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Irish Literature in Transition, 1700-1780 edited by Moyra Haslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, volume I. xv + 409 pages. No price given.
Irish Literature in Transition, 1780-1830 edited by Claire Connolly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, volume II. xvi + 439 pages. No price given.
Irish Literature in Transition, 1830-1880 edited by Matthew Campbell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, volume III. xiv + 326 pages. No price given.
Irish Literature in Transition, 1880-1940 edited by Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, volume IV. xv + 381 pages. No price given.
Irish Literature in Transition, 1940-1980 edited by Eve Patten. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, volume V. xv + 391 pages. No price given.
Irish Literature in Transition, 1980-2020 edited by Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, volume VI. xix + 429 pages. No price given.

No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too.

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin, 1964), p.211.

And do not call it fixity / where past and future are gathered.

T.S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', *Four Quartets* (London: Faber, 1972), ll. 64-5.

Irish Literature in Transition is a significant intervention in Irish scholarship and criticism. It will be seen as a landmark in literary history, and also makes a lead contribution to current reorientations in Irish Studies more broadly. Companions, handbooks, and short introductions continue to appear, but a project of this extent and ambition is unusual. The series opens wider prospects for its eventual successors fully to address the ways Irish texts and performances of various kinds speak from heterogeneous sites of empowerment and disempowerment. Conceived on an unusually large scale, at a time when specialization and narrow focus are the norm, *ILT* does important work in eliciting and freshly characterising Irish literature over more than three centuries.

The body of literary material has in recent decades grown in many directions. Archives holding important, half-buried earlier writing have been opened and the invaluable resource of digitisation has made their holdings widely available, sometimes modifying received

interpretations of familiar texts. *ILT* draws productively on scholarship in contiguous fields including book and periodical history and media, film and technology studies. Meanwhile, creative works in many media proliferate. The integration of Irish work in recent decades into international, even global, literary culture has combined with increasing diversity to displace older assumptions about the stability and the boundaries of the 'high' literary canon. *ILT* consistently broadens its focus beyond such prestige texts and élite milieus in different periods, through genre fiction, middlebrow, and popular works.

Like Irish literature itself, the series is 'more than one thing', as Woolf's character James says about the eponymous lighthouse when finally about to reach it. In fact, in a practical sense each volume is around twenty 'things', and many readers will digitally access these single chapters, treating them as stand-alone word-searchable essays. Others will, of course, avail of the new, confident, and authoritative account of its period offered by each volume. It is, however, useful to think about *ILT* as one work. While mentally taxing, this shows its distinctive character to best advantage and makes it possible to discern and reflect on themes and preoccupations threading through decades and centuries. A coherent project unified by a conscious design, it is also supple and resists uniformity. The Series Preface sets a poised and calm editorial tone. Combining different approaches, each volume joins in continuing critical discussion, engaging with varying viewpoints and methods. The reductionism of what one might call weaponized literary history is very largely avoided. Its assembly of editors and contributors is large, various, and rich, including several generations of outstanding scholars from many locations. Critics across the ideological spectrum have contributed. To form a single general impression of so wide a range, both temporal and spatial, of material, is almost impossible; but certain main strands emerge nevertheless. I follow some of these below.

The proposition that Irish literature has been constantly in transition since 1700 is initially startling, even disconcerting. Eve Patten describes literature as 'a contingent play

above the bedrock of political formations': to take transition as the governing concept is to reconceive Irish literature as a moving target, a process of constant becoming rather than an embodiment of transcendence.[1] This in turn unsettles those notions of stable origins and identities which in turn have played such a major role in Ireland's sense of itself. The Preface says the series 'tracks patterns of transmission and transformation': that is, it maintains a diachronic 'feel' for continuance over the long span of Irish literature, while allowing scope synchronically for change as traced volume by volume by expert contributors. Older literary histories, and newer influential anthologies, assumed – and were credited with – authoritative knowledge of a largely unchanging canon. Yet the received opinions of any era can appear mistaken in the eyes of subsequent readers. *Ulysses*, now seen as a pinnacle of world literature, was negatively received for decades after 1922. Accordingly, the series does not merely present a static assembly of given works: a premise is that the literary past is subject to altering meanings in a shifting present. For Fiona Stafford, Ireland's divisive history means that 'as Yeats found in 1916, attempts to read the writings of previous ages are inevitably determined by the perspective of the reader and by what is happening in the present' (II).

Lasting literature often has a slow coming into being; *ILT* is respectful of those protracted processes of cultural change and development within which, despite momentous social, political and economic events, deeply founded structures of meaning persist. Some of these can, and in many Irish literary texts do, seem almost grounded in the physical milieu. Cóilín Parsons' fine chapter on the Ordnance Survey and its afterlives (III) powerfully develops this insight, which is arguably central to the Irish imaginary. Even amid violent and cataclysmic histories there are few transitions which altogether wipe away the past of a culture. 'No history', Eduardo Galeano wrote, 'is mute… human history refuses to shut its mouth. Despite deafness and ignorance, the time that was continues to tick inside the time that is.'[2] The work of memory, recently much examined in Irish Studies, is now widely understood as a process

which, paradoxically and in partly-occluded ways, both preserves things and alters them. *ILT* finds in Irish literature the rhythm of a recursus by which early texts of world-historical significance – legendary, poetic, and epic – are revisited and retrieved, to inform Ireland's modern literature. This occurs despite the convulsions of language loss and harsh conflict, and is a particular though not exclusive feature of the revival period. This partial survival of such ancient immaterial things becomes a vital motif, recurring during the three centuries this series addresses: older worlds infusing the now. The 1700 starting-point enables a more integrated account of the island's complex and shifting literary expressions and of the mutual relations of Irish and English over the whole arc, before subsequent surges of Anglicisation overwhelmed the contexts sustaining Irish-language literature. I explore later in this review the series' discussion of these expressions and relations.

ILT consistently honours contemporary standpoints, however. We can only ever read literature *as* literature from where we are: tracing the tradition returns us to our present moment, reframed. The movement is two-way, following the literature itself. In the large sweep of the project, retrospective readings counterbalance, redress, and address potential future engagements with these texts. Vol. I's final section, 'Retrospective Readings', performs such a forward-and-back return and re-use of prominent texts. Lesa Ní Mhunghaile's 'Re-Imagining Feminist Protest' considers 'gender, colonial and cultural politics, voice/performance and print' in contemporary translations of *The Midnight Court* and *The Lament for Art O'Leary*. James Ward defines Eavan Boland's and Thomas Keneally's reworkings of Goldsmith and Farquhar as 'counter-memorial' resistance to the colonial modernity disseminated in the Irish eighteenth century. In Vol. II's last section, 'Futures', Murray Pittock traces, not without irony, the long-term role of explicitly nationalist 'cyclical history' past W.B. Yeats right up to Eamon de Valera's 1966 'living revenant' manifestation opening the Garden of Remembrance.

'Literature', Claire Connolly and Marjorie Howes say, is 'often called upon to step in and tell the story of Ireland.'[3] *ILT* refuses this summons, not only because there are more stories than one, but because the series refuses to have literature conscripted instrumentally into other narratives to which it is rendered subsidiary and merely illustrative. No mere 'amanuensis of political and social change' (in Rebecca Barr's phrase), it achieves coherence in its own right as a work of the imagination.[4] One might say that the series thereby *re*-historicizes Irish literature: it rinses off, so to speak, the ideological patina which held it together as a unified assembly exhibiting a single national story. Connolly's own Vol. II, building on her distinguished prior work on Irish Romanticism, is elegant and wide-ranging, integrating European and transatlantic perspectives into the emerging Irish cultural identity stimulated by the discourse of Celticism.

ILT breaks with Irish history's conventional periodization, resisting the magnetism of momentous dates. Instead it follows the varying temporal relationships within the material itself, including 'simultaneity, time lag, and anticipation'. This move signals its divergence not merely from the customary sequence, but from mainstream Irish history-writing itself. The dominant Irish historiography was traditionally positivist, even Rankean, conservative, and patriarchal, narrowly focused on political, military and constitutional matters, and close to the project of the nation-state. With distinguished exceptions, until recently it hardly engaged with later-twentieth-century international historiography, largely ignoring women's, vernacular, and other non-official narratives. Guy Beiner, in his ground-breaking *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (2007), recalls how historians (proper) shunned the folklore archives he was researching: 'I cannot recall meeting other historians. They were all too busy studying History' (p.*xi*). I find *ILT*'s own position informed by a more spacious philosophy of history akin to those of Hayden White and Fernand Braudel, sharing epistemologically broader approaches, including the recognition of history-writing as a

narrative, not a purportedly value-free assembly of facts and dates. ‘History-writing is also writing’, says Matthew Campbell, slightly mischievously. Especially relevant is Braudel’s celebrated positing of three kinds of historical time: the history of events, i.e. militarily or politically significant acts, focused on élite individuals; cyclic or conjunctural time, i.e. many-faceted, more gradual and sometimes recurrent social and economic developments; and the best-known, the *longue durée*, a long-lasting, slowly altering perspective, registering quasi-immemorial social patterns and persistences as well as weather, terrain, and other material conditions. We might see *ILT*’s structuring interest in recurrences and retrospects as combining Braudel’s second and third kinds of historical time, cyclicity with duration.

Also playing a notable role in the series is the structuralist view that institutions, systems and networks precede and enable works and writers, not the reverse. This defamiliarizes and even wrong-foots conventional ideas about literature, unsettling popular perceptions of writers as soaring triumphantly free of their contexts. Significantly underpinning Parsons’ Ordnance Survey chapter mentioned above, this approach is eloquently advanced by Gerry Smyth’s analysis of literary criticism during the Revival. Literature is understood as emerging from a ‘discursive and an institutional context’: that is, it is produced and received within a community and, by extension, a civilization. This coincides with Braudel’s disavowal of ‘heroic’ or élite, biographies. Accordingly, rather than focusing on major figures (‘Great Men’) as key nodes of literary history, the series in general emphasizes ground as much as figure, where famous writers are figures and the ground is the tradition generating them (including the foundations they rebel against). Discussing the Abbey and the Gate theatres, Paige Reynolds finds that modernism, ‘understood as… composed of solitary talents creating autonomous works’, was ‘in fact composed of networks, both abstract and real’ (IV). Connolly, meanwhile, entitles her section on individual writers ‘Reputations’. *ILT,* in other words,

approaches prominent figures by situating them in their contexts, practising historicism in the best sense**.**

I've noted the rejection by the series of historiography's 'political rather than aesthetic or intellectual demarcations', in Joep Leerssen's words. It also disavows the privileging of postcolonialism as *the* explanatory model of Irish literary history. According to Howes, the *ILT* moves away from 'scholarship dominated by postcolonial models' and draws on a 'dense range' of other contemporary scholarship. But neither is it classifiable as revisionist. It refuses to fit either of these categories whose agon bisected the field in the 1990s: 'revisionary' is a better description. The series' project is to frame and examine the literary as its own distinct mode and trace how it speaks of Irish culture and civilization with its multiple voices and is addressed to changing interpretative communities. Questions of colonial power and disempowerment and their refraction in literature are posed – the series 'sufficiently registers the colonial character of the country', as reviewer Patrick O'Malley has observed – and these questions are complicated in subtle and discerning analyses of texts in all periods.[5] The editors' own perspectives are various, and formed in part by the periods they address: Patten argues that while in 1980 the literary canon was still 'blighted by repressions and exclusions', since the mid-1990s a relaxing of 'predominantly postcolonial imperatives' has allowed a freer revisiting of the literature predating the 1969 outbreak of the Troubles. *ILT* shows how literature often eludes seeming ideological givens in respect of identity and nation. The tradition it discloses is plural and hybrid, sometimes contesting colonial representations and sometimes enlisted in them. For James Ward, some eighteenth-century Irish writing 'played a concrete and dynamic part in giving meaning and value to colonial modernity and assisting its global spread' (I). Discussing the construction of the child in mid-eighteenth-century fiction, however, Clíona Ó Gallchoir finds complex negotiations of mixed ethnicity, with rogue narratives countering stereotypes of Catholics as violent and ineducable (I). What this series

demonstrates conclusively is that, already in the 1700-1780 period, the category of 'Irishness' is continually complicated, nuanced, and questioned by counter-currents of genre, ethnicity, and allegiance (itself sometimes fluid).

Irish and English literature are sometimes close, even intertwined, and sometimes markedly divergent: as Stafford wryly notes, 1798 is not remembered in Dublin for the appearance of *Lyrical Ballads.* Nevertheless, into the mid-twentieth century an insouciantly colonial English literary history commonly subsumed and thereby denatured Irish literature, a practice eventually disrupted by the formation of the Irish literary canon, as Shaun Richards shows (V). US interventions, notably by Richard Ellmann, played a role in this. Ronan McDonald's excellent 'Irish Studies and Its Discontents' gives an overarching account of the evolution after 1980 of the larger discipline, in which literary studies partook (VI).The Irish literary record, of course, shows the frequent inescapability for writers of participation in British culture, but this is a complex, nuanced and always altering business. For Joseph Valente, 'Irishness' is forged historically in an ineluctable if impossible relation to 'Britishness', emerging as 'an identity that is 'not one' or 'not quite'.[6] Three fine authoritative chapters in the series allow us to explore changing performances of this equivocal identity. The challenges posed by addressing audiences on the other island were already familiar in the age of Berkeley, as Ian Campbell Ross's discussion of writing and Irish identity, including its stage-Irish performances, shows (I). This resonates with Richards' account of subsequent versions and their deft adjustments according to milieu, by Boucicault's Dublin, New York, and London companies (III); while a virtuoso essay by Nicholas Grene captures the 1890s 'London Irish' theatre of Oscar Wilde, G.B. Shaw, and Yeats, even as in Ireland the Revival gathered strength, and what Gerry Smyth calls the 'unstable yet compelling metanarrative' of national identity was gaining purchase over others (IV). In the nineteenth century far-flung mass migration post-Famine meant more and more Irish people lived elsewhere. Campbell's strong Vol. III, on

Victorian Ireland, is particularly effective in showing how diasporic and transnational geographies of writing developed and Irish literature circulated and recirculated in networks extending beyond either island. Many Irish became 'part and not part' of empire, a category which 'must always be considered ironically', as Jim Shanahan says in his chapter 'Imperial Minds', which stands out for its exploration of the resulting complex, often conflicted, writing. In another direction, the anxiously reactionary character of nineteenth-century Irish-American literature is ably charted by Peter O'Neill (III); in a piquant reversal and indication of the range of the series, Ellen McWilliams finds strong resistance to this ideological conformity in women's writing from the 1950s to the 1980s (V).

Tackling the 1880-1940 period and trying 'to get out from under' the vast array of criticism *and* literature' surrounding both the Revival and Irish modernism, Howes' Vol. IV is a tour de force. It shows extraordinary depth and skill in synthesizing the rich findings of a formidable range of recent scholarship and offering an intellectual framework to organize them. Faced with the challenge of so many world-historical writers, she draws on *ILT*'s distinctive focus on contexts and also encourages unusual, ostensibly tangential perspectives on major figures. One outcome is Valente's brilliant 'Ageing Yeats: From Fascism to Disability', a transformative re-envisioning of Yeats's thought. Bent on diversifying and nuancing the reception of the literature of this period, Howes disrupts the orthodox hierarchy of a single Irish modernism distinguished by formal innovation from an allegedly stultifying naturalism. In a significant and original contribution, Mark Quigley dynamically re-imagines the forms of realism forged post-Independence by Liam O'Flaherty, Seán O'Faolain, Kate O'Brien and Elizabeth Bowen. In its turn, Patten's succeeding volume draws on rich recent research, including Clair Wills' important re visionary approach to neutrality, to dismiss earlier perceptions of a culture imagined as stagnant, in-turned and provincial, temporally a mere 'corridor' between 1940 and the late-1970s acceleration of the Troubles, a perspective that has

blurred visibility of Ireland's actual cultural engagements. Taking Vols. IV and V together, we find a stimulating openness to developing ways of writing modernity, decade by decade, and a continued recuperation of women writers who had been previously ignored or critically misconceived.

Irish literary institutions have for long exhibited a masculinism parallel and related to that of Irish historiography. Observing how women's work still seems subject to 'cycles of retrieval and forgetting', the Series Preface strikes the note of the series as a whole, whose own move towards gender rebalancing is shown in its majority of women volume editors. The proportion of women contributors varies: two volumes feature more women, while most have close to equal numbers. Women authors' place in the canon is much more prominently acknowledged than has until very recently happened in literary-institutional contexts. Margaret Kelleher offers instances of flagrant gender inequity in the funding and valuing of contemporary Irish literature, crisply dismantling what Anne Enright calls the 'excellence argument' used to justify this (VI); in a similar vein James Moran details the vigorous 2015-16 'Waking the Feminists' protest about exclusion of women in Abbey Theatre programming. The volumes at large are rich in chapters integrating twenty-first-century scholarship and feminist perspectives to break new ground. A handful of examples: Jane Moore challenges received views of Thomas Moore with a stylish and accomplished demonstration that he genders the emotional subject as feminine (II). In Vol. IV, Tina O'Toole's deft account of the New Woman writer George Egerton decisively expands the canon, exploring gender and national affiliation, disability and class inequities. Karen Steele's acutely-judged comparative discussion of post-revolutionary autobiography, both women's and men's, is equally illuminating. Turning to the contemporary, however, while Sarah Townsend is excellent on the uses of romance in contemporary Irish fiction, Vol. VI might have explored the literary phenomenon of Irish women's bestsellers (Maeve Binchy, Marian Keyes). Examining how the

literary system operates can expose exclusions and occlusions of the importance or even the existence of writers designated marginal: women, LGBTQ+ people, ethnic others. Anne Mulhall addresses such denials of visibility to emerging migrant writers of colour by the literary establishment (VI). Her concluding hope that 'we' may learn to listen to 'the way they are writing', rather than waiting for 'them to write the way we are used to reading', radically challenges the alleged separability of aesthetic value from art's role as social capital (in Bourdieu's phrase). This faintly echoes Yeats's dilemma between the political importance and aesthetic mediocrity of the *Nation* poets, but from the opposite angle.

The series' attention to LGBTQ+ perspectives might have been fuller. Vol. I is alone in offering a four-chapter 'Gender and Sexuality' section, thus treating both as categories in literature warranting specific discussion, and as related. Declan Kavanagh's fine piece on queering eighteenth-century Irish writing combines learned and entertaining textual analysis with a master-class on thinking about LGBTQ+ literary representation, looking both to then and now. But it stands rather solitary, though there are fleeting queer insights elsewhere, for instance David Wheatley's observations about homoeroticism in Samuel Beckett and the 'unignorably sexual frisson' in the explicitly labelled 'queer' bed-sharing scene of *The Third Policeman*. Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds' Vol. VI introduction emphasizes the ideological and social significance of queer and gender topics and the politics of their visibility in contemporary writing and activism. Several chapters briefly mention LGBTQ writing, however a more focused approach might have yielded benefits. Patricia Kennon's chapter on young adult and children's literature is exceptional in tracking the emergence in such texts of thematics and plotlines making visible sexual and other forms of diversity, as are Rióna Ní Fhrighil's perceptive observations on the gay writers Micheál Ó Conghaile and Cathal Ó Searcaigh.

Looking diachronically, *ILT* offers a virtual sub-series of nine chapters on Irish-language material, tracing the altering contexts of its transmission, its interactions with Anglophone writing, and its own condition right up to the current paradoxical combination of flourishing and decline, with the emergence of creative bilingual approaches amid dwindling numbers of Gaeltacht speakers. *ILT*'s underlying direction throughout is towards treating Irish literature in either or both languages as one cultural sphere, however reliant on forms of asymmetrical mediation. This furthers the dissolution of the previous hard border between the two Irish literatures. Moyra Haslett's brilliant, exemplary Vol. I energetically reinscribes eighteenth-century Ireland as one society, albeit riven with conflicts and stark contrasts. Haslett recalls the signal unifying moment of the 1986 foundation of the Eighteenth-Century Ireland Society, with its bilingual journal dedicated to scholarship in the two languages. She also widens scholarly focus well beyond élite figures and writings, forthrightly replacing the notion of 'the Anglo-Irish' with broader generic and other perspectives. The Irish Anglophone sphere was not, so to speak, watertight. Irish novels, as Anne Markey shows, reveal significant knowledge by Protestant élite authors of the culture, traditions, and history of the Irish-speaking majority, often via antiquarian interests that continued to play vital roles up to the Revival. Anglophone literature had still not quite displaced writing in Irish by the 1820s, when Thomas Crofton Croker still understood 'Irish literature' to mean 'literature in Irish'. Gregory Schirmer's fine essay on the pivotal Cork poet Jeremiah Callanan pinpoints the 'dual poetic space' Callanan knew he occupied, in his 'sensitivity to the cultural instability and uncertainty of the historical moment' (II).

While the Famine devastated Irish-speaking districts, Nicholas Wolf's Vol. III account of continuing transmission of Irish texts in the Victorian period alters older received narratives of unbroken decline. During the Revival, internal tensions between 'antiquarian' & 'folkish' versions of Irishness (in Leerssen's phrase), and a persistent motif in the national movement,

the insistence on the rural as the only *echt* form of Irishness, are explored by Brian Ó Conchubhair (IV). The ultimate prescription of a rural vernacular idiom had far-reaching, partly negative, effects on twentieth-century Irish-language literature. Margaret Kelleher's research on school curricula indicates a related locked-fortress mentality from the 1940s to the 1970s, with hostility to modernity dominating Irish public culture. Educational authorities attempted to protect Irish as a vernacular by excluding recent and contemporary writing in English, including that by Irish writers. Meanwhile writers themselves showed entirely other mentalities, from the disenchanted to the satirical, often infused with anarchic humour from early Irish literature: witness Flann O'Brien's native-speaking piglets in *An Béal Bocht* and the bleak anomic narratives variously of Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Beckett. David Wheatley productively considers all three together as Absurdists (V). Ó Cadhain also figures in Máirín Nic Eoin's authoritative account of space and experiment in Irish-language fiction up to 1980. In Vol. VI, further exemplifying the field's critical-feminist turn, Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh and Rióna Ni Fhrighil contribute able and stimulating accounts of Irish-language literature's contemporary conditions and the role of mediation and translation respectively.

Turning finally to Vol. VI, the contemporary is so evidently in transition, and literary production since 1980 so extensive and heterogeneous, that they can be grasped only provisionally. Falci and Reynolds meet their challenging brief with energy, discernment, and effective organisation of the very extensive corpus of literature. The chapters maintain *ILT*'s contextual emphasis, while short codas are used to frame and pair six major writers; Edna O'Brien with Eimear McBride, Eavan Boland with Seamus Heaney, and Tom Murphy with Brian Friel. The editors rightly allow differences among contributors to play out; given the volatile character of some issues – aesthetic and ideological – and the animus evinced in some contributions, this is a judicious approach. More contestable is the introduction's suggestion that the relaxing of earlier repressive constraints renders writers freer: a neoliberal consensus

ostensibly offering wide choice may in reality be confining, combined with the now-inescapable branding and grooming of writers. There is more than one way of being unfree. Among the chapters most powerfully conveying the material conditions – affluence, recession, precarity – within which literature is now written is Sarah Townsend's supple pairing of crime-writer Tana French and literary novelist Anne Enright. Townsend takes French's and Enright's thematics just as seriously as each other in a sophisticated feminist revisiting of the generic and gendered hierarchies their work disturbs. The perhaps unavoidable foreshortening of periodization may have occasioned the regrettable near-omission of Thomas Kinsella, a poet of formidable achievement and distinctive urban, secularist vision whose long career from 1956 to the 2010s straddles *ILT*'s allotted periods. His work as translator, critic, and anthologist is mentioned piecemeal. But the poetry itself falls through the grating, all but his Bloody Sunday polemic 'A Butcher's Dozen' which Rosie Lavan discusses amid Troubles poetry (VI).

Irish work in several media now has visibility in international, even global, literary, film, and music production, not least as mass entertainment. Exploring Irish stars and blockbusters, Stephen Watt argues that these performances often do far more significant cultural work than older hierarchical distinctions between art and the culture industry allowed. An excellent example is *The Crying Game.* Furthermore, notable examples of amphibiousness between original and remediated versions abound: *Brooklyn*, *Room*, *Normal People.* Viewed from a more politicized angle, however, the pervasiveness of the market in turn elicits ironic forms of postmodernist reception which recognizes every cultural performance as an echo-chamber and where nothing is outside the representational field; this is well exemplified in James Moran's discussion of the 2016 Abbey *Plough and the Stars* as Debordian spectacle. Writers sceptically rehearsing this commodification of authenticity include Paul Muldoon and Sinéad Morrissey, as noted by Julia Obert and Stefanie Lehner respectively.

Lehner shows how Northern-set crime novels can invest the haunting past with an ethical force, chiming with Emilie Pine's identification of Irish culture's 'ethical turn' around 2010. An arresting chapter, team-edited by Pine and others, combines textual skills with digital methods to yield a revelatory reading of the 2009 Ryan Report on institutional child abuse, part of the constellation of Ireland's most painful and pressing inherited forms of systemic oppression. Also impressive is Christopher Langlois on violence, trauma and recovery in O'Brien's *The Red Chairs* (2015) and Patrick McCabe's *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998). Langlois explicitly resists Irish exceptionalism in showing that these texts take Irish history as not distinct from world history: O'Brien's Irish rape victim makes common cause in the world city of London with deracinated women from many places who are also surviving sexual oppression. In this respect Langlois moves beyond the familiar lines of Irish postcolonialism and approaches the global perspectives of decoloniality.

Taken all in all, *ILT* is a tour de force. As we have seen, the series establishes a secure yet flexible critical, historical, and scholarly position. By including the economical and trenchant Series Preface in each volume it makes manifest both its own conceptual reflectiveness in addressing the Irish literary in 2020 and the coherence of its temporally sweeping and spacious project. With confident authority and extraordinary breadth, it opens new spaces and directions for future thinking about Irish literature. Its impact on Irish literary studies and Irish Studies will be transformative.

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Notes

[1] 'Newstalk' interview with editors, Patrick Geoghegan "Talking History", 2 November 2020. https://www.newstalk.com/podcasts/highlights-from-talking-history/irish-literature-transition Accessed 26 June 2022.

[2] *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World.* Translated by Mark Fried. New York: St Martin's Press, 2011. Unpaginated.

[3] https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/charting-the-evolving-story-of-ireland-s-literary-history-1.4172541. Accessed 26 July 2022.

[4] Rebecca M. Barr, January 2021. https://romantic-circles.org/review-entries/types/29266. Accessed 26 July 2022.

[5] Review of vol. 2, *Review-19.* http://www.review19.org/view_doc.php?index=615. Accessed 2022.

[6] 'Self-Queering Ireland', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 36.1 (2012), 25-43. Quoted in Rebecca Barr, 'Masculinity and the Politics of Paternity' (I, p.265.)