

IRISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION,
1880–1940

The years between 1880 and 1940 were a time of unprecedented literary production and political upheaval in Ireland. It was the era of the 1916 Easter Rising, the Irish Revival, and when many major Irish writers – Yeats, Joyce, Beckett, Lady Gregory – profoundly impacted Irish and World Literature. Recent research has uncovered new archives of previously neglected texts and authors. Organised according to multiple categories, ranging from single author to genre and theme, this volume allows readers to imagine multiple ways of re-mapping this crucial period. The book incorporates different, even competing, approaches and interpretations to reflect emerging trends and current debates in contemporary scholarship. As ongoing research in the field of Irish Studies discovers new materials and critical strategies for interpreting them, our sense of Irish literary history during this period is constantly shifting. This volume seeks to capture the richness and complexity of the years 1880–1940 for our current moment.

MARJORIE ELIZABETH HOWES is an Associate Professor of English and Irish Studies at Boston College. She is the author of *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (1996), winner of the Michael J. Durkan Prize for the year's best book in literary and cultural studies awarded by the American Conference for Irish Studies. Howes also authored *Colonial Crossings: Figures in Irish Literary History* (2006) and was a co-editor for three other books, including *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats* (2006). From 2003 to 2010 she was also the co-director of the Irish Studies Program at Boston College.

IRISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION

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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IN TRANSITION, 1880–1940

EDITED BY
MARJORIE ELIZABETH HOWES

Boston College, Massachusetts



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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 re-imagines and remakes another.

Discussions of Irish culture have long focused 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 mechanisms 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 between 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 past and present 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 to 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 re-imagines the literary past and present.

CLAIRE CONNOLLY, *University College Cork*
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General Acknowledgements

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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