

## Introduction

This special issue is part of the celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Irish Studies at University of São Paulo (USP). The fact that the *ABEI Newsletter*, published from 1989 till 1998, gave birth to the *ABEI Journal*, now in its seventh issue, makes us very proud. It reflects the support of colleagues and scholars abroad and in Brazil that we have received throughout this quarter-century.

The present volume pays homage to A. Norman Jeffares, whose recent death has deprived the Irish Studies community of a figure of major importance. At our request, he had kindly sent this article on Iseult to be reprinted with the agreement of David Coakley and Mary O'Doherty, the editors of *Borderlands: Essays of Literature and Medicine in Honour of J.B. Lyons*. *ABEI Journal* No. 7 also includes articles on drama, fiction, cultural intersections, Juan José Delaney's first play previously unpublished and book reviews.

The Postgraduate Course in Irish Studies, the only one of its kind in Brazil, took in its first students in 1980. Since then its production tally includes a postdoctoral thesis, eleven PhDs and nine MAs. Many of these postgraduates have gone on to become multipliers of Irish Literature in English in their own work at different Brazilian Institutions. These academic activities have resulted in various publications such as theses and dissertations in book form and translations into Portuguese of Irish short stories, plays and poems, which are listed here in the section Academic Production in Brazil.

The Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, through the Cultural Relations Committee, has been supporting this Programme since 1986 with donations of books and by funding the visits of Irish lecturers to give postgraduate courses at USP and other Brazilian universities. Thus, we have been privileged to receive Maurice Harmon (UCD), Terence Brown (TCD), Nicholas Grene (TCD), Declan Kiberd (UCD), Terence Dolan (UCD), Patrick Sheeran (NUI-Galway), David Norris (TCD) and Margaret Kelleher (NUI-Maynooth). Other academic exchanges have enabled us to receive visits from David Harkness, Ronald Buchanan and John Cronin from Queen's University Belfast; Richard Allen Cave and Ann Varty from Royal Holloway College; Maureen Murphy (Hofstra University, NY), James Doan (Nova Southeastern University), Heinz Kosok (Wuppertal University) and Dawn Duncan (Concordia College, USA).

In 1988 The Brazilian Association of Irish Studies (ABEI) was founded by professors and students of the Programme. This Association published 13 Newsletters and the *ABEI Journal*. It has organised the Bloomsday celebrations since 1988, which have become a feature of the cultural and social calendar in São Paulo, with presentations of Irish plays, poetry and music for the general public.

The University of São Paulo received the state visits of President Mary Robinson in 1994, the Taoiseach Mr. Bernie Ahern in 2001 and President Mary McAleese in 2004, thus confirming the significance of the research done on Irish Studies at the university.

In July 2002, it hosted the Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL), with the support of Brazilian and Irish government funding agencies. The opening ceremony was presided over by the first Irish Ambassador in Brazil Mr. Martin Grene. Among the writers that honoured us with their visit along the years were Paul Durcan, John Banville, Michael Longley and Billy Roche.

As a sign of our deepest gratitude, this issue is dedicated to all those who have been part of this challenging project of bringing the cultures of Ireland and Brazil closer together.



*Museu Paulista USP (Photograph by Helio Nobre).*