

Physical Movement, Body Cultures and Identity in Europe – on and off the Screen

Interdisciplinary Symposium of the [Irish Centre for Transnational Studies](#) (MIC),
in co-operation with the [Centre for European Studies](#) (UL)

Date:

Friday, 1 October 2021

Given times refer to Irish Standard Time (IST, UTC+01:00)

Place

JHN 221, John Henry Newman Campus, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) & online via MS Teams

Organisers:

Sabine Egger (German Studies, MIC), Marcus Free (Media Studies, MIC)

Programme:

Welcome & Introduction (12:45-13:00)

Panel 1 (13:00-14:30); Chairs: Marcus Free; Sabine Egger

Sport in European Film and Television

Rebecca Dawson (University of Kentucky): Soccer in Early German Cinema. *The Eleven Devils* of the Weimar Cultural Apocalypse.

Seán Crosson (NUIG): The Transnational in Contemporary European Sport Cinema: *The Keeper* (2018) and *The Racer* (2020)

Marcus Free (MIC): "New Gaels"? Irishness, Migration and Gaelic Games in Irish Television

Panel 2 (15:00-16:30); Chairs: Mairead NíBhriain; Marcus Free

Dance, Media and Embodied Identities in Europe (and beyond)

Breandán de Gallai (UL): Interrogating Identity through the Body: Reflections on Choreographic Processes (and Products) in Irish Dance Post Riverdance

Eoin Flannery (MIC): Dance and Performance in the Fiction of Colum McCann

Gert Hofmann (UCC): Embodied Imagination: Corporeality as Subject Ground in J.M. Coetzee's Writing

Panel 3 (17:00-18:30); Chairs: Sarah O'Brien; Sabine Egger

Lola Montez: Spanish Dancer from Ireland, European Femme Fatale, 19th Century Media Celebrity?

Marita Krauss (University of Augsburg): Lola Montez, Countess Landsfeld (1821-1861) – an enigmatic 'Spanish dancer' from Ireland conquers the world

Joachim Fischer (UL): Lola Montez. The Irish Dimension

Christiane Schönfeld (MIC): Introduction to Max Ophüls' Film *Lola Montez/Lola Montès*, 1955

Film Screening (20:00)

Lola Montez/Lola Montès, 1955

Abstracts

Panel 1

Rebecca Dawson (University of Kentucky)

Soccer in Early German Cinema. *The Eleven Devils* of the Weimar Cultural Apocalypse.

By the close of the 'golden twenties', sport in Germany had experienced an exponential rise in popularity, both among the masses as well as amongst the capitalistic elite. Though the cultural and technological progression of the 1920s were welcomed by many, a distinct fatigue and criticism emerged in the late years of the doomed Republic. Cinema, then a burgeoning genre in-and-of itself, offered the opportunity to combine the popularity of sport, and more specifically football, with pedagogical influence in the time of political upheaval and crisis, illuminating the cultural battlefield that raged at the time. Zoltan Korda's 1927 film *Die Elf Teufel (The Eleven Devils)*, elucidates precisely these characteristics. By examining the main characters and their interpersonal interactions, Korda's film sets the stage not only for the fall of the young republic, but also the imminent rise of the Third Reich. This presentation analyzes the star player of the film, Tommy, and the *loves* of his life: soccer and romance. In examining Tommy's role in the love triangle central to the plot (featuring Tommy, Linda and Vivian) as well as the moral crisis in choosing between his love of the game and profit, Korda's film highlights not only the problematic cultural foundations at play in the Weimar Republic, but also those capitalized upon by the forthcoming fascist regime. The film uses the mass phenomenon of football as a means to educate and instruct a young generation on qualities that translate easily from the football pitch to everyday life. The qualities criticized as well as praised in the *The Eleven Devils* reveal the very cultural sentiments that served as the foundation for the political rise of the Hitler regime. While German cinematic history is pregnant with sport films, the films of the late Weimar period provide a distinctive lens through which to understand both the contemporary and historical cultural landscape of Germany and the impending catastrophes to come.

Rebecca Dawson, Associate Professor of German Studies, University of Kentucky (USA). Rebecca Dawson's research focuses on sport in literature and cinema of twentieth century Germany. In addition to presentations and lectures (both in the US and abroad), she has published on a range of sport topics, ranging from propaganda of athletic aesthetic beauty to the commodification of football in German culture. The volume on football, which she is co-editing entitled *Football Nation* is currently under review with Berghahn Press.

Seán Crosson (NUI Galway)

The Transnational in Contemporary European Sport Cinema: *The Keeper* and *The Racer*

Sport cinema has been among the most enduring, popular, and critically acclaimed of genres within American cinema; however, limited research has been undertaken as yet of the European experience. Though a less prominent feature of European cinema, the European sports film has had a long history dating back to the earliest Lumière brothers productions. This paper provides some initial findings from an ongoing quantitative survey of European sport cinema being undertaken as part of the establishment of an online database on the subject. An overview of the historical development of sport in European film will be provided, with particular attention paid to the transnational resonances within recent releases *The Racer* (2020), an Irish-set cycling themed coproduction defined above all by its Europeanness, and *The Keeper* (2018), a biopic of German born former Manchester city goalkeeper Bert Trautmann. *The Keeper* is particularly interesting in the context of a symposium dedicated to exploring the topic of Physical Movement, Body Cultures and Identity in Europe as it suggests significant parallels between dance and football, integrated within the courting ritual of a German POW and English woman in the highly charged context immediately following World War Two. In this respect, the film offers a fascinating example of how embodied practices of athletes and dancers, as Dyck and Archetti (2003) note "afford not merely pleasure and entertainment but powerful means for celebrating existing social arrangements and cultural ideals or for imagining and advocating new ones".

Seán Crosson is Senior Lecturer in Film in the Huston School of Film & Digital Media and leader of the Sport & Exercise Research Group, National University of Ireland Galway. His previous publications include the monographs *Gaelic Games on Film: From silent films to Hollywood hurling, horror and the emergence of Irish cinema* (Cork University Press, 2019), and *Sport and Film* (Routledge, 2013) and the collections *Sport, Film and National Culture* (Routledge, 2021) and (as co-editor) *Sport, Representation and Evolving Identities in Europe* (Peter Lang, 2010).

Marcus Free (MIC)

“New Gaels”? Migration, Irishness and Gaelic Games in Irish Television

In 2020 the Black Lives Matter protests prompted extensive media coverage of racism in Irish sport. There was also considerable debate about the potential of sport to offer paths to “integration” in Irish society. In September 2020 public service broadcaster RTÉ’s television documentary “New Gaels” featured people of various ethnic backgrounds who had become involved in Gaelic games. While this was overwhelmingly positively received, arguably the term “new Gaels”, a variation on “new Irish”, a term that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s (but with a narrower focus given the historical association of Gael with a fetishised form of native masculinity), somewhat simplifies or even erases the complexities of migrant histories, experiences and identities. ‘New Gaels’ also foregrounds sporting excellence and a commitment to Gaelic games as a validation of ‘worthy’ migrants assimilating, with a strong visual emphasis on the athletic body in motion. While such representations use the culturally validated arena of Gaelic games to critically interrogate the equivalence of Irishness and whiteness and the documentary features anti-racist initiatives, excelling in these uniquely demanding disciplines becomes a path to acceptance that endorses their physical embodiment of ethno-nationalism. Set against the backdrop of the much criticised ongoing “direct provision” centres for migrant asylum seekers, the Constitutional prioritising of bloodline as path to citizenship in Ireland and the widespread celebration of the centrality of the GAA to “Irish life” during the 2020 pandemic, “New Gaels”, in conjunction with related broadcasts, tends to offer a benign, future-orientated perspective. It is limited in its engagement with Ireland’s problematic and uneven coming to terms with the impact of migration on the complexities of lived experiences and identities.

Marcus Free is a lecturer in Media and Communication Studies in Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. He has published widely in international journals and scholarly collections on the intersections of sport, gender, race and national identity in film, print and broadcast media. He is co-author of *The Uses of Sport: A Critical Study* (2005) and co-editor of *Sport, the Media and Ireland: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2020).

Panel 2

Breandán de Galláí (UL)

Interrogating Identity through the Body: Reflections on Choreographic Processes (and Products) in Irish Dance Post Riverdance

In the concluding paragraph of her 2001 paper, “Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Global, and Local”, Catherine Foley asked: “And what is the future for the Riverdancers after Riverdance? Do we see the establishment of small Irish step-dance companies or freelance individual Irish step-dance performers?”. My paper explores contemporary Irish dance choreography, both process and product, with particular reference to my own work with my company, *Ériu*. I look at the evolution of the genre outside the commercial arena and the traditional contexts (competition, social, vernacular) in which Irish step dance thrives. I examine the initial thrust of my choreographic practice and how it evolved over time. Bearing in mind Frank Hall’s question “Can one avoid the coup of psycho-cultural projection – explaining someone else in terms of one’s own hang-ups?” (Hall 2008), I discuss how the expectations of those evaluating and consuming the work both shape the company output and

conversations taking place within the organisation, and how this influences creative choices that are being made. I also pose the question: What role do cultural, institutional, and medial contexts play in this process? Through the lens of *Ériu's* repertoire, with a particular focus on our upcoming work *The Village*, I interrogate notions of embodied Irishness – often associated with the Irish step dancing body – and propose that dancing is a liberation of my unique identity, which may include Irishness, but is certainly not limited to this. Indeed, it represents much more.

Breandán de Gallai's is artistic director of *Ériu*, a company he established in 2010 with which he explores the poetic potential of the Irish dance form and presents work that is explorative and innovative. He has created several works, most notably *Walls Talk*, *Salómae*, *Aon*, *Linger*, *Rite of Spring* and *Noctú*. As a dance scholar and choreographer, his interest lies in the contemporisation of Irish dance. As a dancer, Breandán toured with *Riverdance* from 1994-2003, seven of which in the position of principal dancer. In 2007 he returned to *Riverdance* as Dance Director. Building on his training in Irish step dancing, Breandán explored other dance genres. Scholarships to institutions such as the Gus Giordano Dance Academy, Chicago, allowed for further training in Ballet, Modern, Jazz and Tap dance. Breandán completed a performance-based doctorate in 2013. He earned an MA in Ethnochoreology in 2009, and holds a B.Sc.(Hons) in Physics. He held several positions at the Irish World Academy at the University of Limerick including the Course Director of the BA Irish Dance, MA Irish Dance Performance, and the PhD Arts Practice.

Eóin Flannery (MIC)

Dance and Performance in the Fiction of Colum McCann

The paper will focus on two novels by the Irish writer, Colum McCann: *Dancer* (2003) and *Let the Great World Spin* (2009). Through its appropriation of the life of Rudolf Nureyev, one of the twentieth century's stellar artists and politico-cultural icons, *Dancer* tantalizes the reader with the 'truth' value of biographical record. Yet as McCann's paratextual materials impress and its privileging of the body, the novel utilizes Nureyev's existence as a means of re-imagining the latter half of the century, and in order to interrogate the nature of art and storytelling. The mobile, sexual vigour of Rudi's body, in dance most explicitly, is a muscular refutation of the boundaries of biographical textual record. Widely received as a so-called '9/11' novel, *Let the Great World Spin* opens with an iteration of Philippe Petit's 1974 "sky-walk" between the towers of the World Trade Centre. As we shall detail, McCann juxtaposes terrestrial and airborne spaces, which are figurations of hope and despair as well as reminders that life at ground level can be as precarious as life on an elevated tightrope: both demand balance that is often threatened and uncertain. And this is one of the possible interpretations of the wire walker's funambulism, as an acrobatic correlative of the fragile precariousness of daily living. At the same time, his act is an outrageous seizure of urban space, an act, apparently, with no constructive end other than the outstanding beauty of the act itself. The "walker" is apparitional on the Manhattan skyline, a spectre on the horizons of the visible and of the possible. But he is, most importantly, an agent of hope in the allegorical structure of the novel. His decision to step out onto the high wire is the ultimate act of faith: faith in oneself. And it is an inspirational, generous act offered to those who stop, wait and watch his skyborne performance. The wire walker's feat is an imaginative re-calibration of spatiality; it is an unforeseen subversion of the logic of capitalist space. The twin towers and the references to the Vietnam War unfolding at this time are affronted by the vision of the wire walker's spatial creativity. Both the war and the buildings are parts of the same capitalistic continuum and are complicit in the spatial appropriation of the globe.

Eóin Flannery lectures in the Department of English Language and Literature at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. He has published over 60 scholarly articles and book chapters, and is the author of 4 books: *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History, and Environmental Justice* (2016); *Colum McCann and the Aesthetics of Redemption* (2011); *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory,*

Discourse, Utopia (2009); *Versions of Ireland: Empire, Modernity and Resistance in Irish Culture* (2006). His next book, *Form, Affect and Debt in post-Celtic Tiger Fiction* will be published in 2021 by Bloomsbury. He is also currently working on an Irish Research Council-funded project on *Irish Studies and the Economic Humanities*.

Gert Hofmann (UCC)

Embodied Imagination: Corporeality as Subject Ground in J.M. Coetzee's Writing

The *Poetics of the Body* explores the phenomenon of touching as a process of creating an imagination which is fundamentally rooted in pure body awareness – a body-mind blurring experience. The point of touching is void of essential definitions, defies claims of authenticity and, as a consequence, fulfils the ultimate condition for the presence of the Other in the One and the exposedness of the One to the Other. Hence “touching” constitutes an exceptional state of de-centred, intermittent threshold awareness, blurred between absence and presence. Touching corrupts the order of conscious orientation and de-capacitates the possessiveness of the mind that forces the multitude of beings into the identity of its predication. It resonates with, instead, a recessive body awareness that is nonetheless able to reflect on its own fragility and exposedness. It may be the true privilege of art to activate these unique potentials of the body and to renounce and subvert the power of knowledge – to refrain from the raids of objectifying intelligence on the realm of *other subjects* while inverting the logic of cognition into the anti-logic of openness and sympathy for the categorically unknown: the other subject. What is at stake here is not autonomy but the *sovereignty* of art, its true irregular nature, its potency to compose the splintered, abject and singular to configurations of its own provenance. J.M. Coetzee conceives of his aesthetics of writing as based on an act of “sympathetic imagination” which depends essentially on such moments of “touch” which prompt the events of an unheard-of lived experience.

Gert Hofmann teaches German Literature, Literary Theory and Theatre Anthropology at UCC and Rostock University. *Dr. phil.* in Modern German Literature and Philosophy at Würzburg University, *Habilitation* at Rostock University. Previous faculty positions at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Seoul and Leibniz University Hanover. Visiting Professor at HUFU Seoul, UPenn, Université de Montréal, University of Washington. Research focus: anticlassicism, poetics of the body, trauma and aesthetics.

Panel 2

Marita Krauss (University of Augsburg)

Lola Montez, Countess Landsfeld (1821-1861) – an Enigmatic 'Spanish Dancer' from Ireland Conquers the World

Lola Montez, eternally young, was a dancer, a figure at once fascinating and divisive, roving artiste and lover of life. Born in Ireland as Eliza Gilbert, she grew up in India, Scotland and England and, after seduction, marriage and divorce, re-invented herself in 1843 by adopting the stage name Maria de los Dolores Porrys y Montez, an allegedly impoverished member of the Spanish nobility: in short, Lola Montez. She appeared in London, Dresden, Berlin and Warsaw, danced for the King of Prussia and the Russian Tsar, lived in Paris, in Bavaria, Switzerland, England and the United States and toured in America and Australia. Her relationship with King Ludwig I of Bavaria, who elevated her to countess status, made her both famous and infamous. She gained worldwide renown after a sixteen-month spell in Bavaria between 1846 und 1848. When she played Broadway, she earned tenfold the average American annual income in just one week. In the US she successfully commercialised her story under the title “Lola Montez in Bavaria”. Naturally, she played herself. When her dancing career was over,

she became a celebrated speaker as well as a writer dispensing advice on matters of beauty. She died in January 1861 in New York. It was pneumonia that got her. She was only thirty-nine.

Having completed her PhD and habilitation in history at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich **Marita Krauss** held professorships in Munich, Bremen und Vienna before being appointed in 2008 to the Chair of European Regional History at the University of Augsburg. Her research focuses on topics such as migration, remigration and hybridity. In addition, Marita Krauss worked on regional elites in management and administration. Her special interest is in the history of National Socialism in both urban and rural communities. She has written several biographies, most recently on [Lola Montez](#), and is working on a biography of the Bavarian King Ludwig I.

Joachim Fischer (UL)

Lola Montez. The Irish Dimension

Elizabeth Rosanna Gilbert, better known as the famous 19th century *femme fatale* Lola Montez, was born in Ireland on 18 February 1821. She can hardly be considered a major factor in Irish 19th century history, cultural or otherwise. However, that she is not well known in this country may also have other reasons. This paper concentrates on the Irish dimension of her story. This includes her family background, her first marriage into the James family, newspaper reports about her role in the 1848 revolution, her lecture tour through the country in 1858, as well as the subsequent silence about her and her more recent resurrection in literature and film. The conclusion aims to place her both within the broader framework of Irish perceptions of Germany and of women who did not match public expectations, *Wild Irish Women*, as Marian Broderick called them in her book of 2012.

Joachim Fischer (MA Mainz, PhD TCD, Dublin) holds the Jean Monnet Chair in European Cultural Studies at the University of Limerick. After many years as Course Director of UL's undergraduate programme in European Studies Prof. Fischer is now founding Course Director of the pioneering Double Degree MA in European Studies in co-operation with the Europa Universität Flensburg (Germany). He has been lecturing in European Studies, German and Film Studies in Ireland for over 35 years. His research has concentrated on Irish-German relations, national images, European Union studies, and utopian studies. He is joint editor of two book series, *Irish-German Studies* and *Ralahine Utopian Studies*. His most recent book length publication is an edition (with Fergal Lenehan) of President Michael D. Higgins' speeches on Europe and the European Union, *Reclaiming the European Street* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2021). Among his other book length publications are *As Others See Us: Cork through European Eyes* (with G. Neville, Cork 2005 as part of Cork European Capital of Culture) and *Das Deutschlandbild der Iren, 1890-1939* [The Irish image of Germany, 1890-1939] (Heidelberg 2000). He has also published widely in periodicals and edited books.

Christiane Schönfeld (MIC)

Introduction to Max Ophüls' Film *Lola Montez/Lola Montès*, 1955

Max Ophüls' last film, *Lola Montez/Lola Montès* (1955), was a project of exile(s) that began with a conversation between the famous German playwright Ernst Toller and the movie director in London in 1936. I will briefly introduce Ophüls and illustrate the impact of the German-born filmmaker, but will focus especially on the making of *Lola Montez*, outlining the significance of this "story of an Irish girl" for both Toller and Ophüls. The most expensive European film of its time, this lavish French-West German co-production stars some of the top actors of the time and is considered 'one of the best movies ever made'. Cinematographically innovative and multi-layered, the film tells the story of Lola Montez and reflects the plight of a 'fallen woman', but at the same time considers and also creates cinema as art. *Lola Montez* is a historical romance film, a melancholic reflection on love and

expediency, a complex evaluation of celebrity culture and of the commodification of women's bodies by a mass entertainment industry, and much more.

Christiane Schönfeld is Head of the Department of German Studies at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. Dr Schönfeld's research on German-language literature and cinema focuses on a wide range of cultural representations and sheds light on their significance for society. Among her publications are books and articles on creative women of the 19th and 20th century; on Weimar, exile, and post-war literary and visual cultures; adaptations; and on representations of alterity, marginalisation, and the public sphere. For more details: <https://www.mic.ul.ie/staff/206-christiane-schonfeld>.