**Dr Adrian Paterson**

**English**

**Past Research**

WB Yeats argued that ‘dead words’ on ‘dead paper’ were not really poetry. And it is true that language existed before writing, that the dry books and theorists' abstract texts require human presence, that words are nothing on their own. Someone is always saying them, articulating them, writing them, drawing them, singing them, reading them, hearing them, and encountering them in new times and spaces.

Beginning by uncovering the connections between music and poetry and literature’s wider artistic interactions, my research examines where words meet the world, in all their technologies, aesthetic enunciations, and political contexts, trying to listen carefully to what WB Yeats called ‘the music of what happens’.

Early training at Worcester College, Oxford, demanded the most scrupulous attention to close reading and nuanced writing. At Trinity College, Dublin, I became more than ever aware of words’ political weight. On returning to Oxford, a PhD thesis ‘Words for Music Perhaps: WB Yeats’s Musical Sense’ uncovered overlooked musical connections in the work of Ireland’s foremost poet. And for an IRC Fellowship at NUI Galway, the project *Perfect Pitch: Music in Irish Poetry from Moore to Muldoon* broadened the field in which to examine words and music interactions, whether through Thomas Moore’s piano songs or Samuel Beckett’s radio plays and musically-poised ellipses.

It helps that I’ve always been interested in visual culture, design, music, movement, in all the arts that come together to make up a book by Stéphane Mallarmé or an opera by Richard Wagner. So in recent times, I’m perhaps proudest of curating the multimedia exhibition [*Yeats & the West*](https://yeatsandthewest.org/)commissioned by the Government of Ireland for *Yeats2015*, illustrating through archives and rare books, music, video, panels, display cases, and original artwork by all the Yeats family, the creation of a western cultural revolution. Starting at NUI Galway, with the help of many collaborators the exhibition was recast for The Model Gallery Sligo, Columbia University, and Tuskegee University Alabama, with continuing displays at the Yeats Society, Sligo and [Thoor Ballylee, Galway](https://yeatsthoorballylee.org/)

**Current Research**

Writing on eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century literature with a particular interest in the artistic interactions of modernism and of poetry in Ireland, this background helps me examine interplays of aurality, orality, print, performance, and technology in the material (and immaterial, even ghostly) forms of texts.

Recent work, including articles on George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound, investigates the voice, thinking about acoustics, timbre, and all that causes and resonates around what Roland Barthes calls the ‘grain of the voice’. That means it discovers the effects of Shaw’s plan to rework his surrogate father’s vocal coaching textbook *The Voice*; it traces Ezra Pound’s use of early music’s notation practices in avant-garde poetry; it also pursues sound and instrument technology as far back as Goldsmith and eighteenth-century theatre, thinking about what the rise of the piano does for the imagined sound-spaces of poetry in Ireland, or what nineteenth-century street-sellers’ broadsides can tell us about fine-art prints.

With Tom Walker and Charles Armstrong I’m co-editing the forthcoming *Edinburgh Companion to W.B. Yeats and the Arts*, and with Christine Reynier two special editions of [the journal *E-rea*](https://journals.openedition.org/erea/)on ‘Modernist Non-Fictional Narratives’, which examine prose in times of war and peace. Working with a network of scholars in the newly-founded [*Modernist Studies Ireland*](https://modstudiesireland.wordpress.com/), it is more than ever evident that this period in which as Kandinsky said ‘there has never been a time that the arts approached each other more nearly than today’ has, in its history of violent creation and production, important contemporary real-world effects.

**Future Research**

It is my strong conviction that any reading which uncovers the intricacies and intimacies of, say, the [sound patterns that go to make up a poem](https://mooreinstitute.ie/2020/12/18/9809/), is not simply indulging a hermetic pursuit, but one that describes precisely where words matter, where they encounter the world. Exploring the resonances generated by different media, from broadcasting to broadsides, opens up a broad field of intertextual and intermedial relations and provokes study that can uncover insights about all human discourse, encountered in all its varied verbal technologies.

Thus ongoing research projects include *Onus: The Weight of Words,*which looks at specific examples of modern language use not only in literary discourse, but in telegrams, mistyped or censored pages, treaties, speeches, archives, and other media, genres, and forms – a chapter for each decade of the last one hundred years showing why words work in the world and how techniques of literary criticism might advance new understandings of modern media contexts. This sits alongside the radio project *Poets on Air*: *Sound and Sense in the Atlantic World*, recently awarded a Harry Ransom Center Research Fellowship, and new work on Philip Larkin and Northern Ireland.