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Edited by Eve Patten
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IRISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION,
1940–1980

This volume explores the history of Irish writing between the Second World War (or the ‘Emergency’) in 1939 and the re-emergence of violence in Northern Ireland in the 1970s. It situates modern Irish writing within the contexts of cultural transition and transnational connection, often challenging pre-existing perceptions of Irish literature in this period as stagnant and mundane. While taking into account the grip of Irish censorship and cultural nationalism during the mid-twentieth century, these essays identify an Irish literary culture stimulated by international political horizons and fully responsive to changes in publishing, readership and education. The book combines valuable cultural surveys with focussed discussions of key literary moments, and of individual authors such as Seán O’Faoláin, Samuel Beckett, Edna O’Brien and John McGahern.

EVE PATTEN is Professor of English in Trinity College Dublin. She has published widely in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish and British literature. Her books include *Samuel Ferguson and the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (2004), *Imperial Refugee: Olivia Manning’s Fictions of War* (2012) and (co-edited with Aidan O’Malley), *Ireland: West to East: Irish Cultural Connections with Central and Eastern Europe* (2013). She is a Fellow of Trinity College Dublin and Deputy Director of the Trinity Long Room Hub for Arts and Humanities Research.

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IRISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION

General editors:

Claire Connolly, University College Cork
Marjorie Howes, Boston College

This six-volume series captures the dynamic energies transmitted over more than 300 years of the established literary landmarks that constitute Irish literary life. Ambitious in scope and depth, and accommodating new critical perspectives and approaches, *Irish Literature in Transition* captures the ongoing changes in the Irish literary canon. Each of the six volumes revises our understanding of established issues and texts and, simultaneously, introduces new questions, approaches, and authors. These volumes address periods of transition, but also periods of epochal upheaval and turning points of real significance. Each one of these books challenges in different ways the dominant approaches to a period of literature by shifting the focus from what happened to understanding how and why it happened. They elucidate the multifaceted interaction between the social and literary fields in the evolution of Irish literature until the present moment. Taken together, *Irish Literature in Transition* constitutes a new kind of literary history across centuries of intense cultural and literary creation. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the Irish literary experience, creating a new and dynamic version of literary history that highlights the significance of change as a lived, felt force.

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Contents

<i>List of Contributors</i>	page viii
<i>Series Preface</i>	xiii
<i>General Acknowledgements</i>	xv
Introduction <i>Eve Patten</i>	I
PART I AFTER THE WAR: IDEOLOGIES IN TRANSITION	25
1 The War Observed <i>Guy Woodward</i>	27
2 Outside the Whale: Seán O’Faoláin, Totalitarianism and the European Public Intellectual <i>Brad Kent</i>	46
3 Irish Writers and Europe <i>Aidan O’Malley</i>	66
4 Becoming a Republic: Irish Writing in Transition <i>Nicholas Allen</i>	83
PART II GENRES IN TRANSITION	101
5 Intermodernism and the Middlebrow in Irish Writing <i>John Brannigan</i>	103
6 Transitional Life-Writing: Frank O’Connor and the Autobiographical Tradition <i>Muireann Leech</i>	119

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
7	‘Somehow It Is Not the Same’: Irish Theatre and Transition <i>Chris Morash</i>	134
8	Samuel Beckett, Flann O’Brien and the Literature of Absurdity <i>David Wheatley</i>	150
	PART III SEX, POLITICS AND LITERARY PROTEST	167
9	Censorship, Law and Literature <i>Eibhear Walshe</i>	169
10	Sex, Dissent and Irish Fiction: Reading John McGahern <i>Frank Showlin</i>	185
11	History, Memory and Protest in Irish Theatre <i>Emilie Pine</i>	201
12	Violence, Politics and the Poetry of the Troubles <i>Rosie Lavan</i>	216
	PART IV IDENTITIES AND CONNECTIONS	233
13	State, Space and Experiment in Irish-Language Prose Writing <i>Máirín Nic Eoin</i>	235
14	Anglo-Ireland: the Big House Novel in Transition <i>Heather Ingman</i>	255
15	American–Irish Literary Relations <i>Ellen McWilliams</i>	272
16	‘Home Rule in Our Literature’: Irish–British Poetic Relations <i>Tom Walker</i>	288
	PART V RETROSPECTIVE FRAMEWORKS: CRITICISM IN TRANSITION	307
17	Literary Biography in Transition <i>Paul Delaney</i>	309

	<i>Contents</i>	vii
18	Publishing, Penguin and Irish Writing <i>Paul Raphael Rooney</i>	329
19	Curriculum to Canon: Irish Writing and Education <i>Margaret Kelleher</i>	344
20	Critics, Criticism and the Formation of an Irish Literary Canon <i>Shaun Richards</i>	359
	<i>Index</i>	377

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ix

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List of Contributors

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List of Contributors

xi

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Series Preface

Irish Literature in Transition provides a new account of transitions between and across the centuries of Irish literature. Adopting varying frames and scales of reference, the series offers an original map of a territory too often navigated via the narrow channels of political history. Each of the six volumes revises our understanding of established issues and texts and, simultaneously, introduces new questions, approaches and authors. Together, these books generate alternative genealogies across time and space and help readers to understand and interrogate the ways in which one period reimagines and remakes another.

Discussions of Irish culture have long focussed on the close relationship between literature and history. For all the power of such narratives, however, the field has yet to develop a sufficiently dynamic sense of that relationship. Literary transitions do not 'reflect' historical change in any simple or straightforward way. Rather, the complex two-way traffic between these realms involves multiple and uneven processes such as distortion, selection, repression, embrace and critique. The temporal relationships involved in such traffic include simultaneity, time lag and anticipation.

The six books in this series track patterns of transmission and transformation across Irish culture. More specifically, they ask: what kinds of transitions are registered and provoked by literature and culture? What are the levers and mechanics of change? How helpful are our current concepts of literary movements, time periods and national traditions? What is the status of the literary in our literary histories and how do we understand the relations among form, genre and chronology?

We consider these questions from our own location in a time of scholarly transition. The sheer weight of archival material now available is transforming our sense of both the past and present of Irish literature while prompting us to produce new kinds of critical narrative. Older literary histories of Ireland are coming under pressure from new modes

of reading, such as those attuned to ecocritical issues, affect theory, queer genealogies, questions of scale and diasporic and transnational geographies. As the concept of the ‘survey’ itself comes under scrutiny in classrooms and universities, these volumes show how authoritative interpretations can be innovative, challenging and enabling for future readers and writers. Each volume intervenes in continuing critical conversations about culture rather than summarising the field or closing down debate. At the same time, the series charts the contours of literary history across the centuries in ways that highlight the significance of change as a lived, felt force.

Transition: the term means passage from one well-defined period to another; it also helps track subtle interconnections, contingencies or modulations; and it will provoke questions about the definition of change itself. In adopting that term, *Irish Literature in Transition* seeks to provide insight into the future of Irish studies as it reimagines the literary past and present.

CLAIRE CONNOLLY, *University College Cork*
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As General Editors of *Irish Literature in Transition*, we wish to record our thanks to everyone who helped bring this six-volume series to publication. Our fellow editors, Moyra Haslett, Matthew Campbell, Eve Patten, Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds have worked tirelessly on books that make significant new contributions to our understanding of Irish literature across time and space. We also record our thanks to the many contributors who helped shape the intellectual identity of this series with their thoughtful and innovative chapters. Dr Ray Ryan of Cambridge University Press prompted us to rise to the challenge of shaping a new narrative of Irish literature in transition. We thank him for that opportunity, and for all his insight and support along the way. Thanks also to Edgar Mendez of the Press for his help and hard work in seeing the books through to publication.

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