



Irish Studies: Legacies and Futures

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In December 2024, a group of international Irish Studies scholars gathered in Cluj, Romania to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Babeş-Bolyai University's MA programme in Irish Studies – to this day the only postgraduate degree offering a cross-disciplinary perspective on Irish culture, literature and history at any Central/Eastern European university. When the MA programme, initially designed as *Irish Writing and Its Contexts*, was created in 1999, Ireland and Central/Eastern Europe were entering a decade of hopes for deeper European integration and democratisation in their regions and worldwide. It was a time that witnessed the rapid globalising of Irish Studies, backed by Celtic Tiger optimism. However, that decade would also bring in far-reaching changes that prompted, in our domains of knowledge and across the humanities, a thorough overhaul of ways of seeing and framing difference. At the start of the Cluj ISMA, global Irish Studies was dominated by postcolonial rehistoricising and recontextualising approaches pivoting on rigorous archival studies. Importantly, the early 2000s saw a definite decline in the understanding of literary culture as part of the anthropological program of "inventing Ireland", to quote the title of one of Declan Kiberd's seminal books that to this day underpins our discipline; a transition from culture understood as projecting a shared sense of identity and future, to "after Ireland" (to quote another title by Kiberd), that is, to an understanding of literature as operating in a planetary field, fully enmeshed with other forms and modes of imagining personhood, creaturely life and vulnerability.

Leggo, legare: as the Latin etymon of the first word in our title implies, "legacies" translates as chords binding future developments or meshing their potential unfoldings with that which the past bequeaths, in the sense of both an alignment with existing lines of research and an opening up of fields of inquiry towards future possibilities. In fact, in the quarter century since the Cluj ISMA started, literary and cultural studies – Irish Studies included – have shown a pervasive preoccupation with questions of ethics and biopolitics that cut across lines of gender, class, ethnicity, human and nonhuman geographies and habitats. Consequently, the curriculum taught today is informed by corporeal studies, trauma studies, new materialism(s), different posthumanisms, animal studies, and ecocriticism, whose investigations as a rule reveal the ontological and ethical tangle of literary phenomena with earthly life.

Irish culture has often been forced by history to experiment with modes of being, ways of transmission and aesthetic forms that widely deviated from established norms and genres, received notions of the status and social role of culture, and canonical aesthetics. Given the rapid, dramatic changes Ireland underwent since the millennium

turn, to the exceptionally progressive post-Celtic Tiger state, Irish culture is again among the “first respondents” to the multiple, intersectional crises affecting all earthlings. Irish culture’s public framing has similarly continued to change. An almost symbolic illustration could be the transition from the “greening” of the towering modernist self-exiles, whose names came to adorn Dublin’s contemporary architectural landmarks (the “James Joyce” and “Samuel Beckett” bridges across the Liffey designed by international star architect Santiago Calatrava) to the naming of an offshore patrol vessel participating in UN humanitarian missions after the latter: the LÉ Samuel Beckett, which rescued around 1,000 refugees in the Mediterranean before the pandemic.

Twenty-five years since the founding of ISMA in Cluj, we invite proposals for essays on any aspect that perspectivises these legacies anew, for a retrospective and prospective re-threading of our thoughts on Irish culture. We seek papers that explore Irish literature and its modes of questioning and provoking putative certainties, of subverting established norms and forms that corresponded to social, political and cultural power structures. Proposals related to these and any other aspects of the multifarious “tense future” ahead of us are also welcome.

Extended submission deadline of completed essays: March 1, 2026. Articles should adhere to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the journal’s stylesheet: <https://studia.reviste.ubbcluj.ro/index.php/subphilologia/article/view/6341/6042> and should be sent to the following addresses:

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Indicative bibliography:

Campbell, Matthew (ed.), *Irish Literature in Transition, 1830-1880* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Connolly, Claire (ed.), *Irish Literature in Transition, 1780-1830* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Ellmann, Maud, Siân White and Vicki Mahaffey (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Irish Modernism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

Fagan, Paul, John Greaney and Tamara Radak (eds.), *Irish Modernisms: Gaps, Conjectures, Possibilities* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

Falci, Eric and Paige Reynolds (eds.), *Irish Literature in Transition, 1980-2020* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

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