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In a 2015 interview to *The Guardian*, Anne Enright stated that “traditionally, Irish writing has been about breaking silences. The biggest silence has continued to be about the real lives of women” (Jordan 2015). In Enright’s view, since the Celtic Tiger Irish literature has lately demonstrated a brand-new interest in female voices. Literary criticism has also showed an increasing concern about broader political, cultural, historical and social aspects of gender questions in contemporary Ireland. The special issue of *Estudios Irlandeses: Gender Issues in Contemporary Ireland* (2018), edited by Melania Terrazas Gallego, adds to this critical trend that approaches gender from different standpoints.

The issue is divided into three parts, covering representations of masculinity in Irish literature, theatre and film, questions of femininity in Irish fiction and theatre, and reflections by authors Rob Doyle and Evelyn Conlon. The plurality of critical approaches, from ecofeminism to satire theory, makes of this special issue edited by Melania Terrazas an enriching contribution to Irish gender studies.

In the first essay “Groping towards Morality: Feminism, AIDS, and the Spectre of Article 41 in Thomas Kilroy’s *Ghosts*”, José Lanter explores Kilroy’s adaptation of the Henrik Ibsen’s play to 1980’s Ireland, focusing on the aspects of unfaithful husbands, failed marriages, the 1986 Divorce Referendum, and the AIDS outbreak in the 1980s. Lanter carefully demonstrates the aspects considered by Kilroy when adapting the play (1881) to the Irish context, explaining whether the playwright was successful in his endeavor.

The engagement of new materialism and ecofeminism in the works of writer and cartographer Tim Robinson is analyzed in Maureen O’Connor’s “‘Informed Love’: Human and Non-Human Bodies in Tim Robinson’s Ethical Aesthetic”. In this article, O’Connor offers a reading of Robinson’s characterization of the Western male subject through the lens of ecofeminism, drawing parallels between his aesthetics and the work of ecofeminist authors, such as Karen J. Warren and Val Plumwood. O’Connor’s illuminating piece examines the way Robinson gives agency to human and non-human creatures, acknowledging non-human consciousness and resisting gender hierarchies.

Two articles approach John Banville’s representations of masculinity and femininity. In “The ‘Woman’ as a Frame for the Self: Femininity, Ekphrasis, and Aesthetic Selfhood in John Banville’s *Eclipse*, *Shroud*, and *Ancient Light*”, Mehdi Ghassemi investigates the quest of Banville’s male protagonists in search of their true selves, dialoguing with Paul de Man’s concept of “ontological crisis” and Friedrich Nietzsche’s notion of “surface”. Ghassemi argues that the female characters in Banville’s works are often subjected to the male gaze, becoming objects of desire as well as the epistemological and ontological self.

Mar Asensio Aróstegui offers a counterpoint to Ghassemi’s reading in “The Role of Female Characters in the Narrator’s Quest for Identity in John Banville’s *Eclipse*”. By focusing on characterization and spectrality in the novel *Eclipse*, Aróstegui argues that Banville’s female characters refuse to become mere objects of male desire, challenging, fascinating and invading the space of the male protagonist. To Aróstegui, the female characters are able to redirect the

male protagonist's search for identity.

The last article focusing on representations of masculinity is José Díaz-Cuesta's "Representations of Masculinities in John Michael McDonagh's Satirical Film Text *The Guard*", the author examines the satirical masculinities in the movie by the London-born playwright. Díaz-Cuesta divides his analysis into four "masculinity sites", namely the body, action, the external world, and the internal world. This piece argues that the characterization of the protagonist Sergeant Gerry Boyle as a racist and politically incorrect individual aims at exaggerating and ridiculing the stereotypical Irish male.

The section on femininity issues opens with the essay "Thematic Transgressions and Formal Innovations in Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls Trilogy and Epilogue*", by María Amor Barros-del Río. The author questions the frequent classification of O'Brien's *The Country Girls* as a Bildungsroman, arguing that a feminine novel of formation was impossible in 1960's Ireland. Through an examination of literary conventions, Barros-del Río demonstrates that, in the context of its publication, O'Brien's trilogy presents fragmented and transgressive women protagonists who are incompatible with the successful male hero of the Bildungsroman.

The work of another Irish woman writer is scrutinized in Alicia Muro Llorente's "The Modernisation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: Identity and Gender in Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*". In this article, Llorente reads Irish Murdoch's novel *The Black Prince* (1973) as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) to fiction, where the female characters Ophelia and Gertrude are in the spotlight. Llorente suggests that this emphasis on women reveals Murdoch's own views on gender issues, as the male characters is untrustworthy and misogynist.

Gender issues are also relevant for translation studies, as Edurne Goñi Alsúa illustrates in "Translating Characters: Eliza Doolittle 'Rendered' into Spanish". The author examines five translations of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913) into Spanish through the lens of lexical, grammatical and sociolinguistic frameworks. In particular, Alsúa investigates how Eliza Doolittle's Cockney accent is translated into Spanish and whether Shaw's characterization of Eliza as a woman who is ahead of her time is modified or even emphasized in the translations in question.

The final research essay analyzes media and advertisement discourses in the work of Louise O'Neill. Ekaterina Muraveva's "Beauty Magazines' Discourse in the Dystopian World of Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours*" presents an exploration of beauty stereotypes, gender discrimination, alienation, and female identity in the dystopian novel. Muraveva states that O'Neill's work dialogues with the representation of women by beauty magazines such as the *Cosmopolitan*. Visual images and text format, lexical choices, and rhetorical devices are among the aspects studied by Muraveva in this essay.

Finally, the special issue of *Estudios Irlandeses* presents reflections on gender issues by two Irish writers. In "Male Trouble – Writing about Men in Feminist Times", Rob Doyle writes about growing up in an almost all-male environment and the examination of what it means to be a man in a time of feminist transformation. He argues that "intrinsically resistant to edicts and ideology, fiction provides a lens for studying the open sores of modern gender relations" (139). Evelyn Conlon in "Gender Issues in my Work" reflects on being not a feminist writer, but "a writer who is feminist" (142), meaning that her main concerns are not about gender per se, but about relations between people. Even though Conlon writes that gender trouble is not her main preoccupation, it is inevitably present in her works.

*Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Fiction* is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to Irish gender studies. The strength of this publication is its plurality of critical approaches which enlighten the multiple standpoints through which gender questions may be analyzed. Moreover,

the contributions on the representations of masculinity and femininity in Irish literature, theatre and film offer further possible themes of research in the field of gender studies.

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### **Works Cited**

Jordan, Justine. "A New Irish Literary Boom: the Post-Crash Stars of Fiction." *The Guardian*, 17 Oct. 2015, [www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/17/new-irish-literary-boom-post-crash-stars-fiction](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/17/new-irish-literary-boom-post-crash-stars-fiction).