

Call for Papers:

“The Road Less Travelled? Irish-European Lives and Multi-Modal Approaches to Life-Writing”

Online Conference, 25-26 June 2026

Organisers:

Associate Prof. Sabine Egger (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)

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Life-writing, the purposeful recording of one's own or of someone else's life experience, is now seen as inherently multi-genre and multi-modal, well beyond the narrower parameters of memoir and autobiography. Literary Irish Studies has engaged greatly with both memoir and autobiography, not least that of Irish migrants. However, the study of Irish migrant memoir and autobiography has, understandably, been dominated by Irish-American, Irish-British and, more recently, Irish-Australian migrants. The publishing of Belfast-born artist Elizabeth Shaw's Irish-British-East German memoir, *How I Came to Berlin*, for the first time in English in 2025 and other current research suggest that there may indeed be a hidden reservoir of Irish-European life-writing that has still to be investigated by scholars. This online workshop, therefore, aims to explore life-writing by those Irish who have found themselves in various parts of Europe as migrants, exiles or travellers; in person, in imagination and in the digital world. Furthermore, we are interested in a broad range of modes of life-writing, for example by women and members of marginalised groups that may have found it difficult to position themselves to narrate their own life histories in the sustained, authoritative style associated with the classic forms of autobiography, but also by others transcending generic and medial boundaries.

Thus, for our **online conference on 25 and 26 June 2026** we are looking for scholars to examine Irish-European life-writing from a multi-generic and multi-modal perspective. Topics to be examined may include:

- Irish-European memoir and autobiography in comparison with Irish-American and Irish-British memoir and autobiography (and those linked to other global diasporas), in English, Irish and indeed further languages when applicable.
- Irish-Central European life-writing, particularly with a focus on German-speaking areas, understood in terms of diaspora, travel destinations, points of reference; the latter may also be linguistic, historical, social or cultural connection points in Irish writing and Irish lives (e.g. Hamilton's *Speckled People* as a contribution to 'New Irish' autobiographical writing); Irish-Eastern European life-writing.
- Studies of the personal essayistic engagement with Irish-European life and lives, from Hubert Butler to Emilie Pine, and incorporating the essays published in publications specialising in the essay form, including *The Dublin Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Winter Pages*, *Irish Pages* and *Tolka*, as well as other publications.
- Irish-European autofiction and its position between life-writing and fictional writing.
- Visual-oriented approaches to life-writing, such as auto-fictional, biographical and autobiographical graphic novels, from an Irish-European perspective.

- Online versions of Irish-European personal essay-writing, such as blogs and vlogs and social media accounts dedicated principally to the topic.
- Varieties of Irish-European podcasting or visual media which may be seen as taking a personal essayistic form.
- Multi-modality in Irish-European women's life-writing.
- Overviews of autobiography and related forms of life-writing in other European literatures (ideally in comparison with Ireland, but also contextualising overviews without explicit reference to Ireland)

Abstracts, setting out clearly the goal and potential arguments of your paper, should be sent to: fergal.lenehan@uni-jena.de and sabine.egger@mic.ul.ie by **21 April 2026**. The conference is free and open to all. Prof. Liam Harte (University of Manchester) and Prof. Marie Schröer (University of Potsdam) have been confirmed as keynote speakers. Funding for the publication of outcomes from the workshop has already been secured for a peer-reviewed **open-access e-book** with a renowned academic publisher. Presenters with suitable papers will be asked to turn their oral presentation into a written chapter, to be handed in by September 2026.