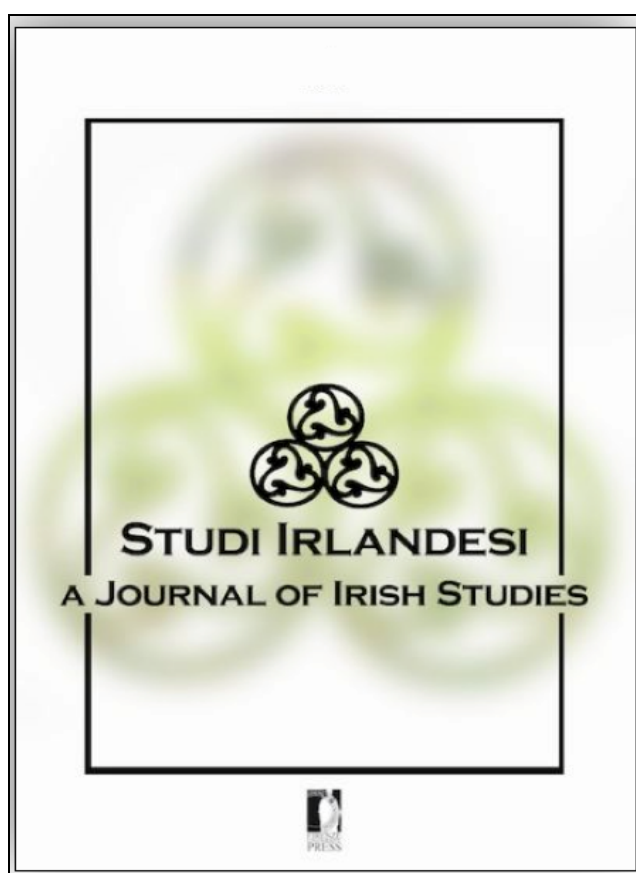


BOOKS

***Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*, General Editor Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Journal Manager Arianna Antonielli, Firenze University Press 2017, 421 p.**



In the ever-growing tension of our current social-political climate, the 2017 edition of the University of Florence's anthology of Irish Studies stands out as a must-read. This issue's editor, Dieter Reinisch, masterfully showcases a series of informative and inspiring pieces, the main

corpus of which are research papers united under the theme of Resistance in Modern Ireland, with the added coloratura of interviews, literary contributions and reviews. To dive into the complex processes that led to the formation of the Irish status quo is by no means a negligible endeavour.

The monographic section commences with an essay by Rosa Gilbert, an analysis of the rent and rates strikes of 1970s Northern Ireland as models of protest practiced against the re-initiation of interment without trial. Geographically coherent, Robert White's paper on the Provisional IRA's continued pursuit of armed struggle is a fascinating sociological study that brings forth evidence in the form of photographs and candid interviews. Divergently, Tracey Icton chooses a more deconstructivist approach in her depiction of women in the IRA by using fragments from relevant texts in order to underline the pervasive sexism of the paramilitary institution. While acting as a shift from the northern colonial conflict, Patrick McDonagh's piece documents the history of LGBTQ activism in the Republic, which ultimately led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Finally, Frédéric Royall's paper focuses on the questionable impact of the Occupy movement in Ireland and the motives behind its popularity and subsequent downfall.

Shifting from sociology to literature, Seán Ó Cadha's thorough investigation of the texts of Irish Republican ballads offers valuable insight regarding their ingrained ideology and rapid circulation. Further on, one of the ideas explored is that theatre reaffirms its compatibility with subversion and resistance: José Francisco Fernández correlates Beckett's *Catastrophe* with his problematic relation to Irish history, while Molly Ferguson reveals that clown techniques are a surprisingly effective form of human rights activism. Keith Hopper and Neil Murphy offer a new perspective on Dermot Healy's *Fighting with Shadows*, availing themselves of the author's provincial Irish background in their reading. The Miscellanea section also features astute essays tackling various topics

pertaining to Irish literature, such as representations of slavery in Maria Edgeworth's play *Whim for Whim*, the dysfunctionality of mother-daughter relationships in Edna O'Brien's short stories, the significance of Brian O'Nolan's humour, trauma-narration in Patrick McCabe's *Butcher Boy* and the importance of naming in Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*.

The puzzling figure of Lawrence McKeown is made accessible to the reader through an outstanding interview: a former agent of the IRA and hunger striker turned esteemed playwright and academic, he discusses his reasons for joining the paramilitary forces, life in the H-blocks and going to Queen's University as a Catholic, while also offering his opinion on the heated topic of Brexit. In his own interview, Pino Cacucci, author of *Quelli del San Patricio*, sheds light on the often overlooked connections between Ireland and Mexico, and discusses the thought process behind his novel, which is centred around a group of Irish deserters who join the Mexicans in their fight of liberation from the American colonizers.

The volume is well-organized and helps readers glide from one topic to another with sustained interest. No reader can remain indifferent to the causes so diligently discussed – the volume's scholarly function is superseded by its power to awaken feelings of solidarity and hyper-awareness of one's own civic duty. In the words of Pino Cacucci: "a heightened sensitivity may lead you to do outrageous things that may be mistaken for cruelty" (p.379). At times, it seems that the strife and suffering of countless heroic souls permeates the scientific conciseness of historical fact.

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