

María Losada Friend, José María Tejedor Cabrera,
José Manuel Estévez-Saá, Werner Huber (eds.)

DREAMING THE FUTURE:
NEW HORIZONS / OLD BARRIERS IN 21ST-CENTURY IRELAND

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Edited by

Werner Huber, Catherine Maignant, Hedwig Schwall

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May 2011

María Losada Friend
José María Tejedor Cabrera
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Werner Huber

INTRODUCTION

**María Losada Friend, José María Tejedor Cabrera,
José Manuel Estévez-Saá, Werner Huber**

This volume began its life during the course of a few busy days in December 2007 in the Spanish city of Sevilla. It was there that members of the Spanish Association of Irish Studies (AEDEI) combined efforts with the Organising Committees from the Universities of Sevilla and Huelva and the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS) to pave the way for the Sixth International EFACIS Conference, a dynamic effort to promote Irish Studies in a broad European context.

In this conference's spirit of creating a Europe-wide forum for diverse and innovative explorations of classic and contemporary issues within Ireland's social, cultural, political, and economic realms, this third volume in the *Irish Studies in Europe* series includes articles and poems that ambitiously reveal the complex academic and artistic challenges of contemporary Irish Studies. The title of "Dreaming the Future: New Horizons/Old Barriers in 21st-Century Ireland," shared by both the conference and this volume, alludes to Walter Benjamin's assertion that "every epoch not only dreams the next but, while dreaming, it impels it toward wakefulness." Already the Irish panorama looks quite different than it did at the turn of the last century – a point ably demonstrated throughout this collection – as "New Horizons" continue to reveal themselves even as many "Old Barriers" stubbornly refuse erasure. As such, it is the challenge of Irish Studies in Europe to trace carefully and elucidate the many and great changes witnessed by both Northern Ireland and the Republic today, as traditional images of underdevelopment, isolationism, sectarianism, and violence are gradually overturned and replaced. This collection meets these challenges through a thoroughgoing and multifaceted recognition and revision of the movements, and figures that, dreaming the future, have led and shaped the island in its non-stop evolution. In this ever-evolving search for Ireland's identity (or identities), the articles selected represent individual and collective critiques of a single vision of Ireland. The fact that a slight dominance of Spanish perspectives and themes can be made out should be seen as a tribute to the genius loci of the conference and the occasion (and not as being in contradiction to the Europeanness of the enterprise as a whole).

Declan Kiberd opens the volume with an exposition of how James Joyce's modernist masterpiece *Ulysses* revitalises the past and makes the ancients

live on in modernity. In “Old Testaments and New: Joyce and Messianic Time,” Kiberd unravels the ways in which the Old Testament text was recycled in the New Testament to provide this new narrative with coherence and cohesion. Tracing phrases and instances from both texts in *Ulysses*, and following the “mythical method” perceived by T.S. Eliot as the basic strategy of Joyce’s Bloomsday book, Kiberd advances to the heart of the subtle and innovative mechanisms of Joyce’s dynamic modernity, which, by cannibalising and rewriting old texts, invests tradition with new meanings.

In “Geography Of Desire and Guilt: Joyce’s “Circe” in the Tradition of the Temptation of Saint Anthony,” Benigno Del Río similarly approaches Joyce within the European religious tradition. Tracing the imagery of seduction, his close reading of the “Circe” chapter of *Ulysses* reveals a sophisticated game of temptation and desire while evincing the chapter’s close relation with Flaubert’s *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* and with the pictorial tradition of Saint Anthony’s temptation in Hieronymus Bosch’s version of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Anne MacCarthy¹ also traces the tradition of European influences in Irish writing through her thoughtful analysis of the influential Irish intellectual Denis Florence MacCarthy, whose translations of Calderón de la Barca’s *autos* and careful readings of the Spanish dramatist’s religious ideas reveal the existent fondness for Spanish classic literature in Ireland. Admirer of Mangan, translator of Spanish romances, and follower of Shelley’s nationalistic yearnings, Denis Florence MacCarthy is also shown to embody the Irish reception of German Romanticism, particularly in following its debates regarding the theoretical and practical techniques of translation.

Alberto Lázaro Lafuente’s contribution explores the reception of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in post-war Spain, in the process uncovering the subtle political ideology that selected books for “untrained readers.” Documenting his case study with censorship files from Alcalá de Henares, Lázaro reveals how Spanish censors in the 1940s faced and resolved the moral ambiguity of the novel, freely manipulating paratextual information and censoring the text so as to offer a book that could be either banned as immoral or offered as an exemplary fable.

Juan Ignacio Oliva analyses the original and subversive means by which the work of Irish author Jamie O’Neill boldly challenges conventional narratives regarding masculinity and morality in Ireland. Cast as shadows of Oscar

1 The editors have the sad duty to report the passing away of our esteemed colleague Anne MacCarthy in February of 2011.

Wilde's personal and aesthetic rebellion, O'Neill's novels *Disturbance* (1989), *Kilbrack* (1990), and *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001) are shown to employ metaphors of fractured selves and 'disturbance' in youths as a means of challenging the moral consensus in Ireland with new visions of masculinity, as well as of deconstructing and rewriting traditional narratives of social and ethical Ireland.

José Francisco Fernández further demonstrates the Irish connection with Spain by unveiling Beckett's relation with Spanish language, history, and translation. Methodically tracing Beckett's few incursions into Spanish culture and language, through references to Calderón, Lope de Vega, and Saint John of the Cross, and scrutinising the Irish author's labours as translator in his *Anthology of Mexican Poetry*, Fernández uncovers ambiguous intertextual links that contrast with Beckett's open and clarifying words against the political situation in post-war Spain.

Originating from a different EFACIS event (Vienna 2009), Estelle Epinoux's paper "Irish Cinema and Europe throughout the Twentieth Century: An Overview" surveys the history of Irish-European relations as reflected in the history of Irish cinema. She discusses Irish cinema as a national cinema within the constraints of alterity and inclusion/exclusion (especially with regard to Ireland vs. Britain and the United States) and notes how contemporary Irish cinema has overcome these antagonistic patterns and found its place in a third space marked by hybridity, post-nationalism, and multiple identities.

In "Connolly and his Legacy," Sophie Ollivier traces the political evolution of Irish labour leader and revolutionary James Connolly through the dual aspects of his ideology – a complex blend of socialist and nationalist convictions. Ollivier frames the essay with Pierre Nora's distinction of Memory vs. History so as to carefully explore the ways in which Connolly's ideas and legacy have been conveniently adopted and adapted by different figures and parties since his execution for his role in the 1916 Rising.

In "New Horizons for the Border Areas: From Good Intentions to Good Practice in Cross-Border Cooperation" Marie Claire Considère-Charon examines the goals for cross-border cooperation and development in Ireland in the decade since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, comparing these hopes against the actual progress made. Reviewing the bases of partition, as well as its practical consequences and psychological impact on the Irish border areas, the author points at the slowly but firmly changing ideas and approaches towards the appropriate processes of reconciliation and reconstruction. Considère-Charon's analysis of the different programmes charged with this

objective is exemplified by the concrete case of the challenges and fortunes of the Blackwater regional partnership.

The volume concludes with an authentic Irish voice, that of Galway-born playwright, translator, and poet Rita Ann Higgins. The three poems included here – “Ask the concierge,” “The Immortals,” “He knows no artichokes” – signal new creative approaches to excavating Ireland’s present for new perspectives on its past, and vice versa. Higgins’s simple, unpretentious style avoids a naïve reading, reconstructing with clarity and wit the cruelties, hypocritical attitudes, and values of contemporary Irish society.