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# LEGACIES AND FUTURES

## Abstracts

**Robert-Giulian Andreescu (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

### **The Mechanisms of Translation as Relating to the Idea of an Irish Identity**

Within the literature on Irish cultural practices there is strong evidence to suggest that translation is and always has been a very important part of the country's literary scene. With a tradition dating back to the 9th century, translation is shown to have changed in methodology and mentality so as to fulfil roles that include, but are not limited to, source for native literary enrichment and cultural mediator. This presentation aims to argue for a more abstract, but just as essential role, that of negotiator of national, or cultural identity. Analysing the way specific approaches to translation: naturalising or more literal, as later defined by scholars such as Lawrence Venuti and Antoine Berman, were adopted, consciously or not, during different time periods and by translators with different ideologies and agendas, it is argued that what is translated, in what manner and from which national language to which, just as what is not translated, are essential parts of the evolution and search for an Irish identity. In the context of a culture that is shown to start out seeking enrichment in a way reminiscent to Goethe's idea of a 'Weltliteratur', it becomes essential to seek out the effects of British colonialism as manifested with a shift towards a desire to be heard and recognised as a distinct and valuable cultural identity.

**Bianka Balga (University of Pécs)**

### **Breaking the Cycle: Existential Fulfilment in Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* and Tom McCarthy's *Remainder***

This paper explores the different outcomes of the shared existential quests undertaken by the narrators of Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* and Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* while placing them both within the framework of the Beckettian hero archetype. Beckett's notion of habit as described in Proust is central to this analysis: a force manifested through continuous repetition that both eases and intensifies existential suffering. In *The Unnamable*, this repetition is expressed through the protagonist's relentless compulsion to speak, while in *Remainder*, it is embodied through obsessive re-enactments. Despite the apparent similarities between the unnamed narrators, their journeys conclude in different ways: while the narrator of *The Unnamable* fails to achieve a period of abandonment – a state in which habit is interrupted, therefore, experiencing true authenticity becomes possible –, the narrator of *Remainder* ultimately breaks his cycle of failure. This rare moment of success achieved by a Beckettian hero disrupts the typical trajectory of Beckettian narratives, offering a fresh perspective on existential fulfilment. By examining how Beckett's existential concerns are reinterpreted in McCarthy's novel, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how contemporary literature continues to engage with existential questions while embracing the change of traditional literary concepts.



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**Bianca-Anastasia Boier (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**Place, Identity and Ecology: An Ecocritical Analysis of Irish Place-Based Writing**

In contemplating literature's role, we are drawn to its power to guide us back toward a mindful awareness of our place within the world. This paper examines Irish place-writing through the lens of ecocriticism, arguing its multifaceted resonance on political and cultural importance in the literary sphere, as well as addressing Irish writing as both a retrospective and prospective means of raising awareness to contemporary global crises. Despite previous arguments that dismissed place-based writing as marginal and limited amongst other prolific literary genres, Irish writing had always concerned itself with the natural, surrounding landscape, constantly retracting its deep connections to past legacies that date back to the Celtic times. The premise of this paper stands in the argument that, in the contemporary literary sphere, ecocriticism frames Irish writing beyond mere aestheticism, framing it as a politically resonant and culturally significant genre that speaks directly to contemporary global concerns. If literature is a looking glass into the human condition and the purest form of accurate, human representation, it is crucial to find ways of understanding this timeless connection between humans and the integral component of what it means to be Irish - nature. The short stories and novel featured in this paper, by Claire Keegan, Anne Enright and Paul Murray, are extensive dwellings upon ecological explorations that concern themselves with raising awareness towards social and political injustice. By allowing the concept of “place” to thrive in Irish literature, the paper reveals how Irish place-based writings invite readers to retrospectively and prospectively examine the timeless relationship between place and the Irish identity, highlighting the role of literary narratives in shaping a more conscious and sustainable future.

**Stefania Burlica (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**“The strategy of the besieged”: Postwar Affects in Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy***

As objects of inquiry, the afflictions that Samuel Beckett inflicted upon his creatures translate as tolls of war, pestilence, and intense emotional and physical strain on their anthropomorphic figures. For Rick de Villiers, Molloy’s disposition links to the quintessential Beckettian ‘agenda’ of acknowledging and defending the humiliation inherent in the human experience of weakness. In league with de Villiers’ book, Erika Mihálycsa’s study of his correspondence casts Beckett as an uncompromising “defender of wretchedness”, whose words and decisions bear direct relevance on his representations of humanity. To elaborate Beckett’s writing of the low and the weak as a multifarious manifestation of war-torn aesthetics, this paper treats the first novel of the “trilogy” as the testing ground for new strategies of recuperating destruction. It grapples with the sort of “negativity” that has been associated with the writer’s signature “darkness” and the “malaise” haunting his “gallery of moribunds”. By forefronting the negative in Molloy, this paper attempts to elude the impulse of interpreting the writing’s micro-victories in the face of disaster as a convoluted way of reaffirming the dignity of the wounded body. Instead of reframing lowliness, scarcity and physical impotence as markers of human and artistic integrity, I intend to examine the methods by which the impasse and the affective flatness experienced in times of belligerence are not only preserved in Molloy but assiduously cultivated to accommodate affect-specific responses to the massive upheaval that Europe witnessed.

**Teodora Crisan (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**The Irish cultural heritage as seen through the lenses that recorded *The Banshees of Inisherin***

The paper will investigate the prominent Irish elements that resonate in the movie such as: Irish Folklore and Mythology (Ó hÓgáin, Dáithí. (2006). *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopaedia of Myth, Legend, and Romance*. Boydell Press), Irish Civil war and Cultural History (Kiberd, Declan. (1995). *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. Harvard University Press with a side note on Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*), some elements of the Irish Cinema (McLoone, Martin. (2000). *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema*. British Film Institute) and thorough research on the Language and Dialect used in the movie (Hickey, Raymond. (2007). *Irish English: History and Present-Day Forms*. Cambridge University Press). In *The Banshees of Inisherin*, the characters speak in a distinct dialect of Hiberno-English, which reflects both historical Irish English and specific regional Irish linguistic traits. This style, often referred to as "Hiberno-English" or "Irish English," involves unique vocabulary, syntax, and expressions that capture Irish identity and contribute to the film’s authenticity. This paper will focus primarily on the Hiberno-English and Irish dialect present in the movie, emphasizing the unique features of Irish syntax, and sentence structure,



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the lexicon and vocabulary and some direct influences of the Irish language that were used in the movie, underlining the blending of the Irish and English languages which help capture the cultural heritage that lies within the character's dialect.

**Iulia Galea (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

***An Béal Bocht: An Extreme Allegory of Irish Resilience***

This paper intends to analyze in depth the social and political state of the community of Corkadoragha, the fictional village that serves as setting in Flann O'Brien's book *The Poor Mouth*. Starting from the grotesque elements of the environment, I will be analyzing the way nature and the body are intertwined and presented in a harmful relationship, bound by the spaces in which the characters live. The paper will also analyze the restrictions imposed by social prejudice and constructs, the association between the body of the local man and the animal body, going all the way to the lowest physical and mental state achievable, illustrated through the outcast character. The reason why O'Brien illustrates abjection in such detail is both to underline the oppressive political bounds of this society as well as to satirize the outstanding resilience of the Irish as it is presented in the Gaeltacht novel. In order to make the connection between abjection, political oppression and self-preservation at the level of community, I will be using the theoretical framework developed by Julia Kristeva in her book, *Powers of Horror, an Essay on Abjection* and Roberto Esposito in *Immunitas*.

**Marianna Gula (Debrecen University)**

**“Confessing Animal”: The Confessional in Martin McDonagh’s and John Michael McDonagh’s Films**

“Western man has become a confessing animal,” observed Michel Foucault almost 50 years ago in the context of discussing how from the 13 th century on in Western societies producing truth (including the truth of sex) has become geared to a form of knowledge-power, confession – a process in which the Catholic Church played a pivotal role. Given the crucial and sustained role of Catholicism in Irish social and cultural history, and the power the Catholic Church held in an independent Ireland up to the late-20 th century, confession looms large in Irish literature. It has also featured prominently in the London Irish Martin McDonagh’s plays and films – described by José Lanter as “postmodern morality tales” – from the start of his career in the mid-1990s as part of a complex critique of Catholicism, the authority of which was melting away in 1990s Ireland due to the serial revelations about clerical child abuse cases. Here I will look at how confession functions as a site of a complex and ever re-imagined critique of Catholicism in the films of both Martin McDonagh, *In Bruges* (2007) and *The Banshees of Inisherin* (2022), and of his brother, John Michael McDonagh, *The Guard* (2011) and *Calvary* (2014). As Patrick Lonergan has eloquently analysed confession in *In Bruges*, I will focus especially on how *Calvary* reinscribes the Catholic obligation to confess in alternative ethical scenarios, and how in *The Banshees of Inisherin* confession becomes an ecologically inflected site interrogating fundamental assumptions of Christianity consonant with core assumptions of modernity with respect to the relationship of humans to nature/animals.

**Rareș Moldovan (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**Afterwits: Translating *Ulysses* as "esprit d'escalier"**

The presentation discusses a few issues in translating *Ulysses* 11, “Sirens”, into Romanian (*Ulise*, Bucharest: Polirom, 2023), glossing on the changes and versions resulting from working together with Erika Mihálycsa, in an attempt to render the musicality, the breaks, the sensuousness of Joyce’s language, as well as outlining the difficulties posed by the Romanian language. Several examples are offered, together with a justification of the topical changes. Since the chapter required a total second rewrite, a belated re-translation, I reflect on interpretation as an “afterwit” that modifies translation.



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**Paul Paraschiv (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**From Witness to Kin: (In)visible Entanglements and Testimonial Kinship in Sara Baume's "A Line Made by Walking" and "Seven Steeples"**

This paper examines *testimonial kinship* in Sara Baume's *A Line Made by Walking* and *Seven Steeples*, arguing that Baume's treatment of human and nonhuman characters reveals an ethical framework based on shared vulnerability and silent witnessing. Through this lens, Baume's protagonists cultivate kinship with animal lives and the natural world, moving beyond traditional anthropocentric relationships. In *A Line Made by Walking*, Frankie's artistic documentation of dead animals initiates a process of empathetic kinship, transforming her solitude into an ethical space where animal suffering and mortality mirror her own. In *Seven Steeples*, Bell and Sigh's retreat into rural isolation fosters a form of silent kinship, a mutual respect embodied in their interactions with animals and the landscape. Baume's novels thus position testimonial kinship as an alternative mode of relationality that transcends species boundaries, inviting a more-than-human perspective that acknowledges the interconnectedness of human and animal lives within a shared ecology.

**Elena Păcurar (Voj) (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**"This is not a novel". Sidenotes on Colum McCann's Recent Historical Narratives**

The presentation maps out complementary as well as competing modes of representing (recent) history in Colum McCann's *Apeirogon* (2020) and *American Mother* (2024), calling into questions variables that challenge the discourse on history: the moral authority of the visual vs. the textual, the politics of narrative and social framing or re-mediation as re-imagination. In addition to the aspects listed above, genre hybridity is discussed as a possible means of bridging irreconcilable or incongruous socio-historical accounts, in fictional and non-fictional formats alike.

**Petronia Petrar (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**"The hidden life of unrecorded acts": Narrative as Resistance in Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song***

While Paul Lynch has repeatedly insisted that he does not write political fiction, my reading of his Booker-prize winning novel suggests it illustrates a politics of the kind Jacques Rancière's attributes to literature: reframing the "form" of time in order to produce "the articulation of the common and the non-common" (*The Edges of Fiction*, p. 150), to rupture "the time of the victors" through the emergence of the voices of the silent. The competing discourses in *Prophet Song*, fusing together personal, environmental, scientific, and what the author calls "cosmic" narratives, but stubbornly avoids an official, explanatory history, illustrates the punctured temporality that resists lapsing into totalitarian explanations of the world.

**Adrian Radu (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**"The Like of Us Will Never Be Again": The Legacy of the Blasket Islands Writers**

In spite or because of the Blasket Islands being situated at the intersection of inclement winds coming from the Atlantic and having their shores constantly beaten by the furious waves of the ocean, the Blaskets are a God-blessed territory situated off the southwest coast of Ireland where spirituality sprouts up and gives birth to memorable residents whose lifeways, supported by maritime and agrarian subsistence, were hailed by nationalist advocates as representing an authentic Irish cultural identity uncorrupted by the impacts of British colonialism, modernity, or new consumer market. This is essentially the case of those islanders collectively referred to as the Blasket Writers: Peig Sayers, Tomás O Criomhthain (Tomas O' Crohan), and Muiris O Suilleabháin (Maurice O'Sullivan). It is the aim of this paper to evoke the Blasket Islands and writers and discuss, compare, and contrast three of their main works: *Peig*, by Peig Sayers, *The Islandman*, by Tomas O' Crohan, and *Twenty Years A-Growing*, by Maurice O'Sullivan. It will seek to identify unique elements of style, content, and purpose among the three authors, and in doing so will illuminate each piece's contributions to the Blasket lore. Collectively, the paper is also meant to serve as a thorough introduction to Blasket literature and its overall place in Irish literature.



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**Sarah Ritt (Vienna University)**

**The Bisexual, Addicted Terrorist: Reading Behan Today**

The works of Brendan Behan, while not exactly fitting in with his modernist contemporaries, have been a staple of Irish Studies teaching and research for decades. I want to argue for a different reading of Behan, one that goes beyond the often-quoted “drinker with the writing problem” and focuses more on the factors behind the writer persona that Behan gave himself and that he, both despite of and with the help of his heavy drinking, curated in his lifetime. There are three facets of his life that warrant a heavier focus when discussing his work and legacy: The fact that he was a member of the IRA and involved in at least one shootout; that he was a bisexual man in a catholic country in the 1950s and that he tried to remedy his inner struggles and the pressure that came with his fame with copious amounts of alcohol. While it is common knowledge in the field that Behan’s writing are largely autobiographic, putting a more updated focus on how his biography factored into his writing, especially in the conservative Ireland he lived in, has the potential to make Modernism more attractive to current students and generate new knowledge too.

**Nicoleta Stanca (Ovidius University, Constanța)**

**Two Decades of Romanian Politics in Files from the National Archives of Ireland (1968-1988)**

According to the organizers of the Irish Studies MA Anniversary Workshop, Babes-Bolyai University, at the start of the Cluj ISMA, in 1999, global Irish Studies were dominated by “postcolonial rehistoricising and recontextualising approaches pivoting on rigorous archival studies”. Thus, I will resort to archival sources to investigate Romanian-Irish connections in the past decades. The presentation traces political themes in Romania in the late 1960s-1980s as reflected in diplomatic documents of Irish institutions preserved in files at the National Archives of Ireland. I consulted two files (while on a research stage in Dublin in 2022, at the Embassy of Romania): DFA/2004/7/92, on political situation in Romania in 1968-1973 and DFA/2020/22/34, on domestic situation in Romania in 1974-1988. The paper will present information on relations between political leaders, visits of foreign ministers and other politicians and diplomats and their respective meetings and talks, initiatives connected to conferences and declarations promoting European security. They will reveal a certain image of Romanian domestic and foreign politics as perceived in the Irish and western diplomatic documents and will help us understand some aspects of Irish foreign policy and why there were no official diplomatic relations between Romania and Ireland in the period in question.

**Gabriela-Denisa Suci (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**Glancing Behind to Step Forward—Shaping the Future through Trauma as Depicted in *Let the Great World Spin* and *The Secret Scripture***

In order to establish a thorough view on the Irish identity, one must observe each step of its formation. History follows the country as much as it does its people, alongside the culture and traditions that they have built throughout the years. Faithfully, writers have witnessed the hardships of their nation and expressed them through fiction—characters that encapsulate the very soul of Irish integrity and contexts that paint both the best and the worst of their times. This is how trauma is passed through the generations, and thus becomes fundamental in the development of the people, now responsible of their motherland. For this paper, the intended purpose is to explore the depths of this trauma and the potential healing that follows, looking at two instances of mental disturbance. The case of Colum McCann’s *Let the Great World Spin* is mainly focused on Corrigan’s condition—and, subsequently, on the experience of an emigrant—as well as the intrinsic evolution to his premature demise. With a similar psychological approach, Sebastian Barry’s *The Secret Scripture* follows Roseanne’s narrative, greatly influenced by the Irish context that had dictated the course of her whole life. Studying these examples of trauma can, later on, help understand the evolution of history, and how the future can be handled.



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**Szász Borbála (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**Edgeworth's *Belinda*: A Self-Subversive Text**

The heyday of didactic fiction has long since passed. Once an openly assumed goal of literature (*docere et delectare*), today didacticism is seen rather as an obvious mistake to avoid, rejected for strictly dealing in rights, wrongs and absolute truth. The once famous Anglo-Irish writer, Maria Edgeworth's works, ranging from novels and children's books to an educational treatise, all seem to fall into this category in some way or other. However, in my paper I intend to show that despite being subtitled *A Moral Tale*, her 1801 novel *Belinda* effectively performs the epistemological instability of discernment and moral judgement, also subverting the idealized image of the heroine. Taking a closer look at Edgeworth's philosophical milieu, I will explore how empiricist epistemology and the moral sense school of philosophy have shaped her thinking and consequently her texts, resulting in a subtle, but fascinating self-subversive quality. In this attempt I will rely on an analysis of plot, as well as the close reading of significant passages which invite the reader to look beyond the surface. I hope that this contribution can add to our understanding both of Edgeworth's oeuvre and of the literature of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as well.

**Enrico Terrinoni (Università per gli Stranieri Perugia)**

**Denying the End: Fin(-)negans *Wake* as a Literary Singularity**

*Finnegans Wake*, a work which is in many ways a translation, is "a book of changes" whose form and shape keeps changing in front of the readers' eyes. It is based on superposition and simultaneity, concepts articulated in Quantum Theory that can be applied to the reading of a "literary singularity" such as the *Wake*. The talk will investigate how and why Joyce's last book can be considered a quantum book in interpretive and translative terms. (Keywords: Joyce, Quantum theory, Singularity, Entanglement, Superposition)

**Paul Vasvari (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**"Polarizing" Patrick Kavanagh: Analyzing the Relationship between the Poet and His Works**

Perhaps one of Ireland's most interesting poets, Patrick Kavanagh has never ceased to amaze readers with his powerful and suggestive verses. Often viewed as a poet who favored rural simplicity to the dangers of urban disarray, his poetry fully embraces the wonders of nature in an impressively personal manner; all depictions of landscapes and nature seem to bear an intimate significance to the poet, transcending word and brining the reader closer to the divine. Kavanagh's works go beyond praising the aesthetics of nature, often containing a stringent social commentary, which is not entirely surprising; the poet seemed to possess an innate propensity towards criticism, one that brought about detrimental consequences to his personal life. Perhaps the most polarizing trait of Patrick Kavanagh, however, would be his own personality, which seems to contrast the solitude and simplicity which he introduces to the reader within his poems. Hence why this essay would like to serve as an analysis of the way in which the poet's beliefs and antics translate into his own poems, pointing out the varied contradictions that we could find between the man who writes poetry and the feelings and undertones that his poems convey.

**Annalisa Volpone (Università degli Studi di Perugia)**

**"Between imagination and experimentation: how Joyce reads Blake"**

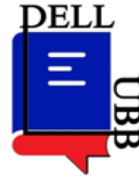
To what extent did Blake influence Joyce? How prominent was Blake in the development of Joyce's poetics? Remarkably, Blake's presence can be traced throughout Joyce's career, from his early works to *Finnegans Wake*. Whether as a direct reference or as part of a more complex intertextual construction, Blake is always present. This suggests that something in Blake fascinated Joyce and continued to inspire him throughout his writing career. In my paper, I propose a brief "excursion" into Joyce's works, following some of the many threads that lead to Blake. While these examples are not exhaustive, they serve as references or points of convergence that indicate Joyce's understanding of Blake and the development of that understanding over time. By doing so, I hope to reposition Blake's aesthetics in the context of Joyce's works. This is necessary given the biased and mediated image of Blake that Yeats and Ellis offered. I argue that Joyce is primarily interested in Blake's concept of imagination and its endless struggle



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with rationality. For instance, Joyce’s portrayal of Stephen and Bloom, and later Shem and Shaun, echoes—in a more paradoxical and satirical way—the dynamic between Los (representing the Imagination and Blake’s alter ego) and Urizen (representing a rationality that fails to be truly productive). Los and Urizen are fragments of both the Eternals (the Four Zoas) and the Eternal Man (Albion). They are distinct and complementary, ontologically necessary for one another, but never truly compatible. Furthermore, one could appreciate Blake’s peculiar treatment of word and image components in his plates, which is, to some extent, very “modernist.” I suggest that the experimentation with text layout that we see in *Ulysses* and especially in *Finnegans Wake* is certainly reminiscent of Blake’s unique style.

**Flavia-Singrid Witowski (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj)**

**The Weight of Expectations: (De)constructions of Irish Masculinities in *The Field*, *Korea*, and *Breakfast on Pluto***

The paper seeks to examine (de)constructions of Irish masculinities in *The Field*, *Korea*, and *Breakfast on Pluto*, understanding the characters as “gendered beings” (Butler) whose identities are defined by the masculine / feminine binary due to pressures exerted on them by their historical circumstances. As each film takes place at different turbulent turning points in Irish history – postcolonial Ireland (The Field), postwar Ireland (Korea), and during the Partition of Ireland (Breakfast on Pluto) – the paper argues that the characters’ selves, bodies, and relationship dynamics are subordinated to an oppressive culture of masculine dominance, only viable through hierarchical control and repression. The patriarchal ideology is re-enacted in all three films in their representations of Ireland-in-crisis as a father-son relationship challenged by societal changes and expectations. The analysis will focus on attempts to disrupt, escape, or redress the patriarchal order and, thus, the “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu), on which “hegemonic masculinities” (Connell) are arguably founded. The historical lenses call into question structures of power (i.e., imperialism and colonialism) that rely on fixed notions of masculinity and masculinized modes of being to rationalize, legitimize, and privilege abusive behaviors (i.e., hostility, secrecy, manipulation, etc.) as the primary means of gaining and preserving authority.