

OBITUARY BY THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

We are deeply saddened at the passing away of Professor Werner Huber. Werner Huber was born in Hassloch, Rhineland Palatinate, Germany, in 1952 and studied English and German at the University of Mannheim, Amherst College, the University of Mainz and Trinity College Dublin. He received his PhD in 1980, with a thesis on James Stephens's early novels, from the University of Mainz and subsequently became a research assistant and assistant professor at the English Department of the University of Paderborn, where he collaborated closely with Rainer Schöwerling on the Corvey Library Project. In 1995, he received his *venia legendi* in English Philology with a Habilitationsschrift on Irish autobiographies of the twentieth century. After a short period at the University of Tübingen he became Full Professor of English Literature at the Chemnitz University of Technology in 1999, before being appointed Full Professor of English and American Language and Literature at the University of Vienna in 2005.

In Vienna, Werner Huber tirelessly promoted the cause of Irish Studies in his teaching and research, founding the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies in 2009 and initiating the Distinguished Chair in Irish Studies Programme, co-funded by the Embassy of Ireland and the University of Vienna, which brought a string of eminent scholars (such as Gerry Smyth, Séan Crosson, Robert Mahony) to our department. Through his involvement in the "Irish Itinerary" culture programme, he contributed to the city's vibrant cultural scene by welcoming numerous renowned Irish authors, film makers, and musicians, such as Medbh McGuckian, Julian Gough, Glenn Patterson, Lenny Abrahamson. He also brought two major Irish Studies conferences to Vienna. In 2009, he organized the Seventh Conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS) on the theme of "Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges"; Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney accepted his invitation to deliver a celebrated keynote lecture on "Mossbawn via Mantua: A Reading with Commentary." Papers from the conference were published in two volumes, entitled *Contemporary Irish Film: New Perspectives on a National Cinema* (2011) and *Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges* (2012). In 2011, marking the centenary of Flann O'Brien's birthday, Werner Huber co-organized the inaugural conference of the International Flann O'Brien Society, with keynotes by Anthony Cronin, Frank McNally, Keith Hopper, Kurt Palm, and Harry Rowohlt. The conference resulted in a much-noted volume of Flann O'Brien scholarship, entitled *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies* (Cork UP). Plans to host the 2017 annual conference of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) sadly did not materialize due to his sudden illness.

Werner Huber's central role in the field of Irish Studies is further illustrated by his function of Vice-President for IASIL Europe (2000-2009), his membership of the

EFACIS Executive Committee (1999-2016), as well as his editorship of the EFACIS book series *Irish Studies in Europe* (six volumes, WVT). The enormous appreciation of his achievements as a champion of Irish Studies has come to the fore in numerous tributes pouring in from the Irish Studies community all over the world upon the news of his death. “We salute Werner as a world scholar in Irish literature and drama and as a steadfast champion of Irish studies and Irish culture within Europe and beyond,” writes IASIL Chairperson Margaret Kelleher. “We will miss greatly his wisdom, his deep and quiet generosity to fellow scholars, and his infectious sense of humour.”

Outside the field of Irish Studies, Werner Huber made notable contributions to the foundation and development of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE), whose president he was from 2001 to 2009, concluding his presidency as host of the Society’s 2009 conference in Vienna on the theme of “Staging Interculturality.” A book of the same title, with papers from the conference, appeared in 2010. His long-standing research interest in British Romanticism is reflected in his position as Secretary-Treasurer and Vice-President of the German Society for English Romanticism (1982-1996) and his influential co-edited volume on *Biofictions: The Rewriting of Romantic Lives in Contemporary Fiction and Drama* (1999). His broad expertise is further reflected in a large number of editorial board memberships (e.g. *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, *Irish Studies Review*, *Irish University Review*) and in his editorial work on numerous scholarly essay collections (e.g. *Intermedialities* (2007), *Self-Reflexivity in Literature* (2005), *The Corvey Library and Anglo-German Cultural Exchanges, 1770-1837* (2004)).

An engaging speaker, Werner Huber will be greatly missed by his students for his lectures and seminars in Film and Cultural Studies, where his enthusiasm for British popular culture (*Downton Abbey*, *Game of Thrones*) proved contagious and his dry sense of humour and attention to quirky details were much appreciated. Students benefitted from his excellent contacts not only in academia but also in the arts world. They had the unique opportunity of hearing talks by Academy Award nominees Lenny Abrahamson and Peter Morgan, as well as distinguished authors such as Claire Tomalin and Michael Frayn. A whole generation of students will fondly remember Werner Huber’s annual London theatre “field trips”, where the groundling experience in the Globe Theatre – sometimes in the pouring rain – was regularly followed by a convivial pint in the local pub.

Werner Huber was not only an exemplary scholar and charismatic teacher but also a kind, generous and inspiring supervisor and mentor, whose advice and continuous support will be keenly missed by his students and also by the junior colleagues who had the privilege of working with him. For those who knew him, he was a true “scholar and gentleman” – an amiable and “cultured all-round man”, who leaves a large gap in the department’s life and the university. We will always remember him with gratitude and affection. Our hearts go out to his wife Edith and his daughter Anna.

Dieter Fuchs, Julia Lajta-Novak, Sandra Mayer

IN MEMORIAM WERNER HUBER (1952-2016)

Klaus Lubbers

It was with great sadness that I noted Werner Huber's passing away on 28 April 2016 after a brief but acute illness of a rare kind. The international field of Irish Studies lost one of its pioneering spirits when he died. My sorrow was somewhat relieved when I came across the moving obituary written by his former colleagues and friends Rolf Breuer (Paderborn) and Martin Middeke (Augsburg) published in the communications of *Deutscher Anglistenverband*.

It was on a nice summer's day in the nineteen-seventies, while I was spending my first sabbatical semester at Amherst College, that my friend Donald White, head of the German Department, introduced me to a tall young gentleman who, by his own ingenuity, had found his way as student as well as teaching assistant into this elitist institution of learning. I have forgotten what we talked about, but after his return to Germany Werner Huber left Mannheim and joined me at Mainz where in the course of time I became his doctoral supervisor and had the good fortune to be able to recommend him to Rainer Schöwerling, who happened to be looking for an assistant. So he passed his formative postdoctoral period at Paderborn just at the time when the treasure trove in the princely abbey of Corvey was discovered, a sensational find containing, among other things, some 2,600 novels in English dating from the Romantic period, which involved him in an additional extended research project. His first call, to Chemnitz, proved – in retrospect – a stepping stone to the professorship he was offered ten years later at Vienna. On 21 December 2005 he wrote to me in his seasonal greetings:

Ich bin jetzt seit Anfang WS in Wien, und Ende Jänner werden wir wohl ganz übersiedeln. Atmosphärisch und studientechnisch ist das beim Vergleich mit der TH [Chemnitz] hier: Championsleague statt Regionalliga! Es macht einfach Spaß, ins Seminar zu gehen. Da die Lehrkanzel für ‚Irish Studies‘ ausgeschrieben war, gibt es dementsprechende Erwartungen.

Expectations which he more than fulfilled: for it was in Vienna that Werner Huber really hit his stride and spent the happiest decade of his life, to judge from the explosion of his scholarly activities as well as from the cheerful letters which he favoured me with. A climax came with his organization of the Seventh EFACIS Conference entitled "Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges" on 3-6 September 2009. Werner Huber's sixtieth birthday was duly marked by a volume entitled *Ireland in Drama, Film and Popular Fiction*, collected by former students and colleagues.

Then, on 14 July 2015, a shocking letter reached me that was in line with the frankness, indeed candidness, of our long and close friendship:

Herzliche grüße auch mal wieder an Sie und nach Mainz!

Ich bin um mitte juni ganz plötzlich mit einem gehirntumor affiziert worden – teuflische Ironie: bes. trifft es mich sprache und sätze.

Small talk und standard situationen gehen OK, aber schwierige situationen dauern.

Wenn die wörter sollen sich erst mal erholen – dafür jetzt auch logopaedie.

Finally his last Christmas wishes:

in diese woche wegen MRT und Logopädie – dann Aphasia / Dysphasia – war ich im Hospital. Dazu kommen dramatic irony: ‘kleine Anna’ nun alles neue mit Sprechen, Worten und Sätzen.

Sad to say, it was glioblastoma, the most aggressive cancer that begins in the brain and whose progress even chemotherapy fails to arrest, that took him away from us.

In following Werner Huber’s distinguished career, I perceive first of all the significant role he played in the thriving of international Irish Studies. In my younger years, a Hibernicist used to attend the conferences of the literature-oriented IASAIL (then still, I now feel, somewhat in a stage of academic tourism – despite such prominent scholars as Patrick Rafroidi, Maurice Harmon, and Heinz Kosok). And that was it. More ambitious European Hibernicists *could* read papers at conventions of the interdisciplinary ACIS (which is what I did intermittently from 1978 until 1995 without ever spotting another attendant from continental Europe). In his correspondence, Werner Huber repeatedly commented on the rapidly changing state of affairs in Irish Studies in Europe:

Wie Sie aus dem beiliegenden Programm sehen, ist die deutsche/deutschsprachige Hibernistik nur mehr vereinzelt in den Relikten der einstigen Hochburgen vertreten ... (11 September 2009).

Deutschland insgesamt stellt sich ... ins Abseits, denn rundherum blühen Centres of Irish Studies (Leuven, Prag, Skandinavien, Frankreich sowieso, Wien) (14 June 2010).

... Von EFACIS kommen z. Zt. stärkere Impulse als von IASIL (20 April 2011).

When looking back I also observe the incisive change in scholarly perspective from New Criticism to Cultural Studies that occurred between his generation and mine. While mine grew up in the tradition of philology and literary history, his was practically forced to break new ground. In this respect, too, Werner Huber’s oeuvre furnishes a striking example – from his doctoral dissertation devoted to James Stephens from the point of view of reader-response criticism, then just around the corner, to his more recent intermedial research projects embracing all kinds of “texts” including films, and photos of David Beckham and Robbie Williams. In that respect, the former pupil has become his former master’s teacher. For that as well as for his life-long gratefulness, I shall never forget Werner Huber, the witty gentleman from Rhineland-Palatinate.

Klaus Lubbers, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

TRIBUTE TO WERNER HUBER

Catherine Mignant

Werner Huber was one of the most enthusiastic promoters of Irish studies in Europe. He passionately believed in the merits of networking to reach collective excellence. Not only was he a member of the EFACIS Executive Committee for an exceptionally long stretch of seventeen years (1999-2016), but he was among the few people who contributed to the very invention of the Association. He was there when the European Federation was launched in Paris; he took part in its inaugural conference in Lille in 1998; the creation of the *Irish Studies in Europe* series was his idea and he became its devoted editor. In 2009, he organized the Seventh Conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies in Vienna and all participants cherish the memory of this truly memorable event. Werner never missed a conference or an executive committee meeting and his constructive and perceptive contributions were always welcome. His untimely death is a tragic loss to those who remember these early days and his warm support for any initiative likely to advance the cause of Irish studies in Europe and the world. A scholar of international standing, he also numbered among the best world experts in Irish literature and drama studies. His numerous publications testify to his outstanding contribution to research in that area. But beyond his professional talents, he was simply a good man. His quality of presence made him a man with whom it was a pleasure to work and his tongue in cheek humour delighted all those who knew him. He will be sorely missed by his colleagues and Irish studies friends.

Catherine Mignant, Professor of Irish studies at the University of Lille
and first president of EFACIS

FOND MEMORIES

Filomena Louro

All along the years I have been involved with Irish studies there were a great number of moments when we could feel we were making an effort to produce something valuable and fun. One of the pleasures and rich moments of my academic life was the opportunity to enjoy the company of Professor Werner Huber as a colleague and a friend.

For me it all started with a letter inviting me to join a group who would be meeting in Paris in the nineties, at the Collège des Irlandais, in 1996. There I met Paul Brennan, Claude Fierobe and many other colleagues invited from other European countries who made their way into the creation of EFACIS.

On the third meeting a new German colleague joined us, Werner Huber from the University of Paderborn. These early meetings at the Centre du Monde Anglophone, 5 rue de l'École de Médecine, and at Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille 3, gained a lot from the discreet presence of Werner Huber, and we established a sound basis for our current and thriving EFACIS group. I clearly recall how a subtle presence like Werner's made himself a key figure in our lively meetings.

These were spent in hot debate about the choice of model to follow, and Werner's contributions were always sound, reflexive, and promoting a forward-looking solution rather than a reductive compromise. In his proposals there was a solution where no one seemed to have to lose something to continue the debate. Rather the opposite, he was able to bring in differing views to agree with him, confident of having put in their share in the debate. It is due to his negotiations that Irish Studies in Europe came into being, with a first issue of the proceedings of the Fourth EFACIS conference in Braga, hosted by me in 2003.

I remember with fondness the lunches after the Steering Committee meetings where we could continue to enjoy each other's company and keep up to date on academic and personal matters. A good listener, Werner was also a good storyteller, discreet with his life and always ready to offer help and to acknowledge collaboration. Werner's memory will be with us who enjoyed his eloquence and academic achievements, his enthusiasm for literature, theatre, film, football and a friendly drink. A much respected colleague, a truly loved friend.

Filomena Louro, co-founding member of EFACIS

“YOU WILL HEAR FROM ME TWICE.”
REMEMBERING WERNER HUBER

Giovanna Tallone

The opening lines of Brian Friel’s renowned and award-winning play of 1990, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, are a catalyst for memory and its intricacies. The protagonist-narrator, Michael, introduces the subject matter of the play: “When I cast my mind back to that summer of 1936 different kinds of memories offer themselves to me.”

My mind is cast back to 1991, my very first IASIL (then IASIL) conference in Leiden. I tried to attend as many sessions as possible, enjoying the variety of critical approaches and the wide range of perspectives such an international event offered. On the last day of the conference, I listened to a paper given by Werner Huber on James Stephens’s early novels. I have a distinct memory of the speaker’s imposing figure, standing to deliver his paper with a captivating voice. Afterwards I tried to overcome my shyness and told Werner I had enjoyed his paper as I was currently doing some research on James Stephens, whereon he offered to send me a couple of articles he had written. About a week later I received an envelope from Universität Gesamthochschule Paderborn (where was Paderborn?) with the two essays he had promised and a covering letter which I still treasure:

Dear Ms. Tallone,

Sorry, I can’t guess your first name.

I enclose two pieces of Stephensiana which may interest you.

Thank you very much for being an interested listener at Leiden.

Best wishes,
Werner Huber.

It was a pleasant surprise to realize that such intellectual generosity could exist; that research was not only private and selfish in a way, but carried out in order to be shared. Throughout the years, I found again that generosity in a variety of ways, and is also referred to in Margaret Kelleher’s and Seán Crosson’s obituaries.

Yet he was also the reserved, not very talkative gentleman who managed at the right time to engage you in conversation in the wide range of topics of his IASIL and EFACIS papers. And it was during the IASIL Conference in São Paulo in 2002, at an evening reception Munira Mutran had organized at her house, that Werner suggested joining EFACIS, something I had never really considered as the conferences clashed with my work commitments. But Werner turned out to be right: the perspective of EFACIS beyond literature, involving social sciences, politics and history would open a different point of view for someone like me.

My network of memories connects Werner to so many places – welcoming me at Budapest Airport with the group of IASILates on the way to Debrecen; at dinner at Britta Olinder’s house in Gothenburg telling me about his dog; joining us at Malpensa Airport on his way to the Casa da Musica in Porto. The paper he gave in Porto on Martin McDonagh’s film *Six Shooter* showed his developing interests in film studies where his “bovine and ovine images and metaphors” greatly engaged the audience.

However, the most enduring memory of Werner I have is related to the years in which he served as IASIL returning officer. Every year at the AGM he explained the election system starting with a formula that never changed over the years: “You will hear from me twice.” Now this sentence is emblematic to me, of his role at the time, but more of the way in which his memory, his presence, his scholarship, his kindness and generosity live on. We will hear from him twice and over and over again, in his essays and books, but especially in the memories of all those who had the happy opportunity to meet him.

Giovanna Tallone, Independent Scholar

100 MYLES AND COUNTING: WERNER AMONG THE MYLESIANS

Paul Fagan

Flann O'Brien studies have undergone not only a renaissance but also something of a revolution over the past decade. From the founding of The International Flann O'Brien Society and its peer-reviewed journal *The Parish Review* in 2011 to international conferences in Dublin, Rome, Prague, Salzburg, Sydney, and Boston in far *Amurikay*, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in both the breadth and depth of scholarly activity on a writer whose achievements had for too long been marginalised or diminished. Few people can claim to have been a more influential driving or shaping force on this new wave of Flann studies than Werner Huber. Personally speaking, it was a pleasure and a distinct honour to work with him on the Flann project in his final years, and I am delighted to have the space here to give voice, on behalf of the members of The International Flann O'Brien Society, to the huge debt that those of us working in the field owe to him.

In 1977, Werner wrote his diploma thesis on 'Forms of Humour in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*' – a topic which, as he was fond of saying, was at that time in German academia "neither popular nor profitable", yet which bespoke his lifelong dedication to the author. His 1988 article 'Flann O'Brien and the Language of the Grotesque' remains a pivotal text in the field for the ways in which it opened up the generic textures and comic energies of *The Third Policeman* for more considered analysis.¹

At the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies, which he had founded in 2009, Werner hosted 100 Myles: The International Flann O'Brien Centenary Conference, the inaugural The International Flann O'Brien Society conference. Despite the success of subsequent symposia, the Vienna conference remains the largest academic event ever held on Flann O'Brien. This fact is attributable in no small part to Werner's expertise and dedication (it was he who came up with the conference's now iconic *100 Myles* title – in the on-site brewery of the Vienna University campus, as I fondly recall). The conference boasted papers and keynotes from 'Flanneurs' (Werner preferred the label 'Mylesians') hailing from three continents. Particularly befitting Werner's dedication to bringing together creative production and scholarly knowledge, the programme included a seemingly endless line-up of artists, authors, performers, and filmmakers. The conference resulted in the publication of *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies* with Cork UP, a prestige collection of essays that reflected the high standard of papers and critical debate at the event, and which Ruben Borg and I had the pleasure of co-

1 Werner Huber, 'Flann O'Brien and the Language of the Grotesque,' in Birgit Bramsback and Martin Croghan (eds.), *Anglo-Irish and Irish Literature: Aspects of Language and Culture*. Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1988. 123-30.

editing with Werner (as his former student, it was a relief to see his infamously scrupulous editorial skills turned on other people's writing, for a change). The collection was listed in The Irish Times top 10 non-fiction books of 2014.

In the conference's aftermath, Werner generously opened up the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies as a home for the burgeoning International Flann O'Brien Society, where it is still based six years later. As the society developed, Werner served tirelessly on the editorial board of *The Parish Review* (he got an endless kick out of the journal's title), always ready to provide not only his expertise and feedback, but also his time and support. It seemed like every time I walked into his office, he had uncovered a recording, a programme, or a letter from his Flann archives that cast new light on some issue being discussed in the journal.

The last talk I saw Werner give, when I chaired his Flann O'Brien panel at the 2015 Palermo EFACIS conference, was titled "Monty Python in the Viennese Woods': Flann O'Brien in Austria." The paper discussed Kurt Palm's bizarre, yet fascinating German-language cult Austrian film adaptation of O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*; a personal favourite of Werner's. It seemed a fitting, if small tribute to his memory, then, that the 2017 International Flann O'Brien Society conference should dedicate an evening of its programme to The Werner Huber Memorial Screening of the film at the packed-out Mozartkino Salzburg (generously supported by EFACIS), followed by a Q&A with the director Palm.

Like the many, many people whose lives were touched by his work and his company, we are extremely saddened by Werner's passing, but proud to have known him and his inexhaustible generosity, without which Flann studies would be a poorer thing, and The International Flann O'Brien Society and *The Parish Review* journal an impossibility.

Paul Fagan, Co-Founder and President
of the International Flann O'Brien Society

TO A FRIEND

Seán Crosson

I feel sad but honoured to contribute to this volume of Irish Studies in Europe in memory of Werner Huber. My contribution is based on a paper presented on a panel with Professor Werner Huber given at the Transatlantic Connections conference organized by Drew University, New Jersey, in association with the Institute of Study Abroad Ireland, in Bundoran in January 2014. During that time I was Visiting Professor in Irish cultural Studies at the University of Vienna, four of the most memorable months in my life to date. My time there (and in Bundoran) would not have happened without Werner's extraordinary generosity and friendship. Typical of Werner, the Bundoran conference was entirely atypical of Irish Studies academic events: it featured panels on surfing, food, and beer as well as the more established academic areas of literature and film. My own participation came further to Werner's invitation to join him at an event that reflected his own richly interdisciplinary interest in Irish Studies, an interest that was both inspirational and informing for myself. Our visit to Bundoran was rather circuitous; it was from Vienna via a trip to the West End in London to watch the musical adaptation of Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments*. As luck would have it, we barely made it in time for the show. Despite arriving over two hours in advance into Heathrow, problems on the London underground led to the closure of several lines and at one point it seemed we'd both be crushed to death as crowds of thousands arrived simultaneously at one tube station. Werner, of course, was unflappable as ever and seemed more amused than anything by it all.

Bundoran is about as far in Ireland from London in terms of both geography and social life as one could imagine. Werner's paper there, on one of his favourite topics – the films of Martin McDonagh and John Michael McDonagh – offered as ever an insightful and highly entertaining overview, so much so that he received an award on the final night for the best paper delivered. I have very fond memories of us walking along the stunning coastline of Bundoran discussing aspects of Irish film, theatre and sport (all great interests of Werner) conversations that continued throughout my time in Vienna. In a way these conversations never ended, despite Werner's passing. They live on in my own work but also in the research of so many fellow academics and students whose lives were touched by the work and extraordinary person of Werner Huber.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

Seán Crosson, Chair of EFACIS