

Aidan O'Malley and Eve Patten (eds)

IRELAND, WEST TO EAST

IRISH CULTURAL CONNECTIONS WITH
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE



Through increased immigration, Ireland has encountered Central and Eastern Europe in a very direct manner since the mid-1990s. However, there was already a scattered history of cultural communication between these two regions, even if these dialogues have often been discrete and discontinuous. Recovering and exploring some of these diverse interrelationships, this volume charts some of the alternative, lesser-known routes that Irish cultural life has taken. By plotting various movements between these two peripheries of Europe, the book recalibrates the map of Irish literary, artistic and historical experiences. In doing so, it also looks to incorporate this movement into theoretical understandings of Irish culture.

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Ireland, West to East

Reimagining Ireland

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Institute of Technology, Tallaght



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Oxford • Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • Frankfurt am Main • New York • Wien

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Pula, where Joyce lived from October 1904 to March 1905. Photograph by
Aidan O'Malley.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
EVE PATTEN AND AIDAN O'MALLEY	
Introduction: Ireland: West to East	i
HISTORICAL EPISODES	
	23
BARRA Ó SEAGHDHA	
A Journey Eastward: Reframing the History of Irish Classical Music	25
LILI ZÁCH	
Ireland, Czechoslovakia and the Question of Small Nations in the Context of Ireland's Wartime Neutrality	47
NATALIE WYNN	
Irish-Jewish Constructs of Tsarist Eastern Europe	69
POETIC ENCOUNTERS	
	85
PHILIP COLEMAN	
Writing Between: Hungarian Affinities in Contemporary Irish Poetry	87
GUY WOODWARD	
'We must know more than Ireland': John Hewitt and Eastern Europe	101

JOYCE AND BECKETT AT HOME AND ABROAD	115
 BORISLAV KNEŽEVIĆ An Exceptional Common Culture: Postcolonial Nostalgia and <i>Ulysses</i>	 117
 TATJANA JUKIĆ Between Auschwitz and Siberia: James Joyce, Danilo Kiš and a Zoning of Totalitarianism	 135
 VITAL VORANAU Beckett Country: Irish Motifs in a Belarusian Landscape	 159
 DEBATING HUBERT BUTLER	 177
 AIDAN O'MALLEY Hubert Butler 'In Europe's Debatable Lands'	 179
 MICHAEL MCATEER From Ireland to Croatia: Hubert Butler and Alojzije Stepinac	 195
 STIPE GRGAS Hubert Butler's Non-Presence in Croatia	 211
 FICTION AND MIGRATION	 225
 JOHN MCCOURT Eastern European Images in the Irish Novel from Charles Lever to Colum McCann	 227

AISLING MCKEOWN

'A distraction in other people's worlds' or 'an insider taking action'? The Representation of the Eastern European Male Migrant in Chris Binchy's *Open-handed* and Hugo Hamilton's *Hand in the Fire*

241

MÁRIA KURDI

Hungarian Migration to Ireland after the 1956 Revolution: Mark Collins's Novel *Stateless* in the Celtic Tiger Context

255

EGLANTINA REMPORT

'History repeating': From Belfast to Budapest in Glenn Patterson's *Number 5*

273

Notes on Contributors

285

Index

291

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Ljiljana Ina Gjurgjan (1950–2012) who laid the foundations for this project.

EVE PATTEN AND AIDAN O'MALLEY

Introduction: Ireland: West to East

In Belgrade I had found my west-in-east.
'Belgrade melancholy of huckster shops
And small shop windows.
Unfresh bread, tinned peas.
Also Belmullet elders in the streets.
Black shawls, straight walk, the weather eye, the beads'.
Then I saw men in fezes, left the known world
On the short and sweetening mud-slide of a coffee.
— SEAMUS HEANEY, 'Known World', *Electric Light* (2001)

In September 2011 a conference entitled *Ireland: East and West* was held at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, in partnership with the School of English, Trinity College Dublin. The purpose of the conference was to explore the connections and parallels between Irish and Central and Eastern European cultures, and to consider various ways in which each location has been represented, in art and literature, by the other. The topic seemed, first of all, a natural progression from numerous independent academic or cultural relationships that exist between Ireland and the individual countries which are usually grouped in the East and Central European bracket, particularly Croatia, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. In addition the event promised a timely negotiation of mutual interests shared by countries on the margins and peripheries of the continent against a backdrop of continuing geopolitical redefinitions of 'Europe' itself, together with continuing rumblings over issues of political and economic accession to the European Union. Above all, this joint venture was founded on a prevailing assumption that Ireland and the various countries of Central and Eastern Europe

would find key points of similarity in their varied experiences of empire; that these were identities still caught up in questions of historical 'aftermath' and exhibiting in their respective cultures both the long- and short-term legacies of imperial, colonial, patriarchal and totalitarian imposition.

This assumption was tested and frequently challenged during the course of the Zagreb conference. Certainly the collaboration served to generate a wide range of correspondences, many intriguing, all illuminating, as the selection of essays collected in this volume shows. Importantly, they also reflect the need that was articulated frequently at Zagreb to interrogate further the premises of 'connection' and 'parallel', putting the instinct towards finding synthesis into constant dialogue with the impetus to examine, rigorously, the rationale for these intercultural perspectives of far West on East and East on West. How appropriate is it to juxtapose two locations on opposite wings of the European landmass in the interests of finding common ground? What fault lines and disconnections might ensue where we had looked, ironically, for sympathy? And perhaps more pressing – how secure are the theoretical structures within which Ireland's apparent cultural and historical proximities to its Central and Eastern European counterparts are typically examined?

In this respect, we have been led throughout by precedent, alert to the strengths and weaknesses apparent in many historical illustrations of 'West to East' engagement. The sentiments of Arthur Griffith's 1904 *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*, for example, are salutary in highlighting the benefits of identification and at the same time, the limitations of such an exercise. According to Griffith, there was a history of political interaction between Ireland and Hungary that had expired, and his project was to revive this in the modern period: '[s]ixty years ago, and more, Ireland was Hungary's exemplar. [...] Times have changed, and Hungary is now Ireland's exemplar'.¹ Informed by his reading of the ways in which Hungary had gained equal status within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Griffith believed a commensurate system, with both Irish and

1 Arthur Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland* 3rd ed. (Dublin: Whelan & Son, 1918), xiii–xiv.

British parliaments subject to a British monarchy, would not only benefit Ireland but would satisfy all political demands on the two islands. Furthermore, he suggested that it would allow Ireland to emulate Hungary, which in his account had developed a great modern literature, an equitable land system and a world-embracing commerce after achieving its goal of dual monarchy.

Griffith's treatise was highly influential: it was reported to have sold 5,000 copies on its first day of publication and became a founding document of Sinn Féin, with many of its tenets re-emerging in the policy formulations of 1921–2. But the Irish-Hungarian parallel was built around a number of blind spots. The historian Michael Laffan notes that quite simply Griffith's polemic 'ignored aspects of Hungarian history that weakened his case'.² As Stipe Grgas points out in his essay in this volume, these included the role played by Croatia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the power Hungary held in relation to Croatia and the Balkan states. In other words, Griffith overlooked the complex frictions of a localized political hierarchy in the region in order to depict the more amenable narrative of a noble Hungary, rising above what he saw as the Balkan states' quisling barbarity towards a 'career of freedom'.³ In Griffith's account of the Hungarian-Irish parallel, the pull towards a galvanizing identification blurs the inconvenient specifics of historical and political process.

It is important to recognize this tendency in the interests of finding a balanced approach to the 'West and East' venture. Reviewing Griffith's treatise in this manner should not just be seen as counselling caution about drawing parallels between Ireland and this region; indeed, rethinking it from a Central and Eastern European perspective that takes into account the experiences of those on the peripheries of empire provides a more nuanced, complicated, fractured account, and renders the example more salient to the Irish context. After all, any depiction of Irish independence

2 Michael Laffan, 'Griffith, Arthur Joseph,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 277–86, available at: <<http://treaty.nationalarchives.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Griffith.pdf>>.

3 Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary*, xxviii.

has to consider the position of Unionists, who in the early twentieth century found themselves locked into a problematic imperial dependency – a position not dissimilar to that of the Croatians and other Balkan states in the Habsburg Empire. When the template of parallel linear narratives of emancipation is adjusted and, instead, the comprehensive experiences of these two sites of intra-European colonization are considered together, opportunities emerge for a fuller, more astute and engaged understanding of political and ideological currencies in both regions.

If there are continuing risks of essentialism in the West-and-East conversation, then there are also – importantly for both sides – enabling critical initiatives. Of these, the most compelling has been postcolonialism, which lends a viable theoretical incentive to readings of the relationship. Ireland, as Ina Gjurgjan argued persuasively in *An Irish Mirror for Croatian Literature*, illustrated the reach and value of postcolonial critique, and a similar perspective should be brought to bear on Central and Eastern European countries such as Croatia, to reveal the many similarities of historical and cultural profile. As Borislav Knežević put it in the same publication: ‘postcolonial discourse made it possible for Irish culture to begin articulating a critical idiom that by definition needed to enter into dialogue with similar or comparable experiences from around the world.’⁴ But this is by no means a straightforward matter and, in his contribution to this volume on the traces of nostalgia that distinguish certain postcolonial readings of Joyce, Knežević outlines some of the problems involved in attempts to frame Croatia and Ireland in a commensurate postcolonial perspective. In short, any such readings need to be carefully modulated in the context of internal European relational constructs.

They must liaise, moreover, with the adjacent discourse of ‘Balkanism’, the concept defined by Maria Todorova in her groundbreaking 1997 study *Imagining the Balkans*. Todorova’s thesis was developed in the context of

4 Borislav Knežević, ‘Ireland, Croatia and Postcoloniality: Between too Much and too Little Theory’, in Ljiljana Ina Gjurgjan and Tihana Klepač eds, *Irsko Ogledalo za Hrvatsku Književnost: Teorijske Pretpostavke, Književne Usporedbe, Recepcija* (*An Irish Mirror for Croatian Literature: Theoretical Premises, Comparisons, Reception*) (Zagreb: FF Press, 2007), 272.

(though never in wholesale deference to) Edward Said's model of imperial cultural hegemony outlined in *Orientalism* (1978), and it similarly opened up a rich field of critical interest in the strategic or collaborative stereotyping of the various countries – Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania – which found themselves grouped accordingly, if sometimes inappropriately or inconsistently, in the Balkan category.⁵ Todorova's detailed illumination of the process through which Western Europe 'constructed' the cultural (and frequently, political) profile of the south-eastern regions of the continent, through memoirs, travelogues, diplomatic rhetoric, literary works and visual imagery, elaborates on the argument previously mobilized by Larry Wolff, in *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994), that Western European nations were compelled by the rationalizing logic of the Enlightenment to project a necessary and sublimated 'Other' onto the face of their Eastern neighbours.⁶

Bolstered by the success of postcolonial studies elsewhere and supported too by companion developments in European imagology, 'Balkanism' gained a solid critical visibility from the mid-1990s onwards. The discourse gave impetus to a compelling list of books, from Vesna Goldsworthy's highly influential *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998), to Andrew Hammond's *The Debated Lands: British and American Representations of the Balkans* (2007). Both authors illustrate the facility with which literary, filmic and popular cultural imagery of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe has underpinned Western ideological structures of distinction from and authority over the region. The historically rooted concept of the 'Balkan Other' gained fresh political pertinence, meanwhile, as Western Europe gradually absorbed the collapse of the communist bloc and the revolutions of 1989. Caricatures based on Eastern European

5 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). For a discussion of the limits of the parallels between Said's project and the concept of Balkanism, see: K.E. Fleming, 'Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography', *The American Historical Review*, 105/4 (October 2000), 1218–33.

6 See Wolff's useful historical discussion of this discourse in: Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

Gothic in general, and the dictator/vampire conceit in particular, were re-engaged, either to convey the 'dark' side of the continent to a Western Europe anxious about expansion and accession, or to stand as metonyms for more general political shadows – of violence, ethnic conflict or state repression – across the terrain of international late capitalism.⁷

A cohesive idea was engaged therefore – a cultural discourse of 'Balkanism' bolstered by centuries of political historiography on the condition of what Tom Gallagher has described as 'outcast Europe'.⁸ In this, of course, we can locate an attractive if predictable Irish parallel with the concept of 'Celticism', the historical and cultural process through which 'Ireland' is understood to have been constructed as 'Other' to the ruling identity of the English crown. If the Balkans were 'imagined', Ireland was similarly 'invented'; it surely followed that the same academic methods might apply in order to expose, in both locations, the hierarchical logic of power and the rapacious grip of cultural imperialism.

The parallel was given added incentive by the cultural after-effects of political violence in both locations, and by the metonymic processes through which modern Ireland and Central/Eastern Europe became locked into essentializing political histories, regardless of 'real time' political movement. Both places became rendered, typically, as fossilized conflict zones. As Todorova has observed, 'Eastern Europe' has functioned less as a geographical fact than as a political synonym for communist Europe or Warsaw Pact Europe, and, as she further points out, the descriptor the 'Balkan War(s)' facilitates a lax spillage of political violence across borders in what

7 This reflex is illuminated by Goldsworthy: '[i]f the Balkan peoples are frequently accused of being trapped in their own history, many of the outsiders dealing with the region have also shown an unwillingness to think beyond a symbolic, formulaic representation, to the point where [...] the Balkans have become nothing but a metaphor for conflict, incivility and violence'. Vesna Goldsworthy, 'Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization', in Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić, eds, *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002), 25–38, 34.

8 Tom Gallagher, *Outcast Europe: The Balkans, 1789 to 1989, from the Ottomans to Milošević* (London: Routledge, 2001).

has already been constructed as a volatile region: '[t]here was no Balkan War in the Balkans: Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, even Albania before the latest conflict, have not been involved in any way with what was essentially a succession struggle strictly confined to Yugoslavia.'⁹ Actual space has also readily assumed figurative functions in Ireland, so that, for instance, 'Northern Ireland' is less a geographical space than a signifier of a vexed political construction, and 'Belfast' continues to operate as an easy synonym for sectarian violence. In different ways, Irish writers have explored the opportunities for modes of foreign exchange by employing the rhetorical currency generated by this mapping of European spaces. In his 1995 novel *Black Night at Big Thunder Mountain*, Belfast novelist Glenn Patterson implicitly twins his native city with the eastern Croatian city of Vukovar, besieged by Serbian forces in 1991: 'Vukovar. A word like the crack of a single rifle shot.'¹⁰ The sentence reduces 'place' to 'word', with all its connotations embedded. Mária Kurdi and Eglantina Rempert unveil in their essays here how just such a version of a repressed 'Eastern' Europe has continued to provide Irish novelists with a lens through which they can focus on Irish problems. The 1956 Hungarian uprising that was brutally put down by the Soviets forms a background to Glenn Patterson's *Number 5* (2003) and Mark Collins's *Stateless* (2006), as both novels feature refugees who have fled from this event. Kurdi and Rempert highlight how, through the fates of these refugees in Ireland, the novelists offer seemingly detached commentaries on the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland (*Number 5*) and on the cruel clerical provincialism of the mid-century Republic of Ireland, while observing too, by implication, the fate of contemporary migrants in this state (*Stateless*).

But if both Ireland and Central and Eastern Europe have been frequently translated into stereotypical sites of political violence, a Balkanist/Celticist alignment falters under critical exposure. The problems of

9 Maria Todorova, 'Introduction: Learning Memory, Remembering Identity', in Maria Todorova, ed., *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (London: Hurst and Company, 2004), 1–24, 14, 7–8 n.18.

10 Glenn Patterson, *Black Night at Big Thunder Mountain* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1995), 6.

'Balkanism' itself emerged almost as quickly as the discourse itself: despite its viability across history and geography, it was apparent to many critics employing Balkanist ideas that a postcolonial model of the 'other Europe' was compromised, even more so perhaps than for an Irish counterpart. Most commentators (including Todorova) were understandably hesitant about any straightforward transfer of postcolonial readings to the complex geographies of Central, Eastern and Balkan Europe. A lexicon of caution surfaced around the subject. In *Inventing Eastern Europe* Larry Wolff had conceded only to a 'demi-Orientalisation' in the cultural connection, while in *The Balkans and the West*, Andrew Hammond drew attention to the paradoxical 'outsider within' position occupied by peripheral countries simultaneously aligned with, and 'other' to, a mainstream European identity. Vesna Goldsworthy carefully nuanced her Ruritanian thesis with a version of Balkan identity seen to oscillate, ambivalently, between European conformity and Oriental difference. The relationship between the European West and East quickly fragmented a neat postcolonial binary into the varied permutations (most of which had also been engaged in Irish postcolonial studies) of 'hybrid' or 'minority' discourse, or was hedged by a critical vocabulary based on gradations and liminality: critics of the subject spoke of 'in-between peripherality' or of 'nesting Orientalisms'.¹¹

While such understandings of Ireland and Central and Eastern European as being both 'in' and 'outside' Europe usefully participate in the project of 'provincialising' the notion of Europe, to evoke Dipesh Chakrabarty's term, they underline, at the same time, the extent to which paradox compromises the translation of postcolonial concepts. Chakrabarty deconstructs Europe's 'universalist' claims by tracing the evolution of ideas

11 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 7; Andrew Hammond, *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other, 1945–2003* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), xiv; Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1998), 2. See also Carmen Andras, 'Romania and its Images in British Travel Writing: In-Between Peripherality and Cultural Interference', *Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14 (April 2003), 1–10; and Milica Bakić-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia', *Slavic Review* 54/4 (Winter 1995), 917–31.

that came to represent Europe – reason, liberty, historicism – and showing how they are specifically located and constructed. Places beyond this notion of Europe were deprived of a sense of history, by being set in an undifferentiated past.¹² If Chakrabarty's perspective from Indian colonial experience makes Europe one place amongst many in a global sense, Balkanism and Celticism illustrate that there are many 'Europes' within Europe, and that regions *within* Europe were 'othered' and marginalized in the very process of creating the European idea.

The limitations of postcolonial metanarratives become increasingly apparent in the current political landscape. Postcolonial (Balkanist) readings simply fail to account properly for the political realities of Eastern and Central European countries *after* the collapse of the communist regimes. While projects of ethnic and religious othering were pursued rigorously in places such as the states of the former Yugoslavia, these could not be convincingly phrased in terms of imperial or colonial dynamics. The transitions of the region inevitably upset the smooth assimilative workings of a Balkanist discourse, and blanket treatments of Central and Eastern Europe in terms of a homogenized historical subjection, whether imperial (to Constantinople or Vienna), military (Berlin) or communist (Moscow), were inevitably reductive as much as productive in this respect, obscuring the cultural disparateness and political irregularity of the post-1989 landscape.

Tensions about 'Balkanism' and the problematic aspects of Irish post-colonialism were a subtext to the *Ireland: East and West* initiative, and thinking through these towards a revised set of approaches was a priority of the 2011 conference. One of the strongest ideas to emerge was that of a necessary *spatial* awareness of the continent of Europe as a location for connections, interrelations and proximities not necessarily driven by imperial frameworks. In his chronology *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, Tony Judt reminds us of the fundamental spatial sensibility informing the character of non-Western European regions. We confront here, he suggests,

12 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

'not so much [...] an *absolute* geography – where a country or people actually are – as a *relative* geography: where they sit in relation to others.'¹³ The point may seem obvious but is frequently underplayed in our discussions of countries at the outer edges of the European landmass. Bringing Ireland and Central and Eastern Europe into proximity promises to tell us something about how cultures relate to their geographical positioning on the periphery of the continent. In Ireland, concepts of the Atlantic archipelago or the Celtic fringe have provided useful alternative formations to an Anglo-Irish binary, and numerous permutations of 'the Other Europe' (Ludmilla Kostova's useful shorthand for the difficult conglomerate of the region) similarly play on the sidelines of Balkanist dialectics.¹⁴

Indeed, the spatial arrangements of Central and Eastern Europe have allowed for overlapping, layered, competing or residual identities to articulate themselves; they permit peripheral and liminal cultures to be exposed without, necessarily, any reference to an overarching imperial/colonial hierarchy. In this light, the complex responses of these cultures and nations to their immediate neighbours, and particularly their competing impulses towards the designation of the 'border' state or cultural edge, must be factored in to their profile as much as their subjugation to any centralizing imperial authority. A multi-layered contextualization such as this provides a more nuanced forum in which to bring Ireland and this region into dialogue. This is illustrated by Lili Zách and Natalie Wynn in this volume, as their historical essays outline two alternative ways in which relations between Ireland and Central and Eastern Europe have been developed. Zách examines a fraught episode in the attempts by Irish and Czechoslovak diplomats to link their countries under the rubric of 'small nations' in the interwar years and during World War II. Connections established through the migration of 'minorities' are explored by Wynn, who interrogates the ways in which the migrations of Jews from Tsarist Russia to Ireland have been portrayed in popular and academic accounts.

13 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 753.

14 Ludmilla Kostova, 'Inventing Post-Wall Europe: Visions of the "Old Continent" in Contemporary British Fiction and Drama', *Yearbook of European Studies* 15 (2000), 83–102; see 83 n.1.

This critical expansion of terms is worth pursuing further within contemporary academic structures, in particular to explore how notions such as ‘peripherality’ and ‘minor(ities)’ might shed light on the complex relationships between history, geography and artistic production. Judt’s recognition of Europe’s ‘relative geography’ has found echoes over the past decade in what has come to be known as world literary studies.¹⁵ For David Damrosch, world literature involves maintaining a stereoscopic perspective – recognizing the national origins of literatures and, at the same time, allowing for perspectives other than the national to be brought to bear on any text. In this procedure, the concept of the national canon is displaced by a broader range of interests and connections:

[r]eading and studying world literature [...] is inherently a more detached mode of engagement; it enters into a different kind of dialogue with the work, not one involving identification or mastery but the discipline of distance and difference. We encounter the work not at the heart of its source culture but in the field of force generated among works that may come from very different cultures and eras.

[...] The result may be almost the opposite of the ‘fusion of horizons’ that Friedrich Schleiermacher envisioned when we encounter a distant text; we may actually experience our customary horizon being set askew, under the influence of works whose foreignness remains fully in view.¹⁶

Many of the essays here embody just such an attitude. Guy Woodward, for instance, insists that any reading of John Hewitt’s achievements must also register the Eastern European dimension in his poetry and not just his Ulster/British/Irish positioning. In a similarly broadening fashion, Philip Coleman traces how Eastern European encounters function as sources of dislocation in the works of Irish poets; indeed, as he shows, Hugh Maxton writes of his first experience of Hungary almost precisely in terms of it setting his ‘horizon [...] askew’.

15 For a comprehensive overview of this field see, Theo D’haen, *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2012).

16 David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 300.

This field of world literature studies has, in many respects, emerged out of postcolonial studies. However, it provides more elastic conceptions both of power relations between states and of how these relate to literary production. Indeed, the primary focus of debates around world literature has been reimagining the relationship of the centre to the periphery by examining how writers from the peripheries have negotiated this disjuncture. Revisiting the conception of *Weltliteratur*, for instance, Damrosch reminds us that Goethe believed that German culture at the time he coined this phrase was inherently 'provincial, lacking a great history, lacking political unity'. Initially feeling this to be an impoverishment, Goethe came to review this as a form of freedom from the weight of tradition, and so, as Damrosch concludes: '[t]he provincial writer is thus at once cut off but also free from the bonds of an inherited tradition, and in principle can engage all the more fully, and by mature choice, with a broader literary world: Joyce and Walcott are far more cosmopolitan writers than Proust and Woolf'.¹⁷

With a similar recalibration of perspective, Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999/2004), the most fully developed and noted study in this field, traces various routes through which writers from marginal cultures could forge careers in metropolitan centres. Notably, Ireland is a key example for Casanova: by negotiating and taking advantage of their positions between the metropolises – London, Paris and, more recently, New York – Irish writers have come to hold a central position in her concept of the World Republic of Letters. But while this book offers a salutary rethinking of the links that obtain between economic and political power and cultural capital, it nonetheless privileges and fails to disturb the positions of the metropolises.¹⁸ Joe Cleary has pointed out that a consideration of other empires such as the Habsburg, Ottoman and Soviet ones would

17 *Ibid.*, 8, 13.

18 See Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, M.B. DeBevoise trans. (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004); Damrosch talks of the 'implicit triumphalism' of Casanova's work, 'which might better be titled *La République parisienne des lettres*. An unsatisfactory account of world literature in general, Casanova's book is actually a good account of the operation of world literature within the modern French context.' (Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, 27n.)

produce a different cultural history of the evolution of literary modernism. And in suggesting a trajectory that does not necessarily proceed via metropolitan cultures, he provides a rationale for an enabling form of transnational thinking that can assist in the recalibration of Balkanist/Celticist perspectives:

[p]eripheral cultures [...] have to wrestle with different constraints, handicaps and dilemmas than metropolitan cultures do, but this can be a spur and stimulus, as well as an obstacle, to cultural and intellectual creativity. What this means is that the organicist, insular and narrowly nationalized models of social and cultural history usually favoured both by imperialist and anti-imperialist nationalist historiography are particularly disabling and misplaced in colonial and peripheral societies.¹⁹

Peripherality – Irish or Eastern European – can be read in these terms as a positive and dynamic state-of-being, outside the hierarchized binary of postcolonial and post-imperial modelling. In his essay here on the cultural history of music in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ireland, Barra Ó Seaghdha charts a route for future studies in this field that traverses just such a terrain. It is only after coming to a proper understanding of the relations that obtained between Irish and British cultural histories (an analysis that does not, in other words, implicitly or explicitly privilege one above the other) that Irish experience, according to Ó Seaghdha, can be brought into the sort of meaningful dialogue with its peripheral counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe that might usefully realign the compass of Irish cultural history.

For many scholars such strategies hark back to earlier incentives to articulate for Ireland the significance of minoritarian discourse. In his 1987 study *Nationalism and Minor Literature*, David Lloyd recruited the notion of ‘minor literature’ to the case of Ireland, reading the ‘minor’ as betokening a refusal to engage with totalizing narratives of identity, be they imperial or nationalist, that project a complete subjectivity. Evidently,

For an overview of criticisms of Casanova (and a critique of Damrosch’s view), see D’haen, *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature*, 104–8.

19 Joe Cleary, ‘The National Novel in an Imperial Age’, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2007), 47–75, 75.

this is not an unproblematic reading of a concept controversial even in its original articulation (in Deleuze and Guattari's account of Kafka), but a loose understanding of 'minor literature' is nonetheless suggestive for this West-to-East project.²⁰ It focuses attention on the sometimes difficult and ambivalent relationship between language and literary production in peripheral regions: having to come to terms with the question of what is one's language and how it relates to the language of empire has been a dilemma facing many writers in non-metropolitan contexts. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a 'minor literature' does not 'come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language'. This is particularly suggestive for both the Irish and Central and Eastern European contexts. Not only does the Habsburg empire and its break-up speak to what they describe as the 'movements of deterritorialization' and 'complex reterritorializations' that characterize 'minor literatures', but at the same time Joyce and Beckett emerge in the foreground: writers who '[a]s Irishmen [...] live within the genial conditions of a minor literature'. In this account, Joyce and Beckett's acts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization have rendered their works a 'revolutionary force for all literature.'²¹ Thinking about Irish literature within such a community of minor literatures describes a process of keeping writers like Joyce and Beckett at home abroad and abroad at home, and this is reflected in various ways in the essays here on these two writers. If Borislav Knežević raises suspicions about what might be termed nostalgic reterritorializations of Joyce, Tatjana Jukić offers a complex analysis of a fascinating deterritori-

20 See David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1987). Mark Anderson claims that Deleuze and Guattari do not deal with what Kafka intended by his use of the phrase 'minor literature', which he employed 'to differentiate Löwy's Yiddish Theater from his own German tradition'. It did not betoken a concern with deracination within German, as Deleuze and Guattari claimed. Nonetheless, Anderson finds this 'misreading' both 'flagrant' and 'insightful'. Mark Anderson, ed., *Reading Kafka: Prague, Politics, and the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Schocken Books 1989), 11.

21 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, Dana Polan, trans. (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press) 16, 24, 19, 19.

alization of Joyce – of how he functions as a form of paternal spectre in the work of Danilo Kiš – while Vital Voranau tells the story of the first Belarusian production of *Waiting for Godot*, which was staged in defiance of the political authorities in 1968.

But while the concepts of ‘world’ and ‘minor’ literatures provide ways of rethinking, and thinking together, the *historical* development of Irish and Central and Eastern European cultures, their relevance in relation to the current political and cultural landscape in both locations should not go unquestioned. The linguistic divisions fostered in the aftermath of the Cold War, in Yugoslavia in particular, have resulted in a series of new national literatures that are, in many cases, all too keen to elide their complicated histories and relationships with each other and with the languages of empire. On the other side of the continent, as Casanova suggests, Ireland has moved from a peripheral to a central location in the World Republic of Letters: contemporary Irish writers are regularly in receipt of international awards and are fully integrated into London and New York literary worlds. Cleary surmises that this new status coincides with forms of stagnation in Irish writing, which, it could be said, enjoys a too-comfortable role within the hegemonic Anglophone literary sphere.²² Indeed, it is often writers, scholars and others engaged in different ways with the Irish language who have sought to disrupt this complacency, usually by establishing links with European literatures and cultures. The Irish-language TV station, TG4, has been exemplary in this regard, for instance by screening documentaries that are not Anglo-American; poets such as Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill have subtly refigured Irish women’s experiences by engaging not only with Irish and English, but also with other languages and cultures, such as Italian, Romanian and Turkish; the critic Michael Cronin’s scholarly work on translation and on the Irish language clearly informs his political critique of Ireland’s enthusiastic embrace of neo-liberal hegemonic thought. Such manoeuvres signify a healthy impulse to redirect Irish literatures away from predictable routes, towards minor, disparate, and highly effective strategies of cultural articulation.

22 Joe Cleary, ‘The World Literary System: Atlas and Epitaph’, *Field Day Review* 2 (2006), 196–219, 219.

A final twist to our theoretical modelling here lies in the dislocation of writing from 'national' space altogether, within the European framework. Damrosch's vision of world literature requires that scholars 'work collaboratively' to develop appropriate contextual and textual backgrounds, and in precisely this fashion, this volume benefits from bringing together scholars from countries including Ireland, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Belarus.²³ Several of the contributors here, moreover, are based in countries other than their native ones, and this reflects the focus in many of these essays on individual and personal links which have brought one flank of Europe into contact with the other – another form of spatial reconfiguration that undercuts both 'national' and 'imperial' relationships. The papers in this volume offer a wide-ranging take on the concept of 'connection'. They cover meetings between writers and artists; visits, journeys, and emigrations between the two locations; collaborations and translations; channels of influence, records of reception and interpretation; textual examples of cross-cultural imagery, representation and caricature. Many of these are listed in John McCourt's survey here of Irish fiction's many encounters with Central and Eastern Europe, ranging from well-known points of correspondence – how a Transylvanian vampire-count was re-imagined by one Irish writer in 1897, or how a Hungarian émigré was positioned as a peripatetic Dubliner by another in 1922 – to the less well-known engagements of contemporary fiction, which bring the Eastern European protagonists of Colm McCann's *Zoli*, Hugo Hamilton's *Hand in the Fire* and Chris Binchy's *Open-handed* into a shared critical context. Moreover, as Aisling McKeown notes, the transnational engagements portrayed in the Hamilton and Binchy novels speak directly to the experiences of Eastern European migrants to Ireland, which is now the most obvious manifestation of the movement between East and West that this volume analyses. Considering that Polish is now the second language in Ireland (and the UK), it can only be imagined that Irish literature will increasingly explore the ways in which this movement of people and languages disrupts assumed notions of identity.

23 Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* 286.

While many of the instances of connection examined in this volume may seem arbitrary, even random, they help endorse an argument put repeatedly by Joep Leerssen: that any serious inventory of European identities must take account, in some way, of the *extraterritorial* elements operating outside or across the geopolitical state lines of the continent. The point is evident, Leerssen suggests, if we look back to some of the historical catalysts of European national cultures and their respective non-national affiliations:

[t]he Albanian Naum Vexilharqi lived and worked in what is now Romania. The beginnings of Serbian literary culture lie in the printing presses of Venice and Budapest. After 1830, Polish and Lithuanian intellectuals looked to Kiev as much as to Warsaw or Wilno/Vilnius; Finnish nationalism tapped into ethnically Finnish areas which then, and now, formed part of Russia. One of the first Bulgarian newspapers was printed in Smyrna. One could go on; but the reader will have noticed my drift. Such situations strike us as extraterritorial and therefore slightly anomalous, part of an ethnic primal soup which only later slotted into its proper geographical matrix; and that is an anachronistic post-hoc distortion.²⁴

This observation is stimulating, and helpful in countering the legacy of Benedict Anderson's 1983 *Imagined Communities*, which sees the activities of print culture coalesce, rather too neatly for our purposes here, with a formative national sensibility. Leerssen's highlighting of the 'extraterritorial' provides us with another pertinent category in the development of a spatial and relativist adjustment to European perspectives, a category in which to place several Irish 'anomalies' whose extraterritorial encounters with Central and Eastern Europe operate outside the dynamics of 'national' culture. One might reflect for example, on the musician, ethnographer and linguist Walter Starkie, who left Dublin to wander across Hungary and Transylvania in the 1920s. Exemplary also in this regard is the Irish Protestant cultural and political commentator Hubert Butler, who receives

24 Joep Leerssen, 'The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe', *Working Papers, European Studies, Amsterdam* 2 (Universiteit van Amsterdam: Opleiding Europese Studies, 2005), 16. Available at <<http://spin-net.eu/pdf/wpesa2.pdf>>.

considerable attention in this volume. Michael McAteer analyses the skewed reflections of home that Butler perceived in World War II Yugoslavia; Stipe Grgas reflects on Butler's lack of resonance in Croatia; and Aidan O'Malley considers the limiting ways in which the links between Butler's European experiences and his liberal ethics have been interpreted by Irish commentators. But Butler is also indicative of a trend that can be charted through almost all the essays in this volume, as most of the artistic links forged with Central and Eastern Europe that are discussed have depended on the individual initiatives of Irish writers. The shift to individuals and their discrete inter-cultural connections outside the parameters of the nation or political region becomes perhaps the most useful mechanism for re-reading the West-East and East-West dynamic, operating as it does at a tangent to postcolonial or post-imperial metanarratives.

If space is to be re-evaluated in these discussions, then the conceptualization of non-physical or quasi-spiritual 'spaces' of cross-European connection must also be addressed. Both Ireland and the countries outside Western Europe have invested heavily in supra-national spaces of intellectual and artistic engagement. In her 2000 study of British literary concepts of Romania, *Corridors of Mirrors*, Pia Brinzeau underlines the quintessential 'utopianism' of the Eastern European sensibility, which, she argues, has continually looked beyond political borders towards a spiritual unification with, or intellectual accession to, an 'authentic', liberated Western Europe. This utopian instinct is compounded by the physical deracination of so many Eastern European intellectuals and writers who have literally transcended their national identity and who now 'wander about Western Europe as if it were a labyrinth'.²⁵ Brinzeau's portrait offers interesting parallels for an Irish cultural sensibility. Long-established romantic nationalist concepts of Irish cultural identity as quintessentially Antaeian in quality, 'rooted' in the soil, as it were, disguise the extent to which much 'Irish' cultural activity has always happened outside the island, not least in a 'Europe of the mind'. Richard Kearney sought to fashion just such a location when

25 Pia Brinzeau, *Corridors of Mirrors: The Spirit of Europe in Contemporary British and Romanian Fiction* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000), 12.

he coined the notion of the 'fifth province' in the journal *The Crane Bag* in the late 1970s. This (non-)place sought to express a utopian intellectual and aesthetic retreat, detached from the unpalatable political realities of the island, and was later taken up by the Field Day company. In his Field Day play *The Cure at Troy*, Seamus Heaney mapped an exemplary 'fifth province' through the idea of rhyming hope and history. While it directly refers to the 'Troubles', the impetus behind this utopian concept came, according to Heaney, from 'the extraordinary events of late 1989' that swept across Central and Eastern Europe.²⁶ From such a beginning, rhyming hope and history would become the motto for the Northern Irish peace process, as politicians and journalists found it expressed the inexpressible – the essentially utopian imaginative leap required to change the political and cultural landscape of Northern Ireland.²⁷

But the appeal of an imagined space, or a utopian landscape in which both peripheral Europe and peripheral Ireland have invested at various times, links Heaney and other Irish writers in other, different, ways with places and people across the continent. Irish writers have frequently written of their association with former Eastern-bloc cities – John Banville of Prague for example, or Hugh Maxton (as Philip Coleman outlines in his contribution here) of Budapest – as if these locations furnish them with alternative intellectual and literary identities. In the same context, we might explore Seamus Heaney's veneration of Polish and Czech poets such as Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert and Miroslav Holub, figures celebrated in his 1989 essay collection *The Government of the Tongue* as witnesses to traumatic history, laudable for their resolute attentiveness to pain and conflict. Both directives speak of how, particularly in the context of Irish civic turbulence in the 1970s and 1980s, an Irish *literati* was encouraged by the careful intellectual self-positioning of its Central and Eastern

26 Seamus Heaney, 'The Cure at Troy: Production Notes in No Particular Order', in Marianne McDonald and J. Michael Walton, eds, *Amid Our Troubles: Irish Versions of Greek Tragedy* (London: Methuen: 2002), 171–80, 176.

27 For a discussion of the possibilities and problems inherent in this utopian concept see, Aidan O'Malley, *Field Day and the Translation of Irish Identities: Performing Contradictions* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 120–31.

European counterpart. Heaney's recognition of Eastern European writers as 'witnesses' standing for the oppressed against their respective regimes underlines his construction, in more general terms, of the writer as the quintessential 'dissident': it is communist-bloc Europe which informs his poems from *The Haw Lantern* collection in 1987, 'From the Frontier of Writing' and 'From the Republic of Conscience', which appear to unite the imagery of Northern Irish impasse with that of Eastern bloc menace in order to substantiate the artist as politically transcendent.

There is a catch here of course; at what stage does an Irish literary aspiration to the condition of the East European dissident intellectual become a fetish? In the same vein, is there a risk of the Irish writer romanticizing East European political repression as a kind of vicarious indulgence? The connection between West and East in this respect has the potential to be exploitative or voyeuristic, despite the evident 'solidarity' which Brinzeau and others have identified between Ireland and the countries of the former Soviet bloc.

Chronologically too, the disjunction between a postmodern West and an East still displaying what appear to many as the remnants of European feudalism is difficult to negotiate. In *The Balkanization of the West*, Meštrović makes a similar point, emphasizing the propensity of a turbulent post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe to be reduced to the condition of 'spectacle' – a throwback primitivism – for its Western neighbours.²⁸ While egregious examples of this tendency can be located in books such as Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (1993), this view of the East has also found expression in works of writers from the East, in particular in Kristeva's *Crisis of the European Subject* (2000). One of the most important figures in contemporary cultural thinking, Slavoj Žižek, has also been accused by Bjelić of depriving the Balkans of agency by framing the region as a site that haunts Europe and is 'structured like the unconscious

28 Stjepan G. Meštrović, *The Balkanization of the West: Between Postmodernism and Postcommunism* (London: Routledge, 1994).