INTRODUCTION

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No matter whether the soubriquets are 'postmodern,' 'secularised,' 'globalised,' or 'post-national,' Ireland in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (also known as Celtic Tiger Ireland) does not only evince all the symptoms of radical political, social, and cultural change, but has became a byword for modernity and modernisation. After some of the enthusiasm that naturally goes with such progress has evaporated and been replaced by sobriety, the signs of an "ethical turn" begin to appear. Questions are being asked – not only relating to the 'underbelly' of the Celtic Tiger itself, i.e. the negative sides of this much vaunted economic and social boom, but also concerning 'responsibilities' and the problem of being in accordance with moral/ethical standards of any kind. In a social and cultural studies context such as circumscribed in the present area of concern, i.e. this projected series of publications on *Irish Studies in Europe*, 'responsibility' is a vital parameter for the reflection of reality and for any mode of representation, whether artistic, literary, historical, or scientific.

The essays collected in this volume concern themselves not only with aspects of contemporary Ireland and problems of representation, but wherever they venture into the past, they are bound to explore crucial episodes and periods in the social and cultural history of Ireland. The hidden structure of this collection is that of a widening of circles, or gyres even. Starting out from a disquisition on Synge and Irish drama today, the volume in its first half proceeds to take in contemporary literature and film. The second half is more orientated towards themes that call for approaches endemic to historical, biographical, political, and religious studies, as well as communication and media studies. Naturally, as one would expect, there are minor thematic clusters that are focused on Northern Ireland/the North of Ireland and the Irish diaspora.

In her essay "John Synge in Context; or, Re-Positioning Synge: The Point of Balance," Ann Saddlemyer takes up the case of John Millington Synge to enquire into theatre's responsibilities. She reconsiders Synge's importance to the history of the Abbey Theatre and contemporary verdicts in the light of Synge's biographical links with the leading figures of the national theatre movement during the first decade of the twentieth century. Starting from Synge's use of the word "extravaganza" (as a mixture of the Rabelaisian and the Romantic), Saddlemyer re-values the mimetic responsibilities in Synge's aesthetic – with *The Playboy of the Western World* as her prime example and as a lodestar for later directors and playwrights. In the second part of her essay, Saddlemyer considers Synge and the Abbey 'one hundred years on' and concludes with a discussion of Martin McDonagh and Marina Carr, the latter being made out as the more legitimate descendant in the Syngean tradition.

In "'The Death of an Author': Collaborative Voices in J.M. Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910)," Lucie Pereira looks at the concept of authorial intention in relation to textual representation and responsibility. She identifies the forces that seem to militate against the idea of complete authorial control, be they traditional (the Deirdre legend), autobiography (Synge's sickness unto death), social contexts (nationalist ideology), posthumous editing (Yeats as Synge's literary executor), or publication history (the Cuala Press).

Elke D'hoker speculates on the success of the "Contemporary First-Person Novel in Ireland" by surveying the Irish novel tradition. Although parallels with wider international trends cannot be discounted entirely, the Irish oral tradition with its peculiar features of eccentricity and a 'strong narrator' is shown to prove an influential factor. The problem of responsibility and representation here is firmly located in the tradition of (un)reliable first-person narrators from Tristram Shandy and Thady Quirk onwards.

In "'Frightened with my own hatred': Telling Violence in Jennifer Johnston's *Fool's Sanctuary* and *The Invisible Worm*," Teresa Casal presents an allegorical reading of these two novels as stories of the "two cultures in Ireland," Catholic vs. Protestant, Irish vs. Anglo-Irish, and as reflections of pre- and post-independence Ireland, respectively. Her basic metaphor is that of the family (romance), and the idea of narration/dialogue as relational space (within the self and between the self and the other) is seen as a responsible way of overcoming past violence and pain. The suggestion is that this may also be valid and of relevance outside the fictional realm created by Johnston.

Yvonne Igoe ("'Northern and troubled, southern and peaceful': Absence, Punishment, and the Disappeared in Films on the North of Ireland") studies concepts and representations of the border between the North and the South of Ireland and how they feature in recent films thematising the Troubles, such as Joe Comerford's *High Boot Benny*, Vinny Murphy's *Accelerator*, Johnny Gogan's *The Mapmaker*, and Anne Crilly's *Limbo*. Her particular focus is on the motifs of punishment, abduction, and absence, as well as on the cinematographic reflections of the Irish landscape.

John Erskine in "Ulster-Scots History and Culture: A North Channel Perspective" surveys the history and culture of the Ulster-Scots community and the links between Ulster and Scotland by taking in the exemplary categories of religion (Presbyterianism/Dissenters), education (The Ulster-Scots contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment), literature (The Weaver Poets), industry (the Lagan-Clyde industrial corridor), and politics (liberalism and political sovereignty).

Staying in the North, Myrtle Hill and Eilish Rooney ("Representation and Responsibility: Women in Northern Ireland/the North of Ireland: A Conversation in Descant") engage in dialectics and a dialogue concerning the recording and the role of "personal stories" as "accounts of remembering" (especially from women victimised by the Troubles). They point out the challenges offered to dominant historical discourse by

personal memories as well as the tendentiousness of official histories prioritising what are deemed more 'authoritative' or 'objective' sources.

Anne-Catherine Lobo ("To Act or Not to Act: Parliamentary Representations of Irish Poverty in the 1830s") looks at political responsibility in an historical dimension by concentrating on the question of the Irish Poor Law and by an analysis of contemporary parliamentary discourses. Responsibility and representation intersect when remedial approaches to the problem of Irish pauperism are made to appear as criminalisation (the punitive approach) or as sanitation (the hygienic approach, which relies on metaphors of bleeding and of containing the epidemic).

The historical theme is continued by Michael Böss ("De Valera Remembering: A Study in Memory and Self-Representation"). Drawing on recent theories of memory, Böss demonstrates how representation functions as self-fashioning in the field of biography. The example Böss uses is the biography of Eamon De Valera by Lord Longford and Thomas P. O'Neill – as authorised by the subject himself. In the childhood chapter of this life-story various strategies of (auto)biographical narrative are employed to construct De Valera as a true-born Irishman.

Representation with regard to sociological research and policymaking is the agenda of Gráinne O'Keeffe-Vigneron's essay on "The Irish in Post-War Britain: Towards Greater Visibility?." O'Keeffe-Vigneron discusses the problem of the (in)visibility of the Irish immigrant generation in Britain after 1945 on local government levels. She studies the effects of the recognition of the Irish as an "Ethnic Minority" in the British Census of 2001 by analysing the Commission for Racial Equality report and a number of interviews conducted with local government officials in a selection of London boroughs. The key question in all this is the visible presence of the Irish in demographic monitoring procedures (and its secondary effects on discrimination, race relations, and lobbying).

Sexual abuse and the gradual revelation of the extent of such criminal practices has been one of the major issues and talking points in contemporary Irish life and society. Michael J. Breen in "Deconstructing Media Reports of Sexual Abuse: An Analysis of Framing in Irish Print Media Coverage of Sexual Abuse, 1993-2002" sets out to perform a content analysis of a corpus of 494 stories of abuse found in *The Irish Times* between 1993 and 2002. These data are subjected to statistical framing analysis. A comparison with the Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland report (as commissioned and carried out by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and The Royal College of Surgeons, respectively) reveals the discrepancies between hard clinical data on the one hand and media representation and the shaping of public opinion on the other (especially with regard to degrees of misinformation and stereotyping).

The issue of abortion is the starting-point for Jean Mercereau's analysis of "Public Representations of a Private Choice: Irish Daily Newspapers and the Referenda on Abortion of 1992 and 2002." Mercereau studies the extent to which five Irish morning

newspapers – *The Irish Independent*, *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Press* (until 1995), *The Star*, and *The Cork Examiner* – reported on this high-profile issue and reflected the polemics surrounding the referenda in their coverage around the actual polling days in 1992 and 2002. Due to the particular ethics involved this contrastive analysis of one important sector of the media landscape foregrounds the question of social responsibility in the media quite markedly.

Finally, Catherine Maignant ("Faith and Responsibility in Contemporary Ireland") looks at the ways in which traditional religion (esp. the Catholic Church) has been challenged by alternative creeds which set great store by individual responsibility and personal representation of truth. Starting from the Derridean equation of 'religion equals responsibility,' Maignant reveals some of the motivation behind new religious tendencies which may be read as expressions of postmodern ultra-individualism and as reactions against, or rejections of, dogma and the legitimacy of authoritarian and patriarchal structures. Maignant discusses both the spectrum of neo-religious groups (e.g., Neo-Paganism, Wicca, Celtic Christianity, and feminist theology) as well as the various responses proffered by the Catholic Church.

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