

# Research Newsletter



St Mary's  
University College  
Belfast  
A College of Queen's University

## TEACHING HEANEY'S TROUBLES POEMS IN SCHOOLS

The Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) held its annual conference at the National University of Ireland between 31 March – 2 April 2016. The theme of the conference was 'Education as a Public Good' which was consistent with its mission to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the



public good. The College was represented at the conference by Dr Brian Hanratty (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) who presented a research paper titled *Teaching Heaney's Troubles Poetry to Upper-Secondary School Pupils in Northern Ireland's Divided Schools: Contexts, Methodology, Outcomes*.

The paper formed part of a wider Esmeé Fairbairn funded project concerned with the use of Troubles literature as a potential catalyst for change with Northern Ireland's schools. Against a background of some theoretical perspectives concerned with the efficiency of reading and writing poetry in a highly conflicted context, the paper presented a detailed literary-critical analysis of five carefully chosen Troubles poems by Seamus Heaney. Complementing that analysis, the paper also outlined possible methodologies for teaching the poems to upper-secondary pupils in Northern Ireland's divided schools with the intention of enabling pupils to engage in a cathartic questioning of inherited attitudes and prejudices. The five poems in focus were 'The Other Side', 'A Constable Calls', 'The Toome Road', 'The Strand at Lough Beg' and 'An Ulster Twilight'. While the selection was somewhat arbitrary and certainly not exhaustive, the argument was that, in addition to their valuable literary merit, the poems provided a fascinating and evolving spectrum of Heaney's politico-cultural perspectives. They represented, therefore, as the paper's methodological recommendations made clear, an opportunity for pupils to enhance their literary critical skills, while simultaneously interrogating their own identities and allegiances and those of their respective communities.

## SPEAKER PRESCRIBES STORIES TO TEACHERS

Catherine Gilliland (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) was keynote speaker at the Annual Learning Conference in Derry on the 22 June 2016. The theme of the conference was 'Connectivity Across the Curriculum' and sessions included teachers and principals talking about literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum. Catherine's presentation was titled *Stories are the Essential Vaccine for Literacy Recovery*.



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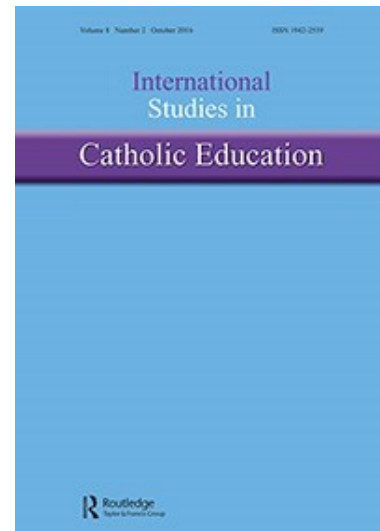
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## ETHOS IN A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The International Studies in Catholic Education journal is an international and interdisciplinary publication devoted to the systematic study of Catholic education, in all its forms, across the world. In March 2016, it featured a research article written by Martin Hagan (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) titled ***Learning and Teaching in a Catholic College: The Importance of Ethos. A Study in Northern Ireland.***

The purpose of the paper was to consider how a small Catholic institute of higher education attempts to balance the broad demands of globalisation with the need to adhere to, promote and develop its foundation as a Catholic College. The paper began with a consideration of the changes which have taken place in higher education in the UK over the past fifty years and went on to consider the response of the Church to this with regard to Ex Corde Ecclesiae. Using an interpretive research paradigm, a threefold data collection was conducted in the case study institution. Data emerged from: observation; documentary analysis; and interviews. Despite the obvious limitations of the study,

the data indicated that the Catholic ethos is clearly evident in the day-to-day practice of the College and is central to its success both as a Catholic institution and as a key provider of higher learning.



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*“Using an interpretive research paradigm, a threefold data collection was conducted in the case study institution.”*

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## THE WELL-BEING OF TEACHERS AT WORK

A research proposal involving Paddy Tally and Dr Elaine McLaughlin (both from the Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment), in collaboration with Dr Timothy Murphy and Dr Patricia McNamara from the University of Limerick, was awarded funding from the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South in May 2016.

The title of the project is ***Teachers’ Pedagogical Work and Well-Being*** and it will focus specifically on teacher well-being. The project partners are especially interested in exploring how pedagogical well-being is manifested in challenging educational contexts and will identify a school in Northern Ireland as well as one in the Republic of Ireland. It is intended that the framing research question will examine what good pedagogical well-being looks like in practice, in other words, how do teachers conceptualize their own pedagogical well-being?

Two schools will be invited to participate in the project. The teachers in the schools will be invited to complete a survey on well-being related to the project. There will also be the opportunity for follow-up interviews with up to four teachers in each school. The survey and follow-up interviews will seek to elicit the teachers’ perceptions and experiences of pedagogical well-being and their overall sense of well-being. It is intended then that the project will adopt a mixed-methods approach.



The intention is to capture information on what contributes to teacher effectiveness, especially in terms of pedagogy, notwithstanding the challenging and difficult contexts in which teachers can work. By inviting teachers to articulate these understandings, it is anticipated that the ensuing research could offer insights and perspectives which could be instructive for teachers who are newly qualified and who may be taking up posts of responsibility as teachers in challenging schools.

## LITERACY SCHOLARS AND TEACHERS DISCUSS IDEAS AT CONFERENCE

The College became the host organisation for the UK Literacy Association (UKLA) national conference which took place on 15 April 2016. The theme of the conference was 'Literacy For All' and it was Donna Hazzard (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and colleagues who expertly organised the conference in Belfast.

The aim of the conference was to help delegates reflect on and consider the broader social struggle when engaging in literacy debate. The range of speakers sharing their expertise and experience with delegates tried to get them to think about how they might do literacy pedagogy, curriculum and affiliated work differently, and hopefully better. The UKLA was particularly honoured to have Michael Rosen, renowned poet, performer, broadcaster and scriptwriter, join the conference to share his thoughts on reading and literacy.

Among the many workshops and seminars, three featured the work of members of academic staff from the College. The first was from Catherine Gilliland (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) who gave a presentation titled ***Making Literacy Addictive***. The second was from Donna Hazzard (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) who co-presented the findings of research titled ***Perspectives on Dyslexia: From the Task Force to the Task Ahead***. The third member of academic staff was Dr Matthew Martin (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and his presentation was titled ***Adapting Writing Centre Models for Diverse School Environments***.



*Donna Hazzard, Professor Andrew Lambirth (UKLA President), Dr Alison Mac Kenzie, Michael Rosen, Dr Eithne Kennedy and Dr Geraldine Magennis*

## STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS SHARED WITH PEERS



*Dr Beth Dickson (University of Glasgow), Carla Darragh and Aislinn Fitzgerald (BEd4 students) and Martin Hagan*

The annual student research conference took place on 27 April 2016 in the College. This was the second year of the conference and the keynote address was delivered by Dr Beth Dickson, University of Glasgow, whose presentation was titled ***Why is Student Teacher Enquiry Important?*** During the conference, which was organised by Martin Hagan (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and colleagues, the final year undergraduate students of initial teacher education presented the findings of their Capstone Projects in three parallel sessions. This initiative enables students to pursue their particular areas of interest in educational research and helps them to develop their own individual professional identities.

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation generously sponsored the conference, along with the prize for the best project. Eight papers were nominated for this prize, which was awarded to two students. The first student was Carla Darragh for her project titled ***Making Friends with the F Word: The Fear of Failure and Coping Strategies for High-Ability Children***. The second student was Aislinn Fitzgerald for her project titled ***Production of a Storytelling Resource to Teach the Topic of Negative Numbers at Key Stage 3***.



## USING CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY FOR A CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOM

The Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South awarded funding in April 2016 for a joint research project involving Dr Maria Campbell from St Angela's College, Sligo and Peter Stevenson (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) from the College. The project, which has two broad aims, will take place during the 2016-2017 academic year and is titled ***The Culturally Diverse Classroom: Exploring Opportunities and Challenges***.

The first aim is to support student teachers to adapt their pedagogies in order to provide the optimum learning experience for all the pupils in their culturally diverse classrooms. To this end, the project will focus on the area of Critical Media Literacy and endeavour to provide student teachers with the analytical tools to critique popular media. This will help them to unpack the hidden messages and subtext contained in the representation of immigrants and minorities so student teachers can be cognisant of the images and media they select in their teaching. It will also enable them to support their pupils to critically engage with popular media in general.

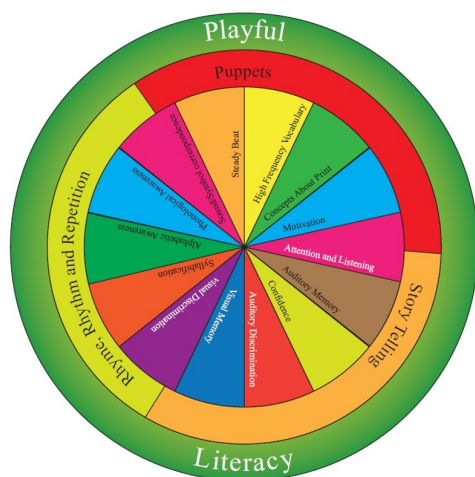
The second aim of the project is to engage in a meaningful way with the continuum of teacher education by hosting a one-day event which explores the opportunities and challenges that the culturally diverse classroom poses for educators. This event aims to bring together representatives from various educational stakeholders but primarily student teachers, initial teacher education providers, school principals and teachers. It may also include school inspectors and representatives from curriculum development units. The main purpose of the event is to examine key issues facing educators in the culturally diverse classroom and to explore ways in which the theoretical concepts of initial teacher education may be transferred into pedagogical practices and inform policy development, in order to provide the optimum learning experience for all pupils.



## PLAYFUL APPROACHES TO EARLY YEARS LITERACY

The UK Literacy Association held its annual international conference in Bristol between the 8-10 July 2016 under the theme 'Literacy, Equality and Diversity: Bringing Voices Together'. The conference aimed to consider the ways in which interventions shape future policy and practice so that marginalised voices can be heard on a shared and equal platform with the voices of the more powerful. The conference featured a wide range of symposia, presentations, seminars and practical workshops, each touching on aspects of the theme of equality and diversity, and all focussed on the learning and teaching of literacy in a range of national and international contexts.

One of the workshops was delivered by Catherine Gilliland (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and was titled ***Positively, Playful Approaches to Literacy in the Early Years***. During the workshop Catherine referred to the educational world of playful teaching and learning which encompasses a home for igniting children's natural development in the earliest stages of their lifelong learning. Catherine suggests that any activity associated with enjoyment, means that the learner will crave more and a most positive and powerful addiction is created. The workshop focused on playful approaches that teachers can use to make young children not only literate but addicted to literacy.



Circle of Playful Literacy

It was divided into three main themes that interconnected. The first theme indicated that rich story telling is at the epicentre of all best case learning environments and this strategy was explored in relation to picture books and the ancient craft of oral storytelling within a localised context. The second theme focussed on the idea that our brains see music as language and children need to be immersed in rhyme, rhythm and repetition to make the wheels of the language bus go round and round. The ways in which practitioners can make the children's bodies come together as a self-conducting orchestra was illustrated through a cameo set in a best case scenario nursery environment. The third theme delved into the world of puppets and their absolute magical ability to ignite language, creativity and a motivation to learn.

## HISTORICAL FICTION BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE



The same annual international conference for the UK Literacy Association in July 2016 featured a workshop delivered by Teresa Cash and Catherine Gilliland (both from the Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment). The title was ***Exploring the Role of Historical Fiction Through Engagement with Active Approaches to Comprehension.***

In summarising the focus of the workshop Teresa and Catherine believe that the beautiful world of historical fiction brings history to life by placing appealing characters into accurate historical settings. They

suggest that the literature of Marita Conlon McKenna, which has adorned bookshelves across Ireland's schools for many years, invites children into the world of 'The Great Hunger' in their own country. They go on to suggest that the work and engaging story lines of Michael Morpurgo and John Boyne, who have written prolifically regarding the historical period of World War Two, have immersed children into historical facts perfectly mixed with imaginative and figurative narrative. They argue that as children develop from tots to teens they should become addicted to the wealth of literature that will tell them about the world in which they live, both past and present. They believe that exposure to high quality historical literature will encourage the addiction process and ensure this aim is achieved.

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*“...as children develop from tots to teens they should become addicted to the wealth of literature that will tell them about the world in which they live, both past and present.”*

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## RESEARCH LINKS ESTABLISHED WITH MUSEUM OF ORANGE HERITAGE

The College's long-running Teacher Education Seminar Series played host on the 18 May 2016 to representatives from the Museum of Orange Heritage who made a presentation to both academic staff and students on the museum and its educational outreach. The seminar was delivered by Dr Jonathan Mattison (Curator at the Museum of Orange Heritage) and David Scott (Services and Outreach Officer). The College's on-going commitment to engage with the Museum of Orange Heritage has its roots in an ERASMUS+ research project known as **BE-SMaRT**, involving Dr Tracey McKay (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and Dr Angela Vaupel (Centre for Global Justice) who represent the College as partners on this research project.

Within the research project there is a range of case studies, with the Northern Ireland case study focusing on the perceptions of the Orange Order held by Northern Ireland students currently enrolled in initial teacher education programmes who come from a mainly Catholic/Nationalist background. The case study explored their perceptions of the opportunities and challenges of crossing borders and collective memory in the context of contributing to a shared society.

During the seminar, chaired by Dr Brian Hanratty (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment), David talked about his role and work on the theme of crossing borders through education and Jonathan spoke about the various artefacts from the Museum's collection. He focused on information about the artefacts and their historical contexts and then discussed how they might be used for opening up conversations about cultural diversity in a deeply divided society. The Museum of Orange Heritage has a very robust scholarly and research remit in its own right, a library, original artefacts, an archive and a reading room for academic researchers.



*Dr Geraldine Magennis, Dr Angela Vaupel, Dr Tracey McKay, David Scott, Dr Jonathan Mattison, Dr Brian Hanratty and Professor Peter Finn*



## ACADEMIC SECURES VISITING RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP IN BERLIN

Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice) spent July and August 2016 as a visiting research fellow at the Centre for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at Humboldt University, Berlin. During her time there, Birgit undertook research that related to a current project on human rights titled ***Posthumanist Challenges to Human Rights: Gendering the Posthuman***.

Birgit's research aims to explore the relationship between posthumanism, human rights and gendered conceptions of human by pursuing three aims. The first aim is to explore if, and in what ways, posthumanism facilitates novel ways of conceiving human rights by reading human rights through a posthumanist lens. The second aim is to analyse the treatment of posthumanist ideas within contemporary feminist theory, with a particular interest in the significance of posthumanist thought for feminist understandings of the body and of gender identity. The third aim is to consider the human rights implications of a posthumanist framing of gender by examining recent developments in the field of transgender and intersex rights.

During her visiting research fellowship, Birgit availed of relevant archival and library material, specifically material at the libraries of the Humboldt University and the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. Birgit also participated in scholarly consultations with other academics at the Centre for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies.



*Humboldt University Library*

## ANNUAL GLOBAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE COMES TO BELFAST

The Global Studies Association Annual Conference 2016 was organised by Dr Gerard McCann, Dr Birgit Schippers and Dr Angela Vaupel (all from the Centre for Global Justice) who worked alongside the College's Research Office to bring delegates to Belfast between 29 June – 1 July 2016. By the College hosting this research conference it helped to contribute to and increase its research activities, raise its profile in the wider scholarly community, underpin the teaching programme of the Liberal Arts degree with research activities, and consolidate the activities of its recently established Centre for Global Justice.

Following a successful application made to Belfast City Council, a reception for the conference delegates was held in Belfast's City Hall along with the conference dinner. The conference was attended by scholars and postgraduate students from Britain and Ireland, the United States of America, Switzerland, Finland and Greece, all of whom contributed to the conference with presentations on their research. The keynote speaker was Professor Jef Huysmans from Queen Mary University of London who is an international authority in the field of security studies and international politics.

The work of the College's organising team was very well received by the delegates and the local significance of the annual conference theme, 'Global (In-)Securities', was emphasised frequently in the presentations and discussions. The conference helped to raise the profile of the College as a scholarly institution and it enabled the organisers to network and exchange ideas with conference delegates.



*Dr Birgit Schippers, Professor Jef Huysmans (Queen Mary University of London) and Dr Gerard McCann*

## COLLEGE SCHOLAR LEADS RESEARCH PANEL ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The annual international conference of the Political Studies Association was held in Brighton between the 21-23 March 2016 and had over seven hundred delegates in attendance. Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice) was one of those delegates who chaired a panel under the theme 'Rights-Claiming, Performativity, and the Politics of Human Rights'. This panel included herself, two other eminent academics, Professor Moya Lloyd from Loughborough University and Dr Joseph Hoover from City University London, as well as a doctoral student, Amie Lajoie from the National University of Ireland. The papers presented at the panel built on certain critical interventions into the human rights discourse and appraised the continued significance of human rights for political theory and radical political practice. The panel's emphasis lay with an exploration of the performative practices of rights-claiming. The papers examined the implications that such performative practices have for a radical and democratic configuration of a politics of, and for, human rights. They also considered how practices of rights-claiming generate political subjectivities and what Wendy Brown calls "politicized identities". Birgit's particular paper was titled *Inaugurating New Worlds: Performative Rights-Claiming and Agonistic Politics*.



## ACADEMIC PAPER PRESENTED AT WORKSHOP

The European Workshops in International Studies 2016 took place at the University of Tübingen, Germany between the 6-8 April 2016. These workshops are the smaller of the two main annual conferences of the European International Studies Association but yet command audiences of approximately three hundred academics. The workshop that Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice) attended focused on the theme of 'Political Struggle and Performative Rights in Global Politics: New Directions in Research' and her paper drew on the writings of both Judith Butler and Bonnie Honig.



University of Tübingen

## UK REVIEW OF POLICY & PRACTICE FOR ESD/GC IN TEACHER EDUCATION



Dr Gerard McCann (Centre for Global Justice) co-authored an article published in July 2016 in *Management in Education: The Journal of Professional Practice*. The title is *A Comparative Review of Policy and Practice for Education for Sustainable Development/ Education for Global Citizenship (ESD/GC) in Teacher Education Across the Four Nations of the UK* co-written with Philip Bamber (Liverpool Hope University), Andrea Bullivant (Liverpool World Centre), Alison Glover (University of South Wales) and Betsy King (Learning for Sustainability Scotland). Through a comparative review of teacher education across the four UK nations, the article highlighted aspects of divergence and convergence of policy and practice with a particular focus on education for sustainable development/education for global citizenship. The implications for ESD/GC was considered in relation to statutory teaching standards/competencies, values and ideologies, curriculum and pedagogy, and the role of the third sector. The article identified opportunities and challenges facing ESD/GC in teacher education across the four nations.

## DEDICATION TOWARDS DOCTORAL STUDIES PAYS DIVIDENDS

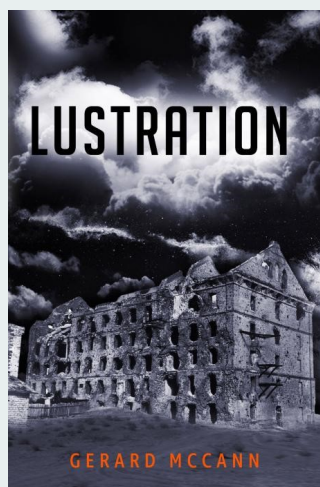
Dr Kieran McGeown (STEAM Research Centre) successfully completed his doctoral studies at the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and was awarded a Doctorate in Education (EdD) during a graduation ceremony held on the 4 July 2016. The EdD at QUB is designed for senior professionals in education and related fields and offers modules in research methods, education policy, education management and professional development. Having completed the required number of taught modules, Kieran progressed onto the doctoral dissertation element of the EdD. For this, he carried out research by means of in-depth interviews that investigated the perceptions held by pupils, across four Northern Ireland schools, towards routine school-based practical work activities and project work in technology and design and also that which had been contextualized within an industrial setting. The views of the heads of departments of each school and four local industrialists were also probed in relation to the latter.





## NEW NOVEL—A FIRST FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

Dr Gerard McCann (Centre for Global Justice) turned his attention recently to writing his first novel published by Pegasus Elliot Mackenzie on the 26 July 2016. His novel titled **LUSTRATION** focuses on an academic who is in Poland for a conference and who "...soon realises that the dangers of shining a spotlight on the past are all too real, and as deadly as ever".



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## APPOINTMENT OF NEW RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Innovative research is currently underway to inform the production of Irish language teaching resources by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). The College secured a research grant from CCEA to carry out the study which will involve a linguistic analysis of Key Stage Three pupils' Irish in post-primary Irish-medium settings. A new research assistant, Aileen Nic Íomhair, joined the research team in April 2016 and is working alongside Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, Dr Seán Mac Corraídh, Dr Eibhlín Mhic Aoidh (all from the Irish-medium Research Centre) and Dr Peter McPolin (STEAM Research Centre). Aileen is currently on a career break from teaching and during her role as a research assistant, she will draw upon her knowledge, experience and skills of working in the Irish-medium sector and of studying for a recent Masters in Education.



During the first stage of the project, Aileen and the research team carried out a literature review, transcribed interviews and analysed oral and written data from Year Eight pupils. The next stage will involve an analysis of data from Year Ten pupils and the final report will include comparative data from the two year groups. The research project aims to provide a profile of the pupils' oral and written Irish and will be used to make recommendations to writers of Irish language textbooks at Key Stage Three. The final report will also discuss implications for immersion pedagogies and professional practices in Irish-medium schools. The research team will work closely with CCEA throughout the project and Aileen has already presented interim findings to a working group that advises the textbook writers.

## STAFF PROFILE



Dr Tracey McKay is a senior lecturer and course team leader in the geography department and has been research active since her appointment in 1999. She completed her doctoral studies on the theme of 'Geography, Empire and the Missionary Imperative' which examined the contribution of the modern missionary movement to geographical education. Her interest in global geographies and development continued through her research contributions to the Global Dimension in Education Project, where she co-authored the publication **For a Better World—The Global Dimension in Education: Knowledge & Attitudes of Students, Pupils & Teachers in N. Ireland.**

Tracey has been a co-ordinator on two EU funded research projects. The first, **PAM-INA (Perceptions, Attitudes & Movement: Identity Needs Action)**, explored European identity and citizenship in the Northern Ireland curriculum. The second more recent project, known as **BE-SMaRT (Border Education)**, involves six other European partner institutions: Pedagogical University of Freiburg, Germany; University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Claude Bernard University of Lyon 1, France; Malardalen University, Sweden; European Academy Otzenhausen, Germany; as well as the University of Tartu, Estonia and focuses on the key themes of 'Border', 'Memory' and 'Identity' within the context of initial teacher education. This year Tracey, along with geography colleagues from the College, the University of Lyon and the University of Ljubljana, co-authored a paper examining representations of Europe in geography A-level textbooks. This paper was presented at the University of Montpellier, France and featured in the proceedings of a BE-SMaRT project conference on the theme of 'Border, Memory and Migration in Educational Contexts' at the European Academy Otzenhausen, Germany. Tracey's current research focus, dealing with the opportunities and challenges of crossing borders in pursuit of shared education, has seen her work closely with the Museum of Orange Heritage and she was instrumental in bringing about the first visit by the Orange Order to St Mary's University College in April 2016. Tracey is a fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy.