

FOREWORD

For nearly two decades, the wormhole connecting a small room in the attic of the Faculty of Letters in Cluj to “Ireland” has remained open. At the far end, an “Ireland” that is as real as it is “invented” year after year radiates itself hither, materially and ideally, to be painstakingly reconstructed, perused, and discussed. Over twenty years hundreds of students and dozens of professors have contributed to this unlikely entanglement that synchronises – relatively – the ends of our continent, the terms of our cultures across space and through a finely calibrated historical lens.

Carmen Borbely’s Introduction does a brilliant job of retelling the history of this unlikely venture, which many may have deemed quixotic. Kindled by the abiding passion of one person – professor John Fairlegh – for the cultures of Romania and Ireland, helped along by the efforts of professors in Ireland and Cluj, the M. A. in Irish studies continues to this day to bring together young postgraduates around the table in the small room, and to open to them the cultural horizon of Ireland.

This volume is an homage to the scholarship that has been fostered in the area of Irish studies at Babeş-Bolyai University, and a snapshot of the work being undertaken by professors, alumni, and students. However partial, it manages to convey the varied research interests and perspectives, orbiting around several centres of gravity that bend discourses this way and that, with the huge Irish-European supernovae of Joyce and Beckett figuring prominently, of course. Still, from Irish myths to contemporary authors, the range of the collection captures something of the amplitude of preoccupations that have over the years shaped the practice of Irish studies in Cluj. The authors – distinguished guests of the programme, professors involved in teaching for the M.A., colleagues with ties to the field, recent alumni – attest the vitality of the endeavour and the dedication that characterizes this small community.

We are honoured to host in the pages of this volume three of the guest professors that have lectured for the programme: Declan Kiberd, Professor Honoris Causa of our university, Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, both from the University of Notre Dame, and professor Nicholas Allen from the University of Georgia. Their presence in Cluj and in the following pages is proof of the international dimension of cooperation and education that the M. A. has succeeded in creating. We are thankful to our colleagues for their contributions, and we are especially proud of the quality of work our alumni, very young academics, have submitted. We hope they will take up the mantle of professor in the years to come. Special thanks are due to Dr. Erika Mihalyicsa and Dr. Elena Păcurar for their help in putting together this volume.

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