

# Centre *news*

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## 14<sup>th</sup> Conference in Irish-German Studies

*A context of 'Kristallnacht': Ireland and the German-speaking refugees, 1933-45 – A colloquium on German-speaking exiles and Irish helpers the national and international context 75 years ago*

University of Limerick, 7-8 November 2013



Bottom row left to right: Myrtle Allen (Ballymaloe, participant), Klaus Unger (Dublin, speaker), Prof Eoin Bourke (Galway, speaker), Philip Jacob (Dublin, speaker); 2<sup>nd</sup> row Harald Seibel, German Embassy (speaker), H.E. Thomas Nader, Austrian Ambassador (speaker), Dr Gisela Holfter (UL, organiser), Michael Kennedy (Peterborough, speaker), Paul Dubsy (Dublin, speaker); top row Prof Ian Wallace (Clevedon, speaker), Stephen Weil (London, speaker).

On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2013, a colloquium took place at the University of Limerick commemorating 75 years since 'Kristallnacht'. Organised by the Centre for Irish-German Studies, UL, the two-day event celebrated German-speaking exiles who succeeded in overcoming Ireland's restrictive immigration policy, and served as a tribute to the individuals and groups in Ireland who reached out and helped. The

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colloquium did not take the form of a typical academic conference; not only did it include current academic research but also personal reflections from former refugees and their family members. These moving personal accounts offered intimate perspectives on the legacy of 'Kristallnacht'.

The conference kicked off with welcome addresses given by Dr Gisela Holfter, conference organiser and Director of the Centre for Irish-German Studies, Prof Meg Harper, Head of UL's School of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication, HE Thomas Nader, Austrian Ambassador to Ireland, and Harald Seibel, First Secretary of the German Embassy in Ireland.

This was followed by two sessions 'Personal Reflections I and II', with papers and reminiscences by Stephen Weil (London), Klaus Unger (Dublin) and Paul Dubsy (Wexford/Dublin) in part I.

The second session began with the fascinating story of Hans Kohlseisen (87) who joined the conference from Vienna via Skype. He shared his experience as a 13-year-old refugee who arrived in Roscommon on his own in 1939. The following contribution by Herbert Karrach (King's Lynn, England), who could not attend on the day, was recorded prior to the colloquium, and in this he reflected upon his escape with his parents from Vienna to Kilkenny, "the middle of nowhere", in 1938. Emeritus Professor Eoin Bourke (Galway/Berlin) closed the session with a speech on George Clare (*née* Georg Klaar) whose autobiography *Last Waltz in Vienna: The Destruction of a Family* tells of his parents' and grandparents' lives in Vienna, his escape to Ireland and subsequent enlistment in the British Army. The first day came to a close with the final session 'Cultural Legacy' which featured a short film, *Blind Eye* (2007). Written by author Hugo Hamilton and directed by Mary Rose Doorly, the film is set in Dublin in 1939 and is based on a true story. Sabina Wizniak, a young Jewish woman who finds refuge with an Irish family faces deportation back to Germany. The film encapsulates Ireland's illiberal refugee policy during the war and reflects upon Ireland's attitude towards refugees. After the screening a discussion followed with the author and director about Sabina, who stayed in Ireland and later married an Irishman.

On Friday Tomi Reichenthal, one of Ireland's few Holocaust survivors, joined the conference. Prof. Anthony McElligott (UL), Prof. Ian Wallace (Bath) and Dr David O'Donoghue (Dublin) gave presentations on

the context of *Kristallnacht* in Ireland, Britain and the Continent. Personal accounts from those who helped the refugees were included in two sessions, ‘Insights into the helpers’ side Part I and II’. Part I included speeches from Philip Jacob (Dublin) of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and Yanky Fachler (Dublin) of the Irish Jewish Community. In Part II, Glynn Douglas (Dublin) and Michael Kennedy (Peterborough) offered insight into the Belfast Committee for Refugees and the helpers’ side in Northern Ireland.



Dr Patricia Conlan, Dr Hermann Rasche,  
Kevin McCarthy



Mary Rose Doorly, Hugo Hamilton

The final session of the conference included work by academics currently conducting research on German-speaking refugees in Ireland. Birte Schulz (Dublin) was dealing with questions of identity, Dr Siobhan O’Connor (UL) discussed policy and public responses towards the exiles and finally Dr Gisela Holfter, who reminded of lesser known refugees in her presentation “Schrödinger was not the only one”.

Altogether there were about 80 participants at this inspiring and moving event which was supported by the AHSS Teaching and Research Fund at UL as well as the German Embassy. An extended conference report by Mary McDermot and Robyn Byrt, students of the MA in Irish-German Studies who were a tremendous help in the organisation of the event, will appear in the 2014 volume of *Germanistik in Ireland*.

The research project on the German-speaking refugees 1933-1945 has been running at the Centre for Irish-German Studies for over ten years and has been supported by grants from the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Austrian Academy of Science, DAAD, Royal Irish Academy and the University of Limerick.

## Lecture on the Saarbrücken *Dankebuch*

On Tuesday, 12 November 2013, the Centre for Irish-German Studies organised a guest lecture by Mr Tony O’Herlihy, “The Saarbrücken ‘Dankebuch’ (Book of Thanks)”.



The lecture, accompanied by numerous illustrations, told the story of an exceptional document. In the immediate post-war period, in summer 1945, the Irish Red Cross began sending food parcels to starving children in post-war Germany. An extraordinary item relating to this important aspect of Irish-German relations surfaced recently. A hand-made book in which girls from a German primary school in Saarbrücken express their deep gratitude for the gifts received from generous Irish donors ended up in the family archive of Mr Tony O’Herlihy who brought it to public attention recently (see the full-page article in the *Irish Times* of 1 July 2013 by Derek Scally, “Post-war food donations led to album of thanks from starving German children to ‘you Irishmen’”). The individual contributions, poems, short prose texts and drawings, composed by the 11-year-old girls contain deeply moving evidence of the hardship and at times near-starvation many German children suffered at the time. They are also a timely reminder of a period when Germany was in dire need and received generously from Ireland; they are in this sense not without political significance in the context of current public discourses about the relationship between the two countries.

The Centre is currently involved in the publication of the *Dankebuch* in facsimile form.

## **Lecture on Scottish-German connections**

Christopher Harvie, Prof. em. of British and Irish Studies at the University of Tübingen (Germany) and Member of the Scottish Parliament 2007-2011 gave a guest lecture to students of German, on 3 April 2014, on “Die deutsche Universität aus schottischer Sicht” (German Universities through Scottish eyes). In co-operation with the Centre for European Studies the Centre also organised a lecture on “Scotland and the European Union” on the same day. Christopher Harvie was born in Motherwell in 1944. He taught at the University of Edinburgh and the Open University before being offered the chair of British and Irish studies at the University of Tübingen in 1980, where he taught until 2007. He was a member of the Labour Party from 1962 to 1988 and was involved in the campaign for a Scottish Assembly in 1979. In the late eighties his CND loyalties led him to leave the Labour Party and move to the SNP. He stood in the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary election and was elected. As well as undertaking significant constituency work from his Kirkcaldy office, Chris served on the Economics, Energy and Tourism Committee. He did not seek re-election in 2011 as an MSP. In 2012 he was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the German Federal Republic in recognition of his lifelong contribution to German-Scottish understanding. Among his book publications are *The Rise of Regional Europe* (1993), *Fool's Gold: The Story of the North Sea Oil* (1994), *Mending Scotland* (2004) and *A Floating Commonwealth: Politics, Culture and Technology on Britain's Atlantic Coast, 1860-1930* (2008).

## **Ernst Lewy Lecture in Wechterswinkel**

Ernst Lewy was the first professor for Finnougristik in Berlin (where he taught Walter Benjamin in linguistics). While during the semester he lived in Berlin, he spent the rest of his time in Wechterswinkel, northern Bavaria, where his family lived since WWI, before having to leave Germany due to his Jewish background. He arrived in Ireland in June 1937 and stayed there until his death in 1966. Wechterswinkel (where Lewy was visited by Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem) has not forgotten its famous resident and invited Dr Gisela Holfter to give a lecture on his life and work. A donation of 800 euro towards scholarships for the MA in Irish-German Studies was gratefully received afterwards and will contribute towards forging new links and support the next

generation of scholars in Irish-German Studies. Press coverage see <http://www.mainpost.de/regional/rhoengrabfeld/Auf-den-Spuren-der-Sprachwissenschaft;art777,7627677>.

## First graduation of students of the MA in Irish-German Studies



Course director Dr Gisela Holfter with some of the students in the first cohort of the MA in Irish-German Studies after graduation

### RTE 1 History Show

Dr Jerome aan de Wiel joined Myles Dungan on the RTE1 *History Show* (<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/the-history-show/>) on 19 January 2014 to talk about the Home Rule Crisis and World War I.

### Members' news

Dr Joachim Fischer has been co-opted to the reconstituted Germany group of the Institute for International and European Affairs, Dublin.

Dr Gisela Holfter was appointed an Associate Member of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, based at the Institute for Modern Languages Research, University of London. She was also invited to become a committee member of the Irish Palatine Association.

Dr Richard Kirwan, Dept of History, UL; Dr Michael G. Kelly, French section, School of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication; and Dr Christiane Schönfeld, Head of German Studies, Mary Immaculate College have joined the Centre as Members.

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We say good-bye to Centre members Dr Sinead Crowe, who moved as a translator to Hamburg recently and Dr Monika Albrecht who has been appointed to a lectureship in German Studies at the Universität Vechta.

## Recent Publications

Sabine Egger, *Between Hölderlin and Heaney: Thresholds and Boundaries in Johannes Bobrowski's Poetry*. In: *Germanistik in Irland* 8 (2013), pp. 107-125.

Gisela Holfter, Review Eoin Bourke's '*Poor Green Erin: German Travel Writers' Narratives on Ireland from before the 1798 Rising to after the Great Famine*, in: *Studies in Travel Literature*, 18/1 (2014), pp. 86-88.

Gisela Holfter, Annette Kolb – Eine Annäherung, in: Gabrielle Alioth, Martin Dreyfus (eds), *Gehen und doch bleiben*, Heidelberg: Synchron Wissenschaftsverlag 2014, pp. 61-66.

Fergal Lenehan, 'Back in the GDR', *The Dublin Review of Books*, 16 December 2013.

Fergal Lenehan, *Europe and Intellectuals - Imagining a Europe of Regions in 20th Century Germany, Britain and Ireland* (Irish-German Studies 7). Trier: WVT 2014.

Christiane Schönfeld, *Representing the 'Good German' in Literature and Culture after 1945: Altruism and Moral Ambiguity*, edited and introduced with Pól Ó Dochartaigh. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013.

Michaela Schrage-Früh, "Like a foreigner / in my native land" In: P. Villar-Argaiz (ed.), *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2014, pp. 163-175.

Michaela Schrage-Früh, "Negotiating Historical Trauma: The Great Famine as Memory and Metaphor in Contemporary Irish Fiction." In: *Critical Engagements: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* 6.2 (2013), pp. 59-74.

## Books due to be published in 2014

Jerome aan de Wiel, *East German Intelligence and Ireland, 1949-1990: Espionage, terrorism & diplomacy*. Manchester University Press.

Veronica O'Regan, Claire O'Reilly (eds), *Ireland and the Irish in Germany: Reception and Perception*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Sabine Egger (ed.), *Irish-German Biographies II – Translating Cultures* (Irish-German Studies 8).

Gisela Holfter (ed.) *An Irish Context to 'Kristallnacht': Refugees and Helpers* (Irish-German Studies 9).

Christiane Schönfeld (ed. and intro. et al.) *Ernst Toller: Kommentierte Werkausgabe*. In collaboration with a group of international scholars, co-editor of volume 2. Göttingen: Wallstein.

## Ongoing PhD research projects

**Antoinette McNamara**, Nazi-Children as Victims? Developments in the Representation of the Past in Recent German-speaking Literature (M. Krajenbrink).

**Claudia Reese**, Multicultural Identity in Contemporary Irish Writing (G. Holfter and T. O'Toole, English section, LLCC).

**Birte Schulz**, Questions of Identity – German-speaking exiles in Ireland 1933-1945' (G. Holfter).

**Martti Steinke** (IRCHSS postgraduate scholar), German-speaking refugees in Northern Ireland 1933 to 1945 (currently on leave, supervisor G. Holfter).

**Sara Eriksson**, Tagebücher im Internetzeitalter – Medientheorie und autobiographisches Schreiben (Universitet Stockholm, joint external supervisor G. Holfter).

## Selected ongoing research projects

S. Egger, Moving East/West: Transit Spaces in German Literature.

J. Fischer, Germany as a Factor in Irish Modernisation Debates, 1916–today: Closer to Boston than Berlin? (Manchester Univ. Press).



J. Fischer, Denis Johnston and German Culture.

J. Fischer, The Reception of German Cinema in Ireland.

J. Fischer / T. O'Herlihy, The Saarbrücken *Dankebuch*.

G. Holfter / H. Dickel (Wiesbaden), German-speaking Refugees in Ireland 1933-45 (de Gruyter).

G. Holfter / J. Herres (BBAW, Berlin), Friedrich Engels and Ireland.

F. Lenehan, German Media Narratives of Ireland.

## Upcoming events

### *Begegnungen in Transiträumen / Transitorische Begegnungen - Encounters in Transit Spaces / Transitory Encounters*

From 29 May-1 June 2014 the Irish Centre for Transnational Studies (ICTS), supported by the Centre of Irish-German Studies, UL, and the Department of German Studies, MIC, will host the International Conference of the Association for Intercultural German Studies (GiG) at Mary Immaculate College. Over 100 participants from Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and Australia will explore transit spaces and movement in German-language literary and digital texts, film and other media, and in the language classroom, among them young researchers and renowned experts in their fields, such as Prof Norbert Mecklenburg (Cologne / Istanbul), Prof Aleya Khatib (Cairo) or Prof Dmitriy Dobrovolskij (Moscow). While the conference language is German, Prof Anil Bhatti (New Delhi) will give a public plenary lecture in English on "Space-Time Displacement and Cultural Translation in a World of Migration", and offer an interdisciplinary workshop for postgraduate students with an interest in intercultural and postcolonial studies. Other plenary lectures are by Dr Gisela Holfter (UL, „Vom Suchen und Finden von Transiträumen - Zur Theorie und Praxis von Forschungsprojekten im Kontext der Reise-, Exil- und Migrationsliteratur" ) and Dr Arnd Witte (NUI Maynooth, „Fremdsprachenlernen und Dritte Orte: Verstrickung und Entfaltung des interkulturellen Selbst" ). Events open to the wider public include readings in English and German by award-winning authors Hans Pleschinski and Ilma Rakusa, as well as works by Irish and international artists exploring transit spaces visually, acoustically and through dance. For further information see <http://www.ictstudies.eu/news-events/>.

Selected papers will be published by Peter Lang in the series *Cross-Cultural Communication* and in a themed edition of the *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik*. The conference is organised by Dr Sabine Egger (Department of German Studies and Joint Coordinator of the ICTS, MIC), Dr Withold Bonner (University of Tampere) and Prof Ernest W.B. Hess-Lüttich (University of Bern/Stellenbosch University). The event is co-funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Goethe-Institut Irland, the German, Austrian and Swiss Embassies, Fáilte Ireland, the Centre for Irish-German Studies, the Department of German Studies, An tOifigeach Gaeilge and the Research & Graduate School, Mary Immaculate College.

### **Reading by Hans Pleschinski from *Königsallee* (2013)**

All are welcome to join us on 29 May 2014, 7.30pm, Plassey House, UL! Summer 1954: Thomas Mann comes to Düsseldorf, accompanied by his wife Katia, to read from *Felix Krull*, his new book that is turning into a bestseller. There he meets Klaus Heuser, on home leave from Asia with his friend Anwar – a coincidence that will have unforeseen consequences. Mann had first met Heuser in 1927 and became deeply attached to him. As one of the loves of his past, Mann later used him as a model for the Joseph in his great tetralogy *Joseph und seine Brüder* (Joseph and His Brothers). Hans Pleschinski, born 1956 in Celle, has published satires, historical novels and translations from French literature. *Königsallee*, from which the author will read in German, was shortlisted for the German Book Prize 2013, and reached the top of the SWR list of best novels. The event is organised by the Centre for Irish-German Studies and supported by the German Embassy in Dublin and the German Department at Mary Immaculate College.

### **Launch of “German Traces”, 17 June, Goethe Institut Dublin**

A new project developed by the Goethe Institut Dublin gets Ireland on the map for a new app, “German traces in Ireland”. Following the example of other similar projects in Bratislava, Stockholm, Slovakia, Brazil and Israel, two well-known journalists, one Irish and one German described the traces. The Centre for Irish-German Studies helped with historical background and advice. Project manager was Kai Wagner.



The app will be launched by **H.E. Dr Eckhard Lübckemeier**, German Ambassador to Ireland on 17 June at 7pm in the Goethe Institut Dublin, 37 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, followed by a reception hosted by the German Embassy. Special guests include **Fintan O'Toole**, *Irish Times*, and **Ralf Sotscheck**, co-authors of *German Traces in Ireland*, and **Hugo Hamilton**, author of *The Speckled People* and other German-Irish stories.

### 15<sup>th</sup> Limerick Conference in Irish-German Studies:

**25 Jahre Mauerfall – Reflections on GDR literature, its legacy and the connections between the GDR and Ireland.** The conference, organized by Dr Deirdre Byrnes (NUI Galway), Dr Jean Conacher (UL) and Dr Gisela Holfter (UL) will take place **7/8 November 2014** at the University of Limerick and is coordinated with the DAAD and supported by the German Embassy. Acclaimed German authors **Kathrin Schmidt** (recipient of the German Book Prize, 2009) and **Katja Lange-Müller** (recipient of the Kleistpreis, 2013) have confirmed their participation. Speakers will include Centre members **Dr Jerome aan de Wiel**, **Dr Sabine Egger** (MIC, Limerick), **Dr Michaela Schrage-Früh** and **Dr Joachim Fischer** (UL); **Prof Karen Leeder** (Oxford), **Prof Ian Wallace** (Bath), **Dr Therese Hörnigk** and **Prof Frank Hörnigk** (Berlin) as well as **Derek Scally** (*Irish Times*, Berlin). The event will also include a dinner in honour of **Prof Eda Sagarra**. See also <http://www.ul.ie/~lcs/Irish-German/>.

### November 2014 - Reception of Refugees in Ireland

A one day colloquium on the reception of refugees in Ireland is currently in planning. The project resulted from the 14<sup>th</sup> Limerick Conference on the Irish Context of Kristallnacht and is supported by a grant of the **Irish Research Council**. *An Irish Context to 'Kristallnacht': Refugees and Helpers* (Irish-German Studies 9) will be launched during the colloquium.

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