

Introduction

Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Dalarna University

This special issue of *Nordic Journal of English Studies* is devoted to the research in Irish Studies being carried out in Scandinavia by a group of scholars based in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as scholars associated—in one way or another—with Scandinavia. Denmark is represented by the University of Aalborg; Norway, by scholars affiliated to the Universities of Agder, the Arctic University of Norway, Bergen, and Stavanger; and Sweden is represented by scholars from the universities of Dalarna, Göteborg, Stockholm, Södertörn and Umeå. Included also in this special issue is the work of two former students, who completed their Masters' degree in Irish literature at DUCIS (Dalarna University Centre for Irish Studies), Sweden—from Norway and China respectively. The collection also contains an article by Dara Waldron, Limerick Institute of Technology, Ireland, who recently presented his research at the Higher Seminar in Dalarna. Contributions by the Irish poet, Mary O'Donnell, who participated in the Nordic Irish Studies Network (NISN) conference, hosted by DUCIS in December 2012, are also included.

The research presented in what follows focuses on poetry, the novel, drama, film, folkmusic and politics, with a wide variety of topics addressed, including Darwinism, the Irish Literary Revival, space and place, landscape, mother-son relationship, postcolonial identity, cultural memory, trauma, hunger strikes, phenomenology, and poetic and political discourse. The collection begins with a contribution by Heidi Hansson, entitled “Kinship: People and Nature in Emily Lawless’s Poetry,” which re-contextualises the poetry of the Irish writer, Emily Lawless (1845-1913), against the framework of nineteenth century natural history, Darwinism and early ecological ideas. Hansson demonstrates the influence of Darwinism in Lawless’s poetry and her acknowledgement of the interaction between the human and natural world. The article explores Lawless’s recurrent theme of concern for the environment, and suggests that the dystopian awareness which Lawless expresses is often counterbalanced by images of nature as a source of restorative healing and power.

Gilsenan Nordin, Irene. 2014. “Introduction.” *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 13(2):1-5.

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The poetry of Yeats is the focus of Charles I Armstrong's article, "The 'intimate enemies': Edward Dowden, W. B. Yeats and the Formation of Character." The article traces the intimate dialogue between Yeats and Dowden regarding the writings of George Eliot, Shakespeare and Goethe. Armstrong argues that Yeats is close to Dowden on a number of issues, and frames his findings by a discussion of Yeats's indebtedness to Victorian culture and ideas. Irene Gilsenan Nordin's article, "Space and Place in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh," explores the interrelated themes of space and place in the poetry of Yeats and Kavanagh, focusing on the idea of place as a creative force in relation to the act of writing. The article examines the different ways these two poets respond to their physical place of writing, where place is understood as a site in which identity is located and defined, and as an imaginative space that maps the landscapes of the mind.

The idea of the poet as "rythmanalyst" is the topic examined by Anne Karhio in "'All this debris of day-to-day experience': The Poet as Rhythmanalyst in the Works of Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon." The article focuses on the poetic journals or "journalistic poetry" of these three contemporary poets, and employs the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis to discuss the repetitive and changing nature of poetry in relation to experience. The article that follows, "'Second Time Round': Recent Northern Irish History in *For All We Know* and Ciaran Carson's *Written Arts*," by Ruben Moi and Annelise Brox Larsen, examines Carson's collection *For All We Know* (2008) in the context of the representation of Northern Irish history in the Troubles and asks "what" the poet is to write about in times of violence, as well as "why," and "when." The article argues that Ciaran Carson's collection is a "historical document," which gives an alternative view of life in Belfast and Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

The section which follows in the journal consists of three poems and a short story, by the cross-genre writer of fiction, poetry and short story, Mary O'Donnell. The first poem, "Forest, Snow, a Train," is what the poet calls a "Sweden" poem, written as a result of her visit to Dalarna in December 2012. O'Donnell explains she began the poem, unexpectedly, after she saw some atmospheric photo shots she had taken from the train on her way back from Falun, shots which had been sitting on her desk in Ireland all year, after her return. The second poem "Waking" is a

touching love poem, followed by the long poem, “An Irish Lexicon,” which, as O’Donnell explains, is an attempt “to try to capture something about what I think of when I think of ‘Ireland’ as a place and culture.” The poem is thus a personal account, and as O’Donnell continues, “it is probably a little critical of what we are told is supposed to be ‘Irish,’ and the Rebuke to Ideological Feminism may seem irritating to some, but I felt it was necessary.” Part of the poem breaks into straight prose at that point. The final contribution by O’Donnell, “Wolf Month,” is a short meditative piece, written as a result of the big snowfalls that fell in Ireland during the winter of 2011.

The contemporary Irish novel is addressed by two articles in the next section. The first article by Britta Olinder is entitled “The Northern Athens or a City Of Horrors? Belfast as Presented by Some Irish Women Writers.” This article investigates how the city of Belfast is depicted in the work of Mary Beckett, Deirdre Madden, Anne Devlin and Christina Reid, and explores the urban spaces available to the different characters in the chosen works, against the background of a segregated city. The article focuses on the idea of people living closely together and sharing the same space and culture, while at the same time living in a space marked by class divisions, gender inequality and political disruption. The second article in this section is by Tyler Post, “Mourning Mothers: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Parental Relationships in Colm Tóibín’s *Mothers and Sons*,” and examines Tóibín’s negotiation with traditional representations of the Irish mother, in his novel from 2006. Using the Freudian concepts of mourning and melancholia, the article demonstrates how the maternal and filial relationships explored in the novel can be understood as representations of repression, desire and mourning. Post concludes that Tóibín circumvents the traditional paradigm of Irish notions of motherhood, and offers the reader an alternative psychoanalytic representation of the relationship between mothers and sons.

Contemporary Irish drama is the focus of the following two articles. Michelle Carroll’s article, “The Indeterminacy of Identity in Tom Murphy’s *A Whistle in the Dark*,” explores the idea of Irish identity politics in the context of postcolonialism, in Murphy’s play. The analysis is informed by Homi Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity and mimicry in relation to colonialism, and demonstrates the struggle of the main characters in the play to define their Irish identity and come to terms with

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their sense of alienation, in a hostile, industrial Coventry. Charlotta Palmstierna Einarsson's article, "The Meaning of Movement: Phenomenological Descriptions of Experience in Beckett's 'Heard in the Dark I,'" highlights the carefully described movements in Beckett's work. In her exploration of the short story, "Heard in the Dark I," she argues that through the medium of the text, the reader experiences movement as if performed or choreographed. Thus, she suggests, movement is kinesthetically meaningful and linked to a phenomenological understanding of the text bringing together experience and knowledge.

The two articles which follow focus on contemporary Irish film and the theme of trauma. The first article by John Lynch, "*Hunger*: Passion of the Militant," examines the British-Irish historical drama film *Hunger* (2008), which dramatises events in the Maze Prison in Belfast leading up to the 1981 Irish Republican hunger strike. The film is directed by British director Steve McQueen, and, in his analysis, Lynch considers the artistic practice of McQueen, in light of the theories of Deleuze and Guattari. He demonstrates how the film addresses the traumatic events of the hunger strike, using aesthetic techniques that go beyond the clichés of media coverage, to offer new ways of thinking about conflict and how resistance can be shown on screen. Dara Waldron's article, "'Pushing Yourself into Existence': Language, Trauma, Framing in Pat Collins's *Silence* (2012)," examines the film *Silence*—a mixture of fact and fiction—by the Irish documentarist Collins, as a film concerned with trauma and responses to trauma. The film explores the journey of the protagonist, Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, one of the film's screenwriters, a sound recordist who treks his way across Ireland to revisit his home on remote Tory Island, in the Donegal Gaeltacht, encountering various memories from his past as he travels. The article explores the film's resistance to the desire to frame traumatic experience, defined by an ethical "silence," which can be seen as an allegory of Ireland, in its acceptance of the limitations of language.

The role of popular music in the construction of communal belonging and cultural memory in contemporary Ireland is addressed by Bent Sørensen in his article, "*Listen*—Christy Moore's Old and New, Glocal Ireland." The article focuses on the music of Irish folk singer, songwriter and guitarist, Christy Moore, the former lead singer and one of the founding members of Planxty, a group founded in 1972, which

quickly revolutionised and popularised Irish music. Sørensen examines Moore's album, *Listen* (2009), as an example of "glocal Irish artefact and cultural text" in its reference to personal, communal and national history, while at the same time it reflects upon and critiques present cultural issues and events. The final article in the collection, Sissel Rosland's, "In Search of the People: The Formation of Legitimacy and Identity in the Debate on Internment in Northern Ireland," examines different concepts of "the people," constructed by various political groups in Northern Ireland in the debate on political internment without trial, introduced by the British Government in Northern Ireland in August 1971. Rosland argues that rather than reduce the escalation of violence, internment—and its accompanying political discourse of exclusionary concepts relating to "the people"—instead increased tensions and the gulf between the various political groups in Northern Ireland.