

Bull Island: The Nonhuman Turn in Irish Studies

The 3rd Vienna Irish Studies & Cultural Theory Summer School

1–5 July 2019

Registration is now open for an ECTS accredited week of lectures, seminars, and screenings with internationally renowned Irish studies and cultural theory scholars at the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies!

From medieval nature poetry, illuminated manuscripts, and bestiaries to the animism of *fin de siècle* revival poetry and modernist figurations at (or beyond) the limit of human experience, the ‘nonhuman’ has long been an embodied, emotive, inter-relational subject of Irish literary and cultural expression (rather than merely the backdrop for the actions of human lives and narratives). And yet, recent years have seen significant developments and advancements in animal studies, nonhuman studies, posthumanist, ecocritical and ecofeminist approaches to the study of Irish culture and literatures – in monographs, collections and special issues dedicated to *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture* (ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbála Faragó, featuring Lucy Collins), *The Animal in Irish Women’s Writing* (Maureen O’Connor), *Joyce, Animals and the Nonhuman* (Katherine Ebury), *Beckett’s Creatures* (Joseph Anderton), and *Irish Theatre Environments* (Lisa Fitzgerald), among others. The challenges these works pose to conventional constructions that centre and elevate ‘the human’ allow us to refocus the critical lens to see more clearly the functions, stakes, and consequences of distinct conceptualisations, representations, and exploitations of animals, machines, and ecologies in diverse Irish historical contexts, cultural practices, and literary modes.

Given the pressing philosophical, material, and ethical issues of the nonhuman in the current literary critical and socio-political moment, the theme of the 2019 Vienna Summer School, *Bull Island: The Nonhuman Turn in Irish Studies*, offers students the opportunity to work with leading figures in the field to develop and deepen their analytical skills and theoretical knowledges in these wide-ranging critical conversations. Through guided close readings and discussions of the interfaces between culture and nature in Irish literature, drama, art, music, film, television, and popular culture, students and lecturers will explore diverse modes of (mis)representing, performing, articulating, witnessing, and deconstructing the non/human. Indeed, the very juxtaposition of ambiguously cultural, political, historical constructions such as ‘Irish’ and ‘non/human’ reveals a series of productive tensions between material conditions, cultural production, negotiated reception, essentialising reduction, legal and extra-legal practices, and the politics of human and nonhuman bodies.

Discussions of eras, authors, texts, genres, and media, as diverse as medieval Irish nature poetry, Jonathan Swift, Dora Sigerson Shorter, W.B. Yeats, Katharine Tynan, Elizabeth Bowen, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Flann O’Brien, *Father Ted*, and Irish cinema (among many others) will allow students and lecturers to address a diverse range of topics, genres, media, platforms, and historical-cultural contexts, including:

- *Bull Islands and Celtic Tigers*: Historical, Literary, Visual, Performative, and Intermedial Representations and Theorisations of the ‘Irish’ Nonhuman World
- *Literatures of the Land, Sea, & Sky*: Diverse Constructions of Ecology, Topography, Geography, Geology, Oceanography, Vegetation, Nonhuman Animals, Archipelago in Irish Culture & Literature
- *Nonhuman Genres and Passions*: Representing the Interface of the Human/Nonhuman Realms as Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Eco-Horror, Utopian/Dystopian Sci-Fi, Carnavalesque, the Grotesque...
- *The Animal Self/The Human Other*: The Functions of Nonhuman Figures in the Discourses of Gender, Race, Whiteness, Sexuality, Class, Ableism in Irish Contexts
- *The Wild Irish*: Clichés, Autostereotypes, and Heterostereotypes; Essentialising, Stigmatising, Othering of/by the ‘Irish’ as Cannibals, Beasts, Pigs, Apes
- *Daoine Sídhe and the Little People*: Figures of Death; Images of the Spiritual World; Hybrid and Liminal Creatures from Irish Folklore and Myth

- *Eating Animals*: Vegetarianism and Vegan Studies; Cultural Studies of Food, Consumerism and Culinary Lifestyle; Naked Chefs Dressing Animals and Vegetables; Hunting, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
- *Body Politics*: Nonhuman Animals and Ecologies under the Law (Structural Violence & Animal Rights)
- *Historical Conceptualisations of the Human & the Nonhuman*: Anthropocentric and Non-Anthropocentric Regimes of Truth, Knowledge and Power in Aristotelian, Religious, Secular, Humanist, Scientific, Darwinian, Romantic, Gothic, Revivalist, Modernist, Post-Humanist *etc.* Discourses and Contexts
- *Irish Bulls*: Role-Playing, Dissembling, Hoaxing
- *The Country and the City*: Constructions of the Irish West, Aran/Blasket Islands; 'Nature' as a Retreat from 'Culture': the Pastoral, Zoos, (Landscape) Gardens & (Theme) Parks; Tourism; Heritage Studies
- *Performances of the Nonhuman in the Everyday*: St Patrick's Day Parades, Horse Races and Dog Tracks, Cattle Marts, The Hunt, Sports, Memes in Digital & Social Media, *etc.*

The Summer School will be accredited according to the ECTS system

Attendance: 2 ECTS points; attendance + term paper (to be handed in by 15 September): 5 ECTS points

Confirmed speakers: **Joseph Anderton** (*Birmingham City University*), **Lucy Collins** (*University College Dublin*), **Katherine Ebury** (*University of Sheffield*), **Paul Fagan** (*University of Vienna*), **Lisa Fitzgerald** (*Université Nice Sophia Antipolis*), **Harald Freidl** (*University of Vienna*), **Dieter Fuchs** (*University of Vienna*), **Christopher Herzog** (*Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg*), **Brett Mills** (*University of East Anglia*), **Maureen O'Connor** (*University College Cork*), **Michelle Witen** (*University of Basel*); more to be announced...

Venue: Dept. of English & American Studies, University of Vienna, Hof 8.3, Spitalgasse 2-4, 1090 Vienna

Organisers: Paul Fagan & Dieter Fuchs

Fee: € 100 for access to all talks, seminars, screenings, social events (free of charge for students who are fully registered at the University of Vienna)

Registration: Email your name and affiliation to dieter.fuchs@univie.ac.at by **16 June 2019**