

Preface

It is a happy coincidence of the calendar that many diplomats arrive to post in Brazil at the end of August just as the WB Yeats Chair of Irish Studies hosts an event to close the activities of its academic year. So, it was my luck to arrive to Brazil and be welcomed by the XII Symposium of Irish Studies in South America.

Joyce said in *Ulysses* that you might “think you’re escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home” (360). Whilst I had heard that there was a strong Irish Studies movement in Brazil, I had never expected to find the range and depth of engagement that met me on arrival and, since that discovery, I have been ever more impressed.

To explain the scale of what has been developing in Brazil, I often give the example of the Bloomsday celebrations which take place the length and breadth of the country, from Rio Grande do Norte to Rio Grande do Sul. It is also impressive that there are three translations of *Ulysses* in print in Brazilian Portuguese and even more so that, in addition to Donaldo Schüler’s “Finnicius Revém”, at least two further Brazilian translations of *Finnegan’s Wake* are “in progress”.

On his visit to Brazil in 2012, the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins explored the deep historical links between our two countries, but acknowledged the small size of the Irish community here, certainly relative to the United States. He described his discovery of Irish Studies in Brazil “as if one had happened on an oasis of learning, sustained by a small dedicated group from within South America who pursue the study of Irish Literature purely on its own merits”.

As the Irish studies community continues to grow here and be passed on to other generations I wonder if we should think of a river rather than an oasis.

The recent foundation of a Brazilian Joyce Society is another landmark whilst in Florianópolis, I have been able to witness the extraordinary development of the Núcleo de Estudos Irlandeses at the Federal University of Santa Catarina under the leadership and guidance of Beatriz Kopschitz Bastos.

In November 2018, Munira Mutran received the Presidential Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her work and the work of ABEI and the WB Yeats Chair now being led by Laura Izarra and Mariana Bolfarine, and I have taken particular pleasure in hearing new generations of students of Irish literature in presenting their work.

The area of study is also expanding. Beyond the classic voices such as Yeats and Joyce, Irish Studies in Brazil has also celebrated the contemporary, embraced the multidisciplinary, explored at times difficult themes and helped throw light on Ireland’s history and present. During my time in Brazil, we have been joined by such voices as Sinéad Gleeson, Marina Carr, Fintan O’Toole and Mary O’Donnell as well as academics from the many different Irish universities who have links with Brazil.

In a single week in August 2019 it was possible to see two different works by George Bernard Shaw on the Sao Paulo stage thanks to Rosalie R. Haddad, experience the ‘Irish Lives’ documentary film season with Alan Gilson at the Cinemateca Brasileira and attend the XIV Symposium of Irish Studies in South America. A truly fitting way to mark the 30th anniversary of ABEI and the 10th Anniversary of the WB Yeats Chair.

In 2020 it has been unfortunate, but inevitable that many events have had to be cancelled or postponed but we are all adapting to these changes. At the same time that we are

finding through technology new ways to connect on-line, we are finding meaning and even solace through language, ideas and words. For this reason, I have absolute confidence that Irish studies in Brazil can continue to go from strength to strength in a moment when the humanities have never been more relevant to interpreting the world around us.

Barry Tumelty
Consul General of Ireland in Sao Paulo

Works Cited

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008.