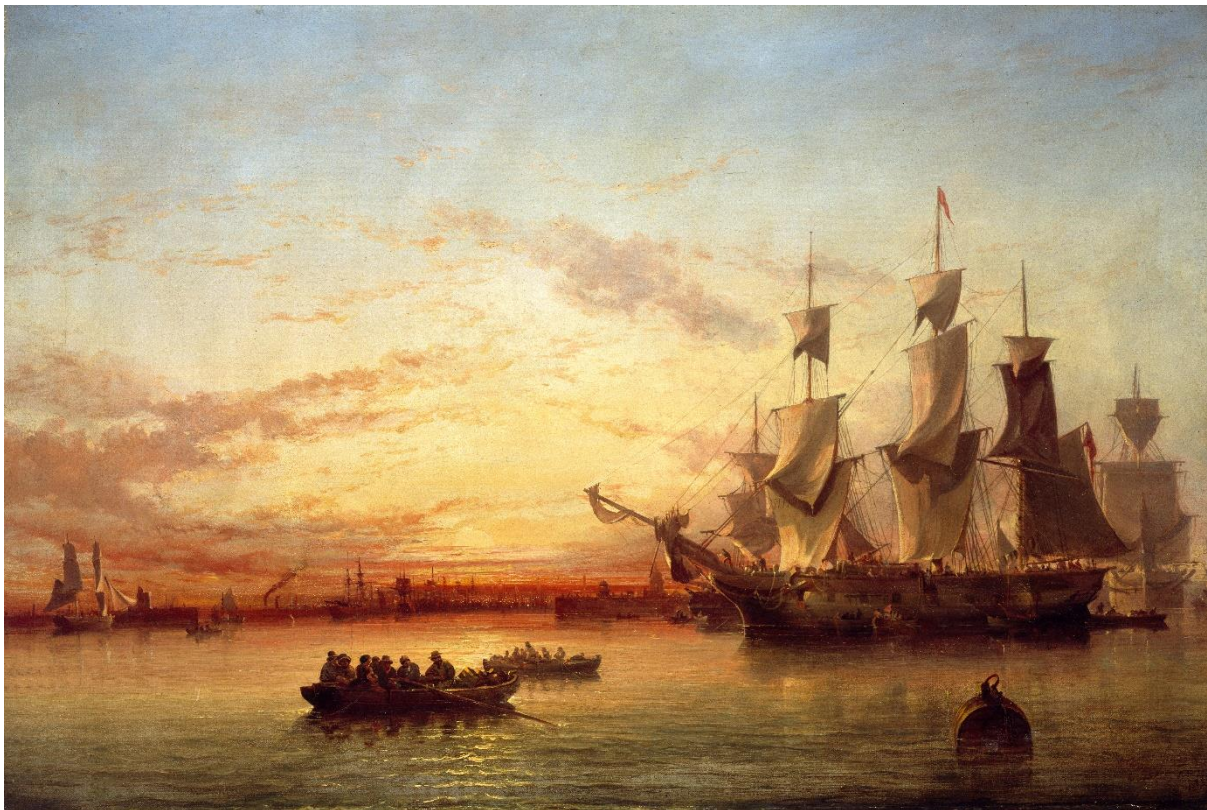


Universalism and Locality in Nineteenth-Century Ireland

19-21 June 2025

Call for Papers

Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies
University of Aberdeen
19 College Bounds
Aberdeen AB24 3FX



As the tensions and contradictions between the global economic system and national affirmations of cultural and political identity come into sharp focus, the SSNCI annual conference seeks to establish how the polarity between universalism and locality was articulated and examined in nineteenth-century Ireland. Drawing inspiration from the work of Aberdeen sociologist, Roland Robertson, who was an early exponent of globalisation as a critical term, and coined the word glocalism, 2025's conference seeks to explore the ways in which Irish communities, commentaries, writers and activists situated the country's condition in the context of both global trends and in local particularity.

The status of Ireland post-Union simultaneously contracted and expanded. While the Act of Union diminished formal politics on the island to a local level, the export of clergy across the globe established what Colin Barr has termed Ireland's spiritual empire. Irish identity (ever ambiguous) was threatened and preserved on various fronts including the OS survey which made Irish regionality more knowable and accessible while also challenging its existence via linguistic anglicization. Various waves of Celtic Revival promised to uncover, preserve and disseminate an authentic Irishness often tied to

specific geographic locations (the Ardagh Chalice, Tara Brooch, Book of Kells) while reproduction of these items saw the burgeoning of a global Celtic brand. Later in the century, the modernist experiments of *fin de siècle* Ireland fashioned novel means of expressing and managing the challenges implied in what Jürgen Osterhammel has described as the transformation of the world into a globally networked economic, political and social system. While exploring Ireland's place in this wider communicative world, the conference also seeks to examine how localised cultural expression refracted and resisted these changes. Seeking to understand the weave of influences that generated a global experience of living in nineteenth-century Ireland, the conference thus also attends to life in the parish and the neighbourhood and to the maintenance of cultural practices and the problems inherent in displacement and isolation.

Keynote speakers:

- Niall Whelehan (University of Strathclyde)
- Colleen Taylor (Boston College)
- Isabelle Torrance (Aarhus University)

Abstracts of **250 words (or 750-word panel submissions)** are invited on themes that include, but are not limited to:

- Parochial government, corporate government and imperial government as expressions of spatial authority
- Transport and infrastructure as a means of thickening and thinning local identity
- Nationalist ideologies as universalist politics
- International communication (the telegraph) and networks of news
- Letters as a source of connectivity
- Photography and the iconography of the regional
- The environmental impact of imperial economics (slavery; heavy industry; the coming of the Anthropocene)
- The literary depiction of regionality (the west, Ulster; Dublin etc)
- The rise of modernism and the search for universal expression
- Utopian imaginaries and the possibility of universalism
- Gendered approaches to migration (work, labour, sexuality, the body)
- The history of emotions (isolation, loss, love, patriotism, etc.)
- Folklore as mythology, and the particularity of the Irish supernatural
- Institutional life and universal practices: the rise of bureaucracy and the construction of an imperial civil service
- Architecture and regionality (construction practices, styles, living arrangements)
- The intrusion of the universal into the domestic (the empire at home; exotic objects etc)
- The Irish language outside of Ireland and the evolving role of English in Ireland
- 'Celtic' material culture and the export of the Celtic Revival (International Exhibitions; replication and sale of antiquarian and archaeological finds; global Irish imagery)

Please email abstracts (and 50-word bio) to ssnciconf2025@gmail.com for consideration **no later than Monday 17 March 2025**. In keeping with the Society's commitment to interdisciplinarity, the conference aims to bring together a diverse range of scholarly voices

including new and established researchers and those working outside of traditional academic settings.

Three Bursaries of €300 will be provided on a competitive basis to postgraduate, and three similar bursaries for early-career researchers, or independent scholars for whom another source of funding is not available for travel expenses. Please mention if you wish to apply for a bursary when submitting your abstract.

Conference email: ssnciconf2025@gmail.com

Click [here](#) to download a PDF of the conference Call for Papers.

Organizer: **Professor Michael Brown**, Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen, 19 College Bounds, AB24 3FX, UK. Email: m.brown@abdn.ac.uk

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