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***Estudios Irlandeses*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2018, *Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature*, Melania Terrazas (ed.), 145 p.**

Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature, guest edited by Melania Terrazas, constitutes the second special issue of *Estudios Irlandeses* since its foundation in 2005. It is highly appreciated that a full volume of this journal is devoted to a theme that remains crucial both in the wider socio-political milieu of the country and, more specifically, within the academic arena. As the editor mentions in her introduction, recent events like the same-sex marriage and the repeal the Eighth amendment referenda have led to “a time in which Ireland is becoming more culturally liberal in many respects” (p. 1). Yet, critical debates and direct actions are still much needed in order to deconstruct the gender politics that continues to affect a great part of the Irish population. In this vein, the collection of articles gathered here contributes significantly to those debates, offering a fair amount of examinations from literary approaches.

At first sight, there does not seem to be a clear-cut division of parts in the issue, which comprises a total of eleven contributions. However, some kind of organisational cohesiveness and structural pattern emerge when we go through the different authors whose works are studied in depth. Thus, as Terrazas indicates (p. 2), the collection is divided into three main parts, which correspond to essays dealing with, first, texts by male authors like Thomas Kilroy, Tim Robinson, John Banville and John Michael McDonagh, and second, articles that explore either texts by women writers, such as Edna O’Brien, Iris Murdoch or Louise O’Neill, or female characters, like George Bernard Shaw’s Eliza Doolittle. Still according to Terrazas: “The third section closes the issue with two reflective pieces by the talented young writer Rob Doyle and the renowned short-story writer and novelist Evelyn Conlon” (p. 2). Although the editor admits having followed a chronological criterion for the organisation of each of these sections and she has managed to reach a fair balance between articles that touch upon male and female figures, an explanation for this principle and its expected effect upon the reader would have been welcome.

For reasons of space, each individual article cannot be thoroughly discussed here, but there is a number of them that are worth consideration. Thus, the opening piece by José Lanthers focuses on Thomas Kilroy’s adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts* in 1989 (p. 6-18). Quite convincingly, she demonstrates that Article 41 of the Irish Constitution is a haunting presence in the play (p. 9) and that the divorce referendum (p. 7) and AIDS crisis (p. 12), two key events in the mid 1980s, where the play is set, are echoed so as to criticise the moral hypocrisy that characterised the social treatment of women and gender at that time. Then, in what is certainly the most compelling essay in the collection (p. 19-29), Maureen O’Connor concentrates on Tim Robinson’s ethical aesthetic, which she interprets through a very well grounded and effective ecofeminist approach, concluding that his work defends how inseparable humans are from all matter (p. 28). In the two articles that follow the focus of analysis moves to John Banville’s fiction, particularly his latest trilogy: *Eclipse* (2000), *Shroud* (2002) and *Ancient Light* (2012). Both essays

provide thought-provoking analyses of the complex process of characterisation that distinguishes Banville's oeuvre and they equally underscore the important function of gender for the articulation of subjectivity that permeates the texts. For the reader, though, the fact that these two interpretations of texts by the same author are plainly juxtaposed within the contents of this special issue may have puzzling and wearing effects.

The second part encompasses articles about well-known women writers like Edna O'Brien and Iris Murdoch, but also about emerging authors like Louise O'Neill. A strong entry (p. 77-89) is María Amor Barros del Río's insightful analysis of Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls Trilogy and Epilogue* (1986). The research she has been conducting on O'Brien is brought to bear on these four texts that, analysed holistically, epitomise the formal category of the Bildungsroman, fittingly described and contextualised by Barros del Río. However, she claims, the complex universe of female experiences that the novelist describes in these works makes their classification rather difficult, and it is this uniqueness that makes them exceptional titles in the history of Irish literature. Also worthy of note is Ekaterina Muraveva's insightful study of *Only Ever Yours* (2014), by Louise O'Neill. Using a critical discourse analysis approach to this dystopian novel, this article tackles the gender constructs that media and advertising wield upon young women, while bringing to the fore the warnings posed by O'Neill about the ongoing reach of male supremacy and the sexualisation of female bodies.

The collection concludes with a third section, dedicated to personal reflections by a male author and a woman writer: Rob Doyle (p. 138-140) and Evelyn Conlon (p. 141-145). Coming from different generations and with different literary careers, each of them conveys their critical standpoints in terms of gender and feminism. In this light, while Doyle ruminates about his experiences of turning into a young male novelist in a socio-cultural atmosphere that has been increasingly interrogating traditional standards of masculinity, in what is probably my favourite contribution in the collection Conlon provides a stimulating first person account of her encounters with the many vicissitudes throughout the long course of Irish feminism(s). Locating these two pieces at the end of the special issue was a skilful decision on the part of the editor, not only as a perfect culmination of many of the points discussed by the contributors, but mostly for the positive and hopeful tone with which it ends. "[...] the gender issue in my work", Conlon writes, "is not that I write about women, but that I don't constrain them, I allow them to think in crooked lines. And be as unique as humans are" (p. 142).

In the final analysis, *Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature* stands as a considerable contribution to the field of Irish studies in recent years. By offering a representative number of articles by Spanish and international scholars and writers, and an array of critical approaches to the main theme, the collection demonstrates that the rhetorics of gender occupies a central position for the analysis of literature produced in Ireland. In this vein, individually and collectively the essays presented here are a major aid for readers interested in recent trends in academic research on the troubles and complexities that gender continues to entail for the articulation

of individual and cultural identity in the Republic. As the editor observes, the North was not part of this project, which I believe would have provided a more comprehensive outlook to the situation, along with the inclusion of studies dealing with the intersection of gender and multiculturalism in the present milieu of the island. This by no means constitutes a weakness in what is arguably a solid collection of scholarly materials that may raise abundant questions and further investigations about an extremely engaging topic.

Auxiliadora PÉREZ VIDES

Eglantina Remport, *Lady Gregory and Irish National Theatre: Art, Drama, Politics*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 237 p.

The impact of the Irish Literary Revival on the development of English and Irish language literature in Ireland and on modern literary criticism cannot be overestimated. Albeit challenging to quantify in its totality, critical appraisal of the Revival and its key figures are wide-ranging. They take the form of biographies on the life and work of individual artists and thinkers: Roy Foster's tome on W. B. Yeats (*W. B. Yeats, A Life*, vol. II, *The Arch-Poet*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003); to critical studies by Philip O'Leary (*The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); to edited collections of the short Irish language plays of the early part of the 20th century (*Drámaí Thús na hAithbheochana*, edited by Éadaoin Ní Mhuircheartaigh and Nollaig Mac Congáil, Gaillimh, Arlen House, 2008). The intertwining of literature and politics is evident in the lives of many of those key figures. For example, writer, educator and revolutionary Pádraig Mac Piarais (Patrick Pearse) played an important part in the development of Irish language prose writing, while poet and senator W. B. Yeats was one of the founding members of the Abbey Theatre as was the subject of this study, Lady Augusta Gregory (née Persse) (1852-1932).

In her 2018 monograph, Eglantina Remport places Lady Gregory centre stage, taking a thematic approach to her life, work, and relationships. The study is structured into an analysis of five main strands of Gregory's social, educational and aesthetic ideals: her education in visual arts on the *Grand Tours*; Celtic mythology and Victorian Hellenism; education and social reform; the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the sister arts and the Irish plays; and Christianity, culture and constitutional reform. This well-written study breaks new ground in the importance it places on the multimodal symbiosis between visual and text-based arts, between political philosophy and social reform, and between Irish and English language literature. In this complex and in-depth study, Remport shows how Gregory was a driving and energetic force in the application of those ideals within the Irish Literary Revival. Although this aspect of the study has echoes of Michael Phillipson's examination of