focussed on what the group considered the most pressing challenges today: identity and what it meant to be European.

- Some members of this group noted the enduring strength of local identities in Ireland: parish, village, town, city and, arguably strongest of all, county. These were reinforced by the strength of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA).
- This identification with the local was something that struck people when they visited Ireland for the first time.
- There was a need to articulate appreciation for the local, national and supranational identities thus 'localising Europe'.

The group also believed that the concept of Europe and its political culture needed to be more effectively communicated.

- It was suggested that the way that the EU works is not fully understood.
- There is loose talk about a 'democratic deficit' and this was particularly evident in the UK referendum.
- The group did not agree that there was a 'democratic deficit' but believed that the EU structures and processes are complex. These should be explained to citizens so that they are informed.
- This was tied in with defining and articulating the direction of the European project.

This group identified language as a major challenge of Brexit for Ireland. The largest English-speaking member state would be leaving the EU and Ireland would need to develop much stronger ties with non-English speaking member-states.

- There was an impression that Ireland over-relies on the English language.
- There would be tens of millions of people in the European Union speaking such languages as Italian, Spanish, Polish, French and German daily with only Malta and Ireland speaking English on a daily basis.
- Ireland would have to give serious consideration to its language strategy. The Government of Ireland had committed to improving the foreign language competency of the schooling population and must follow through on this as a matter of urgency.
- While the language barrier was a major challenge associated with Brexit, the group felt that there was now an opportunity to engage with Europe through an increased emphasis on learning its languages.

Roundtable Three

The third roundtable picked up on the point in relation to the challenges and opportunities associated with Brexit.

- Once more, the language barrier was singled out as one of the major post-Brexit challenges for Ireland.
- However, the group struck an optimistic tone. While Ireland would certainly need to improve its competency in the major European languages, there was also an opportunity to present itself as the English-speaking pivot within the EU.
- Either way, the withdrawal of the UK from the EU would mean that Ireland could no-longer assume that everybody else speaks English. There would need to be investment in languages.

The group also considered how their divergent paths on EU membership would affect the relationship between the UK and Ireland.

- The group acknowledged that the two countries had, in the past, taken divergent paths: Irish independence in 1922; Ireland's departure from the Commonwealth in 1949 and Ireland's adoption of the euro in 2002.
- However, here – after decades of collaboration as European partners – the relationship would become dramatically altered and there would be implications as Nicholas Boyle's keynote had demonstrated.
- Furthermore, if Ireland makes a success of 'going it alone in Europe', how will that play out in Scotland and possibly Wales?

The group believed that Brexit would challenge Irish 'cosiness' with British culture.

- There was an Irish audience for British soap operas and the English Premier League.
- Would there be an impact on popular culture and the choices made in terms of television and sport? The group considered whether Irish football fans would, over time, turn, in increasing numbers, to the German League or the Spanish League.

- Britain was also a historic destination for Irish migrants. Brexit could alter the situation, with ever-increasing numbers choosing continental Europe.

Irish exceptionalism was also discussed. Members of the group identified a need to articulate the relational nature of European experience and values.

- It was suggested that we begin to teach history in a different way. There was a tendency to 'Irish exceptionalism' and to be introverted in how Ireland examines its history.
- There had been recent growth in comparative and transnational history, for example in treatment of the Famine or the Irish experience of the early twentieth-century. This needs to be further expanded.

This group also observed that Ireland had become a 'foodie' culture during the 1970s and, like the first roundtable, linked this development to its accession to the EEC in 1973. Cheese culture really arrived in Ireland during the 1970s.

The group also picked up the point relating to Ireland's democratic traditions and moderate politics.

- The group discussed the strength of constitutionalism in Irish nationalist politics. Continuities from Daniel O'Connell's early nineteenth-century campaigns for Emancipation and Repeal of the Union to the Home Rule movement of the late nineteenth- and early- twentieth centuries.
- After a bitter Civil War, 1922-23 the state emerged as a stable democracy at a time when totalitarian movements of the left and right were gaining ground on the continent.
- Could Ireland relate to the experiences of other young states in Europe?
- Ireland would, the group felt, have to think about forming new relationships on the continent, particularly in terms of links/alliances with the smaller states. Up to now, the relationship with the UK had been paramount.

The group saw 'town twinning' with towns and cities on the continent as a practical solution in helping to connect Ireland with Europe. This could transcend the sense of Irish exceptionalism.

Further information

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