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Introduction

This collection presents thirteen articles characterized by diversity, multiple analyses from different perspectives, both in the literary field and in the historical one. It is, therefore, a miscellaneous collection that, however, offers common aspects, mainly derived from the application of cultural studies, postcolonial perspectives and other theoretical currents to literature. Several countries are represented in the studies compiled in this special issue of *Océánide*. From Australia to the United States, taking in Spain and, in particular, Galicia. Most of the contributions included in this book, however, are devoted to Ireland and most, although not all, to the contemporary literature of this country.

When we analyse Ireland's impressive contribution to global culture, we often think of what happened just over a hundred years ago, of the great achievements of the Irish Revival. And we think about the political events that changed the country forever, also one century ago. However, the culture and history of Ireland cannot be understood only through such liminal moments of history, as is often done in a simplifying way, but thanks to a powerful substrate that comes to the present from ancient texts. Despite the characteristics of the history of Ireland, namely colonialism, that progressively erased its own identity and language, despite dramatic episodes such as the Great Famine, which resulted in social collapse and mass emigration (which also transformed the country forever), it is necessary to emphasize, as Declan Kiberd points out, "the extraordinary capacity of Irish society to assimilate new elements through all its major phases" (1996, 1).

With this perspective of more than one hundred years, which celebrates the importance of the insurrection of 1916 and the beginning of a new idea of Ireland, the achievements of contemporary Ireland seem to be numerous, despite the dramatic scenario of the conflicts in the north and the problems derived from decolonization. The terrible events of the twentieth century and the globality of world conflicts complicated Ireland's arrival into modern times, after long periods of darkness, but that enterprise of the intellectual elites of the Irish Renaissance deserves to be remembered today as an extraordinary achievement, able as it was to link the present and the past, especially from the artistic and cultural point of view. It was an enterprise that, supported by giants like Yeats, recovered the meaning of Irish identity in very diverse fields, reinforced the concept of community and, above all, struggled to develop individual freedoms. However, the most extraordinary thing about the movement was its ability to combine society and culture, art and domestic life, promoting the national theatre as the best way to establish links between art and people. The foundation of a National Theatre proved a real success, despite triggering more than one protest, revealing the deep divide between the new and the old. But it also explained, fundamentally through the Abbey Theatre, the profound transformations of Ireland at that time.

One hundred years later, the construction of contemporary Ireland must be celebrated and valued in its proper measure. As Kiberd points out in his seminal book, *Inventing Ireland*, published almost twenty-five years ago, that extraordinary cultural effort that brought such different intellectuals and artists into contact

... achieved nothing less than a renovation of Irish consciousness and a new understanding of politics, economics, philosophy, sport, language and culture in its widest sense. It was the grand destiny of Yeats's generation to make Ireland once again interesting to the Irish, after centuries of enforced provincialism following the collapse of the Gaelic Order in 1601. No generation before or since lived with such conscious national intensity or left such an inspiring legacy. (3)

For those of us who are dedicated, in one way or another, to the study of contemporary literature, Ireland is one of the most fascinating examples of how culture and art can transform a country. Not only because Ireland has been awarded four Nobel prizes for literature so far, but because art, and particularly poetry, has contributed extraordinarily to the inspiration of the entire community. As Yeats said, referring to the anticipated illumination that culture offers, "the arts lie dreaming of what is to come." The influence of arts and artists in the development of history is one of the elements that characterize the essays included in this collection. This not only happened at the dawn of the 20th century in Ireland, but has happened time and time again in the past. The poet's ancient role as the authority of the tribe extends to modern times, in which we are seeking a lucid and critical approach to reality. In Ireland, the evolution of literature, at least since the Irish Revival, has allowed a direct observation on the evolution of historical events, sometimes in a bitter way, as in the Troubles period. A country in an inspiring process of reinvention could not ignore the participation of its extraordinary plethora of writers in the reconstruction of national memory. Today, the 'standing army of Irish poets' referred to by Patrick Kavanagh is still very much present in Irish cultural life. One hundred years after the great reinvention of Ireland, literature is still essential in order to understand the evolution of this country, also in these uncertain times of the 21st century.

The decisive relationship between literature and history is reflected, for example, in trauma and conflict studies. In this collection, some articles develop this theme. Laura Lojo analyses, through two short stories published in 2014, the concepts of silence and amnesia as a result of the participation of Irish soldiers in the Great War. According to the author, it is necessary to understand the traumatic process suffered by many families, especially the younger generations that make up, a hundred years later, a new sense of community based on past experiences.

Alberto Lázaro's essay also deals with the trauma caused by war conflicts and their international connections, in this case during the Spanish Civil War. Lázaro, through the war reportages of two Irish writers who analysed the conflict from opposite sides, Peadar O'Donnell and Eoin O'Duffy, studies the different perspectives of the Spanish Civil War, the reflection of the war from confronted ideas, and analyses the value of fiction and truth in a context of this nature.

Music and vernacular language are also represented as two very relevant topics in this collection of articles. On the one hand, Sánchez Rei compares the situation of Ireland and Galicia in the first third of the twentieth century from the linguistic and musical point of view. Cultural and artistic relations between Galicia and Ireland, as well as the remarkable similarities

in folklore and in the artistic tradition of both territories, have been the object of preferential study by some researchers and institutions, namely the University Institute of Irish Studies Amergin, of the University da Coruña, and Professor Antonio Raúl de Toro. Sánchez Rei, from these consolidated links between the two communities, which have been reinforced through common projects in recent years, studies the similarities between Irish and Galician musical manifestations, and also the not so well known connections between both vernacular languages. Galician and Irish links had in the famous Xeración Nós, about to celebrate its centenary, one of their most enthusiastic defenders.

Also in the musical field, Eduardo Barros and María Bobadilla offer an interesting approach, within the parameters of Cultural studies, to the Northern Irish musician (singer and song writer) Van Morrison, and, in particular, to the romanticized component of the representation of gypsyism in his songs, considering the resignification of transit spaces and their characteristics as a nomadic people.

Ciarán Dawson elaborates in his article on the Irish Gaelic literary tradition, which at the end of the 19th century was in danger of extinction. It is probably the oldest vernacular tradition in Western Europe. Through the figure of Peadar Ó Gealacháin, Dawson traces the map of how that invaluable literary tradition was preserved, thanks to the effort of a small group of copyists or scribes who decided to collect and put ink on paper poems and texts belonging to the cultural heritage in Irish language.

María Jesús Lorenzo Modia and Begoña Lasa analyse in their article the reflection of New Women at the end of the 19th century through two periodicals, *The Irish Times* and *The Weekly Irish Times*, in the light of the so-called New Journalism. This essay, inscribed in what is known as women's studies, includes a comparison between the English and Irish publications of the time, a study of the Irish politics of the moment and an analysis of the situation and the perception of the women of that time, in the periodical media mentioned above.

As regards the strictly literary landscape, this collection includes several articles on considerably recent aspects of Irish literature, and also some look at the classics. Among the latter, José-Miguel Alonso-Giráldez explores Joyce's work, especially *Ulysses*, in the light of the latest cognitive theories. The connection between mind, body and medium is presented as the fundamental scheme to understand the reasons why language builds reality in Joyce through emotional connections, perceptions, intuitions, sketches and various cognitive events.

Several essays in this collection are devoted to contemporary Irish literature. In his work, José Manuel Estévez-Saá analyses the last two novels published by Edna O'Brien, *The Little Red Chairs* (2015) and *Girl* (2019). As the author points out, O'Brien has been a reference in Irish literature during the recent decades, at least since the 1960s. On this occasion, the two critically acclaimed novels address problems and conflicts of our time, such as the Balkan war and the siege of Sarajevo or the kidnapping of more than two hundred schoolchildren by the Boko Haram group. O'Brien had a first-hand experience of the Nigerian conflict and interviewed many of the victims of this tragic episode.

Margarita Estévez Saá also explores the impact of the novels written by women in contemporary Irish literature. In the author's

words, the joint study of these three young authors and their three novels, very recently published, (*A Line Made by Walking*, by Sara Baume, *Milkman*, by Anna Burns and *m for mammy*, by Eleanor O'Reilly) allows understand the enormous rise of women's literature in Ireland. A literary boom that also takes place, perhaps in greater proportions, in poetry. In these three novels, the protagonists show their struggle against society and their circumstances in different scenarios, such as the family, nature or politics. In this way, these three authors follow the productive path, both for the freshness of the themes and for the novelty of the literary technique, of other authors of recent generations who have been unanimously acclaimed, such as Eimear McBride (*A girl is a Half formed thing*), among others.

The analysis of the Irish novel in this collection also encompasses the Gothic genre, very productive since at least 1771, as David Clark demonstrates in his article. In that year *The History of Lady Barton*, by Elizabeth Griffin, was published, and that novel can be considered the starting point of Gothic literature in Ireland, which reached its climax in the romantic period with Sheridan Lefanu. His influence, Clark notes, has been of great importance for all authors of the genre, notably in the contemporary novelist John Connolly, who combines the supernatural and the fantastic, the detective novel (with his character, Charlie Parker) and dark and disturbing atmospheres.

Manuela Palacios and María Xesús Nogueira elaborate in their article, taking advantage of the cultural links and historical similarities we have mentioned between Galicia and Ireland, on the poetry of Mary O'Malley and Marga do Val. The study aims to demonstrate the deep historical roots that relate both poets to migration, a relevant fact in both Galicia and Ireland, and that can be found significantly grafted to the biographies of both writers.

José Antonio Gurpegui also addresses the question of migration and its different perspectives in his article, in which he compares the migration to the United States of both Irish and Mexican communities. Although it has traditionally been considered that these were two very different migratory experiences, Gurpegui describes the similarities that an empirical study of both exoduses reveals, beginning with the time they occurred, practically coincidental, and the historical background of both communities (they were colonies of two European countries governed by monarchical systems).

Finally, Socorro Suárez analyses the literary work of two authors separated by three generations. In this case, the comparison is established between the Australian Gail Jones and Virginia Woolf, the great representative of English modernism and literary experimentalism. Suárez concludes that it is necessary to turn life into a story to feel it as something projected into the future, "because no life story becomes history till it is rendered into written language", she says, while the authors must confront their own past and subvert the truths and the norms accepted by their culture. The thirteen articles that make up this collection are completed with the literary contributions of three contemporary authors, a Galician writer (Suso de Toro) and two Irish poets (Paddy Bushe and Bernard O'Donoghue).

Works Cited

Declan Kiberd. 1996. *Inventing Ireland*. London: Vintage.