

Hedwig Schwall (ed.)

BOUNDARIES, PASSAGES, TRANSITIONS

ESSAYS IN IRISH LITERATURE, CULTURE AND POLITICS
IN HONOUR OF WERNER HUBER

Irish Studies in Europe

Volume

8

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 **Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier**

**Boundaries, Passages, Transitions:
Essays in Irish Literature, Culture and Politics
in Honour of Werner Huber /**

Hedwig Schwall (ed.). -

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This volume starts and ends with gratitude. First of all to Werner Huber, founder of ISE which he firmly anchored at Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier who have been extremely helpful, precise and quick in the production of each issue.

Werner was active on all levels in Irish studies: publishing, teaching, spreading culture, networking, or simply helping out wherever needed. He was a truly European bridge builder, and one, I am glad to say, with a soft spot for Leuven. This started in 1978 when he met my predecessor in Irish Studies at an Irish Summer School organized by NUI Galway; the next year the two young Turks went together to the Yeats Summer School where they advocated new approaches. Werner was always keen to open up new horizons so at IASIL in Goteborg I invited him to join EFACIS and ever since he was a pillar of each and a hyphen between both organisations. When invited to be a lecturer at the first European Intensive Programme in Irish Studies in 2000 he generously spent the fortnight in Leuven inspiring the students who came from fifteen universities, some of whom are now professors in Irish Literature across Europe. Ever since Werner was a yearly visitor to our university, giving guest lectures and coming over for EFACIS meetings. In 2010 we were delighted to welcome him at the opening of our Leuven Centre of Irish Studies where he represented the German-speaking countries in a Round Table discussion on Irish Studies in Europe. While he described the situation as a sad one then, it is not so now. When we launched the Irish Itinerary in 2013, Werner was the ideal user of the programme and one of the mainstays of the initiative, making Irish culture visible throughout Central Europe as he coordinated musical, literary and film festivals with colleagues in Prague and in several places in Hungary and Germany. Everyone loved his friendly and efficient approach, as we hear from Ondřej Pilný, Csilla Bertha, Mária Kurdi and many others.

That this volume of ISE is one of the biggest ever reflects Werner's popularity. But ISE 8 also reflects on the success of the 2015 conference on "Boundaries, Passages, Transitions" Chiara Sciarrino organized in Palermo. This was a highlight in the history of EFACIS in terms of numbers, academic standard and style. It was wonderful to experience how Sicilians have been practicing the art of life for over twenty-five centuries, leading to the unforgettable hospitality Chiara and her colleagues showed us. We also thank her and her institution, the University of Palermo, for their financial support of this volume.

Thoughts have to incubate and papers have to be collected and corrected: my sincere thanks to all involved, the inspired contributions of the authors and the conscientious comments by the referees. In its last phase the process was accelerated by two EFACIS interns, Rebecca Jackson and Vera Gonskaya. It is thanks to their quick and thorough processing the volume can be offered to the whole EFACIS community, one year after Werner's passing. May this tribute bid him godspeed in his existence among us.

BOUNDARIES, PASSAGES, TRANSITIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

Hedwig Schwall

This eighth book in the series *Irish Studies in Europe (ISE)*, co-founded by Werner Huber, is dedicated to our dear friend, who died on 28 April 2016, only sixty-three years old. Part of the contributions come from colleagues who were present at his last conference, the Tenth International Conference of EFACIS on *Beyond Ireland: Boundaries, Passages, Transitions* which took place at the University of Palermo from 3-6 June 2015; further contributions were sent in answer to a call for papers to celebrate the work of Werner Huber.

Werner was a staunch EFACIS supporter and Palermo was the last place where he met his friends, Irish scholars together from all parts of Europe, from Tromsø to Malta, Brittany to Cluj, and of course from all Irish universities, North and South. Werner kicked off the Palermo conference together with Seán Crosson with the book launch of ISE 5. The next day Werner gave a talk on “‘Monty Python in the Viennese Woods’: Flann O’Brien in Austria”. This title was characteristic of his interests: film and drama were his favourite genres; sports and Irish culture were favourite topics in his search for identity in (de)mythologizing representations; and his favourite mode was that of humour, especially of the kind evident in the work of Beckett, Flann O’Brien and James Stephens, moving in later years to the grotesque as he found it in Martin McDonagh. Werner also wrote on women writers as diverse as Elizabeth Bowen and Marie Jones, interests which will find their echoes in this book.

Declan Kiberd sets the tone when he opens his contribution “Going Global?” launching the idea that maybe expressions of a national idea are like baby Moses in his basket, which may be rescued by some Pharaoh’s daughter in a different dispensation. Going back to De Valera’s radio broadcast on St Patrick’s Day in 1943, Kiberd draws a sweeping picture of the last century in Ireland, showing how “Unity of Being” has always been out of reach, partly because the powers that be – politics, economics and culture – failed to work together. Worse: between them, politicians, the banks and the Church destroyed the country to a level that there is no obvious value system from which to build it up again, hence the need for a rescuing outsider. While the ecclesiocracy destroyed itself by the numberless instances of child abuse – “the ultimate betrayal of trust” – economics did not help the country either: 150 years after the Famine, Ireland moved to another disastrous monoculture, that of houses. Further, as lawyers started to outnumber priests the country opened itself up to “predatory kinds of capitalism”.¹ Yet according to Kiberd, rescue may come, as it has happened in the past, from culture, from artists and writers. These are responsible for the “worlding” of Irish culture while exploring alterity, as either they or their work moved abroad

1 Claire Kilroy’s modern allegory, *The Devil I Know* (2012), is a hilariously striking satire on the dark globalized aspect of the Celtic Tiger years.

and back.² This influx of fresh value systems may contribute to a kind of “considered lay theology”, a “civic republicanism” – one in which, one hopes, women writers will be prominent. As Kiberd himself indicates, the Abbey Theatre has been criticized for overlooking women playwrights. We were delighted to welcome contributions on Nancy Harris and (further afield) on Marie Jones and Elizabeth Bowen; and while women writers are not in a majority in this collection, female contributors are.

In good EFACIS fashion not all articles focus on a literary questioning of boundaries: there is also the approach of political sciences and sociology. In the case of Katherine Side’s scrutiny of the *Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)* this leads to the conclusion that, rather than integrating and pacifying, the scheme divided and polarized. People seeking assistance had to face two kinds of problems: on the one hand they were besieged by paramilitary organizations, on the other they had to endure a long and complicated application process in which the RUC was involved, which did not guarantee objective assessments. About today’s situation Side observes three things: first, the *SPED* administrators accept that the scheme exacerbated community-segregated housing; second, anno 2017 there is still no comprehensive examination of loyalist and paramilitary involvement in housing issues in Northern Ireland; and third, the scheme which had mainly aimed at curtailing emigration ended up “bolstering state securitization”, which led to closing off perspectives rather than opening them up. The effects of conflict-instigated housing displacement are now visible in its peace walls and public art displays, as well as in the elevated highways which connect the industrial growth poles implanted on Belfast’s periphery, but which bypassed or destroyed mixed-community neighbourhoods.

While Side focuses on the maintenance of physical and social boundaries in Northern Ireland, with focus on Belfast, that same city’s boundaries are dematerialized in Stefanie Lehner’s analysis of Stewart Parker’s *Northern Star* and *Pentecost*, the plays which start and end his triptych *Plays for Ireland*. The fact that each of Parker’s plays are ghost-haunted indicates that boundaries are not simply physical limits – they are also emotional, charged by experiences of people long dead, which keep vibrating, creating a cityscape still pulsated by its past. Like Kiberd, Parker believes that politicians, “visionless almost to a man” must be rescued by artists who “construct a working model of wholeness by means of which this society can begin to hold up its head in the world.” Here, boundaries are deconstructed in different ways. First there is the symbol of the liminal setting: the first play takes place in a semi-ruined cottage on Cave Hill where Belfast is said to have originated, the other in the kitchen of the last inhabited house between the sectarian lines in East Belfast. Second there is the meta-theatrical aspect: in one performance, the action is set in the wings of the theatre. A third way of questioning boundaries is in the dialogue, like when one of Parker’s protagonists, the leader of the United Irishmen at the end of the

2 For detailed illustrations see the excellent book *Literary visions of multicultural Ireland: the immigrant in contemporary Irish literature*. Ed. Pilar Villar-Argáiz. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2014.

eighteenth century, warns his fellow citizens (and the audience) that perspectives may not be what they seem: “you (play) ... your chosen parts ... except that maybe they’re really playing you”. But there is hope: though the *Northern Star* shows how sectarian moulds from the past cannot contain their negative energy and so continue to haunt the living the characters from *Pentecost* “dander” their way into more redemptive forms of interaction, finding Bhabha’s “third space”, celebrating the feast of common languages in a final jazz session.

The tone of Stephanie Schwerter’s article on “‘Beyond the Troubles’: Parody and the Northern Irish Thriller in Ceasefire Cinema” is, considering the topic, much lighter. The author finds that the first ceasefire declaration by the IRA in 1994 brings a new mood of optimism in the subgenre of the ‘Troubles Thriller’ and she illustrates this with *Divorcing Jack* by David Cafferty (1998) and *An Everlasting Piece* by Barry Levinson (2000). While the thriller genre is said to scrutinize a society in its own particular way (via the representation of its criminal networks) the parodic aspect humorously subverts this picture. In *Divorcing Jack*, the male and female stock characters of paramilitary fighters, soldiers or policemen, mothers and seducers are replaced by a clumsy journalist and a woman who is part-time nurse and part-time stripper, “more Armalite than Carmelite”, getting involved in the obligatory car-chase. *An Everlasting Piece* (a pun on the Peace people, founded in 1976) does not have a criminal as its protagonist but two civilians, the Catholic Colum and Protestant George. Together these barbers in a psychiatric hospital in Belfast decide they want to branch out providing wigs and thus they want to “cover the whole of Northern Ireland” but they become involved in ludicrous forms of violence.

The combination of film and sports, Werner Huber’s absolute favourite, is covered by Seán Crosson’s “Gaelic games and the films of John Ford”, where the author focuses on the layered ways in which this Irish-American filmmaker referenced hurling in his films, particularly in his Irish-set productions *The Quiet Man* (1952), *The Rising of the Moon* (1957) and *Young Cassidy* (1965). As Crosson indicates, a further major interest of Werner Huber’s, Flann O’Brien, was an outspoken defender of Ford’s work, including against attacks by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), an organisation concerned with the depiction of its games in the great director’s productions. The article shows how Ford realized what Stewart Parker urged people to do: to “exploit ... the performative potential of Irish stereotypes”, though these performative aspects were not recognised by the GAA. Ford in particular exploited the comic potential of hurling (a process also evident in earlier American cinema) to “diffuse anxieties regarding the Irish”, and to help integrate Irish-American culture into mainstream American life.

Jochen Achilles, another close friend of Werner Huber, focuses on our colleague’s core business as he writes about the ways in which “Intermedial Drama and the Commodification of Irish Identities” are connected. He starts from two articles by Huber, “Contemporary Drama as Meta-Cinema: Martin McDonagh and Marie Jones” (2002) and “(De-)Mythologising Ireland on the Screen” (2003) and asks questions

similar to Kiberd's when, with Fredric Jameson, he wonders whether American film and media industries have so much suffused Ireland that it cannot imagine "radically different social alternatives" any more. This question is answered by Marie Jones' *Stones in His Pockets* in a tragicomic way. The metacinematic concept is a perfect metaphor for the mutual exploitation that is going on between the Hollywood filmcrew and the Irish locals; yet in the end the (surviving) locals understand that they have to become more active to reclaim a "viable self-image." A second question asked in this article is what the word "Irish" means these days, as the word has become "deterritorialized" and merely functions "as a brand – a commodified abstraction." This point is further complicated by McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* as it avoids contrastive comparisons and instead focuses on the constructedness of each identity, whether "californicated" or made in the West of Ireland.

Martin McDonagh's *Hangmen* (2015) is treated extensively in the next two contributions. Both Ondřej Pilný and Joan FitzPatrick Dean admire McDonagh's ability to "nail the vernacular" – this time that of Northern England – and the playwright's ability to summon up a local sense of place via the rhythms and turns of phrase of the idiom. Both critics also agree that McDonagh's manipulation of both characters in the play and audience is central to his vocation as a writer, which aims at radically questioning the human being's ability to find truth. Considering the fact that the play is about capital punishment, the meticulously twisted plot is part and parcel of the play which does not lead to any clear truth and hence to a final lynching which implicates everybody in a communal guilt. While both critics stress the fact that McDonagh stated that *Hangmen* is not a message play they both look at different passages to weigh this idea. Pilný agrees with Werner Huber that the grotesque is a category central to McDonagh's work (Werner was the first critic to see this): as the value system "appears in constant flux and in a state of destabilization", "satire loses sight of its targets"; as Huber observed, all the playwright wants to do is to shunt the audience between different emotions without letting them land on a clear set of values. This happens by stringing together an intricate series of shocks and inconsistencies: the play is about celebrity and hanging, charm and horror; it stages grim situations with a humorous turn; it is realistic in technical details while magnifying the brutality of an execution.

FitzPatrick Dean too takes her cue from Werner Huber who observed McDonagh's "art of 'coddling'", which she further specifies as "his manipulation of an audience's gullibility" in which he (ab)uses "the conventions of confidence-building", illustrating "life's epistemological uncertainties." Further she pinpoints how the power structures, grounded in the knowledge of secrets, are built on an elaborate hierarchy of male positions which are constantly negotiated via "microaggressions". These make up the "comedy of menace" which, in *Hangmen*, grips a bigger cast than in other McDonagh plays – a metonymy of society at large. It looks like the playwright offers a textbook example here of René Girard's theory of the scapegoat, where society is reigned by ignorance and rivalry, the victim is a cryptic person and everybody denies responsibility.

With Mária Kurdi's analysis of Nancy Harris' *No Romance* (2011) we move from a masculine to a more feminine kind of grotesque. Like many other prominent female Abbey playwrights Harris sees laughter as a vital tool to undermine the "oppressive effect of patriarchy on both women and men". In order to map post- (or inter-)Celtic crisis Ireland Harris develops a "postdramatic theatre" in which increasingly divergent stories illustrate the growing isolation of individuals and the confusion of values this brings with it. This isolation is said to have been caused by Ireland's quick move to cash and next to crash. Both movements led to a loss of solidarity and gain of consumerism; but, as *No Romance* shows, when the crash brought mass unemployment the "beset, recession-impacted man" remasculinized himself and is inspired to do this via the internet. So, instead of developing the hard-won prestige of Irish women, global consumerism makes couples revert to traditionalist views on gender. This regression oppresses both men and women to the extent that they miss out not only on contact with each other but also with themselves. As a result, groups of individuals, families and generations fall apart, so that the miraculous human relationships which defined the genre of Romance are now replaced by transgenerational alienation which hollows out Irish society.

The next section deals almost exclusively with fiction and starts off with Joyce, as he was one of Werner Huber's great favourites. Gerry Smyth's "Another Listen to the Music in Joyce's 'A Mother'" follows the feminist lead admiring Mrs Kearney for standing up for her rights in a society dominated by (hardly openly articulated) male values, imposed by Catholicism, a self-colonializing nationalism and familialism. Yet Mrs Kearney has the guts to be anti-stereotypical by taking the initiative, by her discreet steering of the amateurish committee, her dealing with the financial side of matters and her standing up for her rights in public life. Smyth suggests that Mrs Kearney may be inspired by three women who were active on the Dublin music scene around 1904, when Joyce was active there himself: Eileen Reedy, Máire nic Shiublaigh and Dr Annie Patterson, the first woman in Ireland with a doctorate in music. All three are represented as committed to but critical of nationalism, republicanism, feminism and socialism. Backed by these models, Smyth makes a positive case for Mrs Kearney.

Paul Fagan's article "Out of Joint: James Joyce and 'Irish Time'" opens with the image of the Dublin GPO clock which stopped during the fighting of the 1916 Easter Rising, turning it into the symbol of a paradigmatic modernist concern with living in a time that is "out of joint." Moving from *Dubliners* via *Ulysses* to *Finnegans Wake*, Fagan illustrates how Joyce stages discrepancies between 'clock time' and 'lived time', referring to aesthetic, political, and legal disputes in Ireland, where several time systems vied for prominence: GMT, which facilitated interactions on a global level, DMT (the Dublin variant of the Greenwich norm) and DST, Daylight Saving Time. First Fagan describes the way in which Irish literary revivalists, political and economic forces responded to this complication. Second, he shows how Joyce picks up the death-in-life rhetoric and the corresponding figure of the revenant in *Dubliners*, such as Father Flynn in the opening story and Michael Furey in the closing one.

Ulysses stages further discrepancies in time with Bloom's stopped clocks and in the Stephen-Hamlet configuration, where the Danish prince introduces the motifs of hesitancy and recurrent betrayal, which in turn are connected to Parnell and to the pre-history of the Rising which goes back to the misremembered Phoenix Park Murders. In *Finnegans Wake* the scene where HCE is "accosted" by one whose "watch was bradys" illustrates Joyce's blending of discrepancies again as he mixes languages (*bradus* being Greek for "slow") and situations of suspension and betrayal in Irish politics. Throughout the article Fagan highlights Joyce's sensitivity to Irish temporal paradoxes: he echoes the allochronic fieldwork of Synge but realizes that it is recorded by modernist techniques; he engages Yeatsian faery aesthetics as an "opportunity for experimental fiction" and fashions his remythologized Dublin from the very inconsistencies of the politics, economics and aesthetics of his day.

From here on Tamara Radak takes us further into *Finnegans Wake*, where she traces Freud's influence. Though Joyce made it clear that he liked neither Freud nor Jung he peppered many of his writings (especially the Notebooks and the *Wake*) with references to their work. These references do not limit themselves to a borrowing of quaint lexical elements, or an inspiration to puns as in Joyce's reference to the "dablinganger"; the author argues that Joyce develops some Freudian principles into the very poetics of *Finnegans Wake*. Like Anna O., who coined the English term of the "talking cure" and often, in her cure, mixed "four or five languages", *Finnegans Wake* relishes the mix of languages and registers. Further Radak argues that Issy is modelled on Lucia Joyce, diagnosed with schizophrenia and other illnesses; but *Finnegans Wake* transforms and positively reevaluates Issy's affliction by making it part of the aesthetics of the text. This, the critic argues, is especially clear in "night lessons" (II.2) which breaks the mould of the traditional novelistic form and replaces it with an extra dense set of references to psychoanalysis. Again, these references are not just puns, as in "the law of the jungerl"; the "cycloannalism" of *Finnegans Wake* also reflects its whole riverrun poetics, practicing a never-ending process of free association.

In the next five contributions we move chronologically through a series of writers who try out boundaries to shock themselves, via their personae or protagonists, into new positions. The first in the series is Anthony Trollope. Of the fifty novels of this prolific writer, five are "Irish novels", and John McCourt focuses on three of these. McCourt sees him as a typically Victorian figure, full of self-reliance, duty and thrift, but a "reluctant colonialist", one who wanted a fairer economic union between the two islands, and who is scandalized that "men in Parliament know less about Ireland than they do of the interior of Africa". As he introduces his views on Ireland to his countrymen in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, Trollope deplores the lack of justice. *The Kellys and the O'Kelly's* is more optimistic, though Trollope makes it clear that he was against the Repeal movement. *Castle Richmond* is the most shocking of the three: written in 1859, only twelve years after the Famine, the British administration is fervently defended, partly on the grounds that charity should be limited – an observation that rings painfully familiar in the current refugee situation in the EU. Though

Trollope seems to have sympathized with the Irish peasant, his loyalty lay with Britain. Finally McCourt mentions one story, "The Turkish Bath" which he counts among Trollope's "counter-hegemonic tales" as he stages a feminized Irish man much liked by his English friend, thus ambiguously presenting a homosexual friendship in a positive light.

The ways in which Oscar Wilde used Italy to explore possible constructions of himself is explored by Donatella Badin Abate in "'The soul within me burned / Italia, my Italia, at thy name': Wilde's Early Poems and his Fascination with Italy". Though the author distinguishes three factors in Wilde's interest in Italy – the aesthetic impulses influencing his early poetry, the sensationalism of the plays set in Italy, and the charm of a society that seemed more permissive, Badin only focuses on a dozen poems on Italy which Wilde wrote early in life. These are pulsing with Turner-esque light and either represent Pre-Raphaelite ecstasies in a "marble-throated lily girl[s]" or languishing "lovely brown boy[s]" à la Guido Reni's Saint Sebastian in Genoa, or they stage a reanimated Ovidian world as in "Ravenna", where "goat-footed" creatures dally with "Dryad maid[s]". The long poem "Ravenna" is central to this article as it fully illustrates Ellmann's characterization of Wilde: "contradictoriness was his orthodoxy". Indeed, Wilde wavered between embracing Catholicism and refuting it, calling the pope in one poem the "Holy One", "a vile thing" in another. As a result, a reviewer of the 1881 volume of his poems noticed that those who unified Italy were execrated in one poem and panegyricized in the next. Clearly, Wilde was less concerned with Home Rule or Rome rule, his principle was Role rule: one lives properly as long as one assimilates new roles.

Elizabeth Bowen's links with Italy were limited: *A Time in Rome* is "her only travel book". In Bowen's development of herself the boundaries she negotiated ran more between the perceived grandeur of her own Anglo-Irish past and the flux of the times she so painfully experienced after her seventh year. In order to map these negotiations Elena Cotta Ramusino studies Bowen's *Seven Winters – Memories of a Dublin Childhood*, an autobiographical account of the writer's early winters in Dublin. This Dublin is condensed in the sheltered Bowen home at Herbert Place and the area encircled by the Canal, the rest is "*terra incognita*", as scary to the child as "any swamp or jungle", and though she knows the "poverty-rotted houses" only from hearsay she feels the "canyon-like streets" they form "might at any moment crumble over one's head". As Cotta Ramusino shows, the fact that Bowen's childhood was abruptly terminated by her father's mental illness and the child's banishment from him deeply formed her writing. Ever since she tries, with "withstood emotion", to seek her way back to that time of harmony by exploring the possibilities of self-writing. On the one hand this makes her realize "the closeness of a minority world", on the other hand she wants to rescue that world by reanimating it in its authentic intensities, and household objects seem to be powerful conductors to help her back to the "semi-mystical topography of childhood", as Bowen calls *Seven Winters*. As Cotta Ramusino indicates, autobiographical representations of places of stability to Bowen were

a vital way of coping with the destruction of houses in wartime London and later of her own Bowen's Court.

Houses and dwelling spaces are also at the heart of Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper's overview of Dermot Healy's work, but where Bowen seemed to want to bolster the past, Healy wants to explode it. Since Healy's untimely death in 2014 this writer's complete works have finally been published; Healy is a key figure in this volume as he is not only versatile in many genres, but he crosses the boundaries between them, combining the abilities of the short story writer, novelist, poet, playwright, screenwriter, director, actor, essay writer, editor and teacher. In this article the authors do not merely want to sketch the width of Healy's "creative eclecticism" but also show how, over a period of forty years, key formal strategies changed within his short stories, as he moves from an "O'Faoláin-esque realism" to a "counterrealist aesthetic". Focusing on two versions of one short story, Murphy and Hopper illustrate how Healy progresses in his imagistic mode as he replaces realist description, third-person narration, linear cause-and-effect plot and other hierarchizing structures by phenomenological observation mediated in free indirect discourse, juxtaposition and montage, which deconstructs the idea that sense impressions are an individual matter, while highlighting how states of mind are a matter of floating interactions. Healy tries to reach out to characters who find themselves in panic and despair, whether in the London Irish diaspora or in a rural context, simultaneously honing and checking his empathy, in what Eoin MacNamee called "an orchestra of the withheld".

The volume closes with Sylvie Mikowski's analysis of Colum McCann's *Transatlantic*, Sebastian Barry's *On Canaan's Side* and Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn*, three novels which focus on women crossing boundaries. All three protagonists (Lilly, Lily and Ellis) are "Lilies", innocent women oppressed and sent out to the US by an exclusionary (sectarian or nationalistic), male discourse. The three novels illustrate in fiction form what Parker showed in drama: that inward-looking ethics only reap further division, whether racist, religious, social, economic or other. As each of the novels is embedded in historical contexts the mimetic narcissism of the nation-building discourse is illustrated with examples of existing figures, such as the freedom fighter John Mitchell who, on the one hand, insisted that the Irish were treated like the American slaves, but on the other hand encouraged Irish Americans to keep slaves. The three novelists' protagonists, however, break through conspiracies of family and Church, through barriers of culture and colour, so that after a physical emigration they start on their psychological migration. To each of them, America's contrasts help them recognize the racist principles which upheld their Irish identities; and, taking the brunt of self-perpetuating patterns of violence, their resilience sometimes leads to real emancipation.

As we look at Ireland and Europe in 2017 we may think (once again) that things fall apart and the centre cannot hold, but maybe the notions of "centre" and "apart" have to be rethought. Certainly, under the onslaught of global predatory capitalism which takes over our agricultural acreage, industrial production and our internetted minds, it is no luxury to think about the darker sides of ourselves and our society, as much as

about the creative potential of difference between ourselves. Writers and artists see boundaries as building blocks, strands to weave always new patterns with; contradiction can be a motor out of stereotype; discrepancies are to be used as passages from which a new breath can originate; physical and social boundaries are to be mapped in their emotional impact so as to filter out, or morph the negative effects into positive ones. Indeed, boundaries are not just marking differences in spatial aspects but also in styles, rhythms, degrees of epistemological certainty: if you are not as convinced as the next man, you are excluded. This volume of ISE practices alterity, offers models of heterogeneity and inclusion, reminds us to be alive, alert and kicking, questioning certainties imposed as truth.