

The Oldest Chair of German in the World

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Exploring the current situation of German Studies in Ireland is particularly interesting thanks to the fact – indeed greatly overlooked – that one of the present-day Irish Republic’s universities is responsible for having in a certain way institutionalized studies related to that discipline at an academic level. In fact, as Trinity College Dublin’s website declares, “[t]he Department’s Chair of German (1776) is believed to be the oldest in the world”.¹

How is it that German Studies evolved in Ireland in the second half of the 18th century up through today? Or rather, how did it survive over the course of almost two-and-a-half centuries of multiple changes, often outright devastations, of a political, historical-cultural and religious character to which the country of Ireland, dependent on Great Britain until 1922, has been host?

Following the setting up of a Chair of German at Trinity College Dublin, in 1849 language department chairs were added at Cork, Galway and in what is now Northern Ireland, in Belfast, where in some cases one professor was responsible for the teaching of various languages and literatures.² Nevertheless, in spite of the important role that Dublin has had in making German Studies official, German has never established itself as the first foreign language of the country. Instead, it has always been outdone by French, because many Irish schools depended and still depend on French religious orders, because of purely political reasons, and because Ireland has followed the model of England, which is geographically close to France and which tends – in spite of the secular, political-cultural Franco-English rift – toward learning its language. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the widespread resistance on the part of Anglophone peo-

¹ http://www.ted.ie/Germanic_Studies/research (04-04-2012).

² For a more detailed profile of the history of German Studies in Ireland see Joachim Fischer - Manfred Lukas Schewe, *Deutschunterricht und Germanistikstudium in der Republik Irland*, in *Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Ein internationales Handbuch*, edited by Gerard Helbig et al. 2. Halbband (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 1471-1480, especially pp. 1471-1473.



ples, due perhaps to being aware of having the tool that permits them to communicate throughout the globe, to enlarge their knowledge of foreign languages. Nonetheless, German today is studied more in Ireland than in the United Kingdom.

Peculiarities of the Irish education system: the learning of Gaelic

As many people know, in the Republic of Ireland (Éire) there are two coexisting national languages: Irish (or rather, Irish Gaelic, simply referred to as Irish) and English. Despite the Celtic revival which developed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and which led both to the foundation of a Gaelic League and to various authors refusing to write in English, preferring their native idiom instead, the most significant results of that rebirth are indebted to artists (William Butler Yeats being a perfect example) who published in English and who in their turn were heavily indebted to the culture of London. The Celtic Twilight – an expression borrowed from a poem of Yeats and a term which refers to the literary revival under the aegis of Irish tradition and native culture – was realized for the most part using the English language. Experiments like that of John Millington Synge to probe the Gaelic spoken in the extreme west of the country, that is, in the Aran Islands,³ have an indubitable sociolinguistic and anthropologic value, but from a literary perspective remain rather isolated.

Starting in the year 1922, the year Éire was founded, institutions undertook an intense course of action intended to create and consolidate Irish national consciousness; programs of various scholastic disciplines were revisited, modified and integrated in order to enhance everything that could contribute to strengthening Irish identity. As a consequence, the fight for the study of Gaelic inevitably created a not entirely favorable context for the learning of a third language. In just such a situation for a long time French – understood to be the language of Catholic culture as opposed to that of the predominance of

³ Cf. John Millington Synge, *The Aran Islands* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).



Protestant English – maintained a privileged position in contrast to German. An extremely indicative example is that reported by Joachim Fischer and Manfred Schewe, who record that in 1927 only 33 students at the secondary school took final exams in German.⁴

Recent developments

The situation radically changed only in the 1960s-70s thanks to the Goethe-Institut in Dublin (1961), the elimination of taxes related to higher education and Ireland's entrance into the European Community (1973), which determined a program of active collaboration with Germany and therefore the necessity of learning the language of Europe's most powerful economy. In successive years, thanks as well to specific institutional provisions aimed at incentivizing German, the number of students in whose Leaving Certificate German appears constantly increased (from 3.5% in 1985 to 18.4% in 1995),⁵ before slowing down in the second half of the 1990s. On the one hand, English's position as an international lingua franca made learning the language for industrial and economic cooperation with German companies to some degree unnecessary. On the other, awareness of Ireland's economic boom made it optional to emigrate to richer European countries, *in primis* Germany, to find a job related to one's professional profile.

Even if – beginning in primary schools where the study of Gaelic is compulsory – in 1998 it became possible to study another foreign language, the most common choice continues to be French. In 2007/08 64% of students studied French compared to only 13% who opted for German.⁶ The fact that the four universities belonging to the *National University of Ireland* (NUI: <http://www.nui.ie>) recently decided that knowledge of a third language (other than English or Gael-

⁴ Cf. Joachim Fischer - Manfred Lukas Schewe, *Deutschunterricht und Germanistikstudium in der Republik Irland*, cit., p. 1472.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Cf. Joachim Fischer - Manfred Lukas Schewe, *Deutsch in Irland*, in *Deutsch als Fremd- und Zweitsprache. Ein internationales Handbuch*, edited by Hans-Jürgen Krumm et al., vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter-Mouton, 2010), pp. 1689-93, here p. 1690.



ic) was no longer necessarily a prerequisite for admission to university study,⁷ does not help the learning of foreign languages in secondary schools nor does it increase the number of students who will decide to register for university language courses. Basically, concentrating the efforts of pupils – regarding the learning of a language other than English – on Gaelic, where the educational system is not supported by attentive linguistic-cultural politics, there is not much space for the learning of idioms other than those of the two national languages. In reality, even if Gaelic is considered a national language along with English,⁸ it nevertheless does not have the same relevance in all parts of Éire. It is in fact necessary to distinguish between three different groups: those who live in the area known as *Gaeltacht* (further Western areas of the island) for whom Gaelic is their mother tongue; those who speak only Gaelic at home and who attend schools in which all the subjects are taught in Gaelic (*Gaelscoil*), but who do not live in the *Gaeltacht* but in the city; and finally those who learn Gaelic only at school and who, in a few cases, often thanks to the frequent summer courses offered by the colleges of *Gaeltacht*, reach a good level of the native language.⁹

Paradoxically, the economic crisis that struck all of the West in 2008, and that has particularly affected Ireland, has favored a certain resurgence of interest in German, the language of a European power the Irish tend once again to consider a possible emigration destination.

The universities

In Ireland German can be studied at an academic level at seven universities and sixteen Institutes of Technology (comparable to

⁷ Cf. <http://www.nui.ie/college/entry-requirements.asp> (08/04/2012).

⁸ As regards the treatment of the native Irish language see the document edited by *Language Policy Division Strasbourg* and the *Department of Education and Science Ireland* called *Language Education Policy Ireland 2005-2007*. (http://www.education.ie/bobservlet/language_education_policy_profile.pdf) (12/04/2012).

⁹ The data relative to Gaelic is collected in the aforementioned document *Language Education Policy Ireland 2005-2007*, on the site (<http://www.mio-ie>) as well as in an email from Micheál Mac Craith (NUI Galway) to the author April 16, 2012.



Fachhochschulen in the German-speaking world) where one can learn German as a micro-language outside of the humanities in courses such as economics, engineering, natural sciences, etc.

Of the seven Irish universities, four (Trinity College Dublin, University City Dublin [UCD], Galway and Maynooth) belong to the National University of Ireland, two (Limerick and Dublin City University [DCU]) were established in the 1970s and one (Trinity College Dublin) enjoys a long tradition. They offer German Studies curricula characterized by a wide variety of choices.¹⁰ The study of German in Ireland in a humanities department does not necessarily mean that one must specialize in literature or in linguistics; the traditional structure is increasingly giving more space to curricula of an interdisciplinary and cross-sectional character, as will be illustrated in the following paragraph.

Teachers of *Germanistik* – among whom there are very few full and associated professors, but rather mostly *lecturers* of various levels (*associate lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer*) – belong to departments specialized in the discipline in question (at Trinity College Dublin the *Department of Germanic Studies*; at Galway and at Maynooth the *Department of German*; at Cork the *German Department*), and at times to “schools” of a broader character which contain many languages (*School of Languages and Literatures* at UCD; *School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies* at DCU; *School of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication* at Limerick) and host various courses like language, literature, culture, *Landeskunde*, etc. which are also taken by students whose studies are not centered on German.

The formative offer and courses

As is well known, Anglophonic university systems foresee undergraduate courses (in general three-year but sometimes also four), which accept students having a secondary school diploma, and postgraduate courses, reserved for those who already hold an academic title (normally a Bachelor of Arts [BA] for disciplines in the humanities).

¹⁰ Information on courses offered are available on the universities' respective websites.



Undergraduate

Alongside more traditional BA courses in German Studies which concentrate on language and literature and/or linguistics, one finds courses like *Business Studies International* and *Languages for International Communication* (Cork), *Law and German*, *Business and German* (Trinity College Dublin), *Education in Languages* (Limerick), courses that in some cases seem to fall outside of the humanities. What really strikes one, above all when considering the Italian academic context, is the offer of courses centered on a European dimension: *European Studies* at Trinity College Dublin (where there is a specific chair in the *Centre for European Studies*), at Limerick (which, in addition, offers a BA entitled *International Insurance & European Studies*) and at Maynooth. Observing the structure of the BA course in *European Studies* offered at Limerick, representative of analogous BA courses offered by other universities, one recognizes the primary role that not only languages play (at least one elective to be studied for four years between French, German, Spanish, and Gaelic),¹¹ but also disciplines of a legal, sociological, historical and economical character as well whereas the study of literature does not appear; moreover, every student is obliged, thanks to the exchange program Erasmus, to spend two semesters abroad in a European university.

The transcultural and supranational dimension is evident in titles such as *Applied Language and Intercultural Studies* and *Language for International Communication* (DCU), *International Languages* (UCD) and others. At Trinity College Dublin one of the most popular courses is *Two Subject Moderatorsip (TSM) German* which allows the student to combine the study of German language, culture and literature with that of another discipline (not necessarily of another language), in this way putting together a path of study characterized by a “balance between breadth and specialization.”¹² Obviously courses of a canonic nature of German Studies are not absent; and so, increas-

¹¹ Whoever opts for Gaelic is obliged to study another foreign language as well among those indicated.

¹² http://www.tcd.ie/Germanic_Studies/undergraduate/tsm/index.php (04/04/2012).



ingly common after language and literature, one finds modules of *Landeskunde*, culture, history, cinema, media, etc., as an integral part of the area that already for some time now has been known, not only in the Anglophone world, as *German Studies*. While in the last 3-4 years the number of students who opt for German has increased, it is important to underline that this increase is not to be found in the traditional areas (i.e. language and literature) or in the broader field of German Studies, but in courses where the study of German and German speaking countries is related to judicial, economic or scientific areas of study. Taking note of this fact, the formative offer is increasingly distancing itself from a strict *geisteswissenschaftlich* perspective in order to open itself up to collaboration with other disciplines and to permit the student an easier transition into professional life. As Joachim Fischer states:

Die Studiengangsplanung richtet sich nicht mehr ausschließlich nach fachimmanenten Kriterien, sondern erfolgt seit Mitte der 80er Jahre besonders auch in Reaktion auf arbeitsmarktpolitische Entwicklungen, die zu neuen Ausbildungsbedürfnissen und mithin zu neuen Fächerkombinationen geführt haben.¹³

Literature has been losing its position of importance that it enjoyed up until about two decades ago, configuring itself now rather as *one* aspect of the country's culture, an aspect no longer held to be more important than any others, for example, media, technology, or the arts. The reasons for this "sind [...] komplex und nicht zuletzt verbunden mit veränderten Lebensbedingungen im modernen Irland, in dem das zweckrationale Denken zunimmt und wo junge Menschen sich die Welt nicht mehr primär lesend, sondern vermittelt über elektronische Medien aneignen."¹⁴ Learning that, among the course modules for a diploma in languages centered on German

¹³ Joachim Fischer - Manfred Lukas Schewe, *Deutschunterricht und Germanistikstudium in der Republik Irland*, cit., p. 1476.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1479. On this problem see also Hugh Ridley, *Die heutige Situation der Germanistik. Eine irische Perspektive*, in "Runa" (Coimbra), XXVI (1996), pp. 939-944.



Studies, “[d]ie unbeliebtesten sind Literaturmodule”¹⁵ makes one reflect – obviously beyond the Irish horizon considering that the phenomenon is of a wide extent – upon the strategies of the teaching of literature, and above all hope for a closer collaboration between the *Literaturwissenschaftler* and the teachers of other disciplines of a didactic-pedagogic nature..

Postgraduate

Along with the traditional MA (Master of Art, *Magister Artium*), the Irish universities are offering ever more often courses entitled MLitt (Master of Letters, *Magister Litterarum*) and MPhil (Master of Philosophy, *Magister Philosophiae*): if the MA, which normally lasts one year, entails attending a course which finishes with the completion of a thesis, the MLitt, which typically lasts two years, is set up (analogous to a PhD) as a course of pure research which does not entail attending classes but which ends with a paper undoubtedly more demanding than that expected of the MA; the MPhil, organized according to each individual university, is also (like the MA) a structured course. If in the case of the MLitt and the PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), which generally require only individual research, the universities usually indicate on their websites the various areas (which mirror the research areas of the professors) in which students may choose topics for their research which is completed with submission of the final thesis. But for the MA and MPhil the universities communicate – by means of the Taught Courses – the specific titles of the teaching topics.

The most widespread degree is an MA in *German* or in *German Studies*. Very often they are MAs in which German is only one of the areas of study. For example, Galway offers MAs like *International Contemporary Literatures and Media*, *Advanced Language Skills* and *Translation Studies*, the latter a specialization offered by DCU as well, which in addition has a *Centre for Translation and Translation Studies*. The peculiarity of Limerick at a postgraduate level however is in its MA in *Irish-*

¹⁵ Email from Valerie Heffeman (NUI Maynooth) received April 16th, 2012.



German Studies, supported by its homonymous center. Trinity College Dublin at a doctorate and post-doctorate level underlines its openness toward interdisciplinarity and toward “unusual research project proposals”.¹⁶ Pedagogical disciplines together with teaching related to *Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF)* appear ever more frequently among the single modules of postgraduate courses, in particular at the universities of Cork, UCD, Maynooth and Trinity College Dublin.

Research Centers

The research centers, which mirror the inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural structure of German Studies and more generally that of Irish *Geisteswissenschaften*, are set up as structures that, with their libraries, journals and initiatives (conventions, conferences, workshops, scholarships) play a fundamental role in supporting the graduate or post-graduate courses of the university of which they are part. The three most important research centers, listed moreover on the official site of the *Association for German Studies in Great Britain and Ireland* (<http://www.ags.ac.uk>), were founded recently: the *Centre for European Studies* at Trinity College Dublin (http://www.tcd.ie/European_Studies) founded in 1987 (which plays an important role for the MPhil and PhD in European Studies) and the *Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (http://www.tcd.ie/Medieval_Renaissance) born in 1999 (which supports the MPhil in *Medieval Language, Literature and Culture*); at Limerick the *Centre for Irish-German Studies* (<http://www.3.ul.ie/llcc/Irish-German>) born in 1997, which is the point of reference for the specific MA in *Irish-German Studies*. This latter center frequently collaborates with the Heinrich Böll Cottage (<http://www.heinrichbollcottage.com>) where the Nobel prize winning German author stayed during the course of his multiple stays in Ireland and which inspired, for example, his *Irishes Tagbuch* (1957). This cottage is situated on Achill Island (Co. Mayo) and since 1992 has acted as a residence for writers and artists who would like to work undisturbed on projects besides hosting various cultural and literary events.

¹⁶ http://www.tcd.ie/Germanic_Studies/research (05/04/2012).



Faculty research areas

Analyzing the research areas and publications of University teachers of German operating in Éire, one is led to believe that contemporaneity attracts much more attention than older periods. Both among *Sprachwissenschaftler* and *Literaturwissenschaftler* the tendency is toward specialization in interdisciplinary and intercultural areas of study with particular reference – to cite only two fundamental aspects – in the field of linguistics to theories of *media* and their influence on language learning, and in that of literature to transcultural and multiethnic modern European society. This latter vision invites one to reconsider the national canon of literature and to analyze various contemporary cultures in a supranational context on the basis of their reciprocal relations.

As far as literature is concerned, of course, studies focusing on the Enlightenment, Classicism, Romanticism and Realism are by no means lacking, nor are specialists on authors like Lichtenberg, Claudius, Jacobi, Schiller, Jean Paul, Hölderlin, Brentano, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Heinrich von Kleist, and Raabe or on specific themes like 18th century aesthetics (Maynooth), the dream in literature (Galway), the *Ästhetik der Ohnmacht* and the poetics of the body (Cork); a lot rarer however are the areas related to *ältere Literatur*, represented as a personal field of research at Trinity College Dublin (medieval literature, courtly novels), which hosts the aforementioned *Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, and at Cork (Ulrich von Hutten).

Studies of 20th and 21st century German speaking literature however are undoubtedly more significant and more diversified: from GDR literature to that of the *Wende*, to literature of the Holocaust, to Austrian literature, Swiss-German literature, Yiddish, to theatre, feminist writing, travel and utopian literature, post-modernism, to theories of Pop, Material Culture, Trash and much more, with numerous specific expertise related to individual authors (Karl Kraus, Ingeborg Bachmann, Robert Walser, Heinrich Böll, Monika Maron, Eva Königsdorf, Thomas Hürlimann, to mention only a few).

The most popular areas by *Germanisten* active in Ireland are without a doubt, as was seen in the section on academic organization,



those of a comparative and often interdisciplinary nature. These connect literature to fields like ecology, anthropology, science (Trinity College Dublin), law (Galway, Cork), cinema, music, and architecture (UCD).

In the comparative field, German speaking literature is studied above all in relation to Irish literature, both from the diachronic as well as synchronic points of view, paying particular attention to the aesthetic, cultural and anthropological implications of the phenomenon. One of the most widespread indications of this trend among the research fields of teachers is precisely *Irish-German Studies* (where German is intended to mean German speaking),¹⁷ or even German-Irish Relations, Irish Images of Germany, or even more, from a no longer literary perspective, *Comparative Migration Histories of Ireland and Germany*, and finally, from a socio-linguistic point of view, *German Speakers in Ireland*. The *Irish-German Studies* examine inter-textuality, both in the production of German speaking authors (as, for example, Heinrich Böll, Ralph Giordano, Gabrielle Alioth, who in different ways refer to Irish culture) and in the production of Irish authors who, through different strategies and artistic modalities, refer to German speaking literature. In that sense, the narrative and theatrical production of the most famous contemporary Irish novelist, John Banville, passionate expert of German culture, constitutes a real mine of suggestions.¹⁸ The *Irish-German Studies* are part of the greater field of *Anglo-German Studies*, a field that over the last years has seemed to attract attention: one need only consider the most recent issue of Zurich's

¹⁷ Not infrequently the research of Irish-German Studies is found in the field of travel literature. Representative of this trend for example are Gisela Holfter, *Erlebnis Irland. Deutsche Reiseberichte über Irland um zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1996) and Joachim Fischer, *Das Deutschlandbild der Iren 1890-1939. Geschichte - Form - Funktion* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000).

¹⁸ See, for example, among the most recent contributions as regards this aspect of John Banville's work, my article "A Genuinely Funny German Farce Turns into a Very Irish Play: 'The Broken Jug' (1994), John Banville's Adaptation of Heinrich von Kleist's 'Der zerbrochene Krug' (1807)", in "ANGERMION. Yearbook for Anglo-German Literary Criticism. Intellectual History and Cultural Transfers/Jahrbuch für britisch-deutsche Kulturbeziehungen", IV (2011), pp. 75-94.



journal “figurationen” dedicated to a specific sub-group of the whole, that is, *Britannia/Helvetia*.¹⁹ A particular variant which recently has seemed for some reason to attract scholars’ interest is the relations between Irish literature and German speaking Swiss literature. The two countries are both characterized by a certain “insularity” (in one case geographically, in the other orographically and politically), and they present – *mutatis mutandis* – an analogous linguistic situation that gives rise to not dissimilar literatures.²⁰ Particular mention must also be made of the field *German-Scandinavian Literary Relations* (UCD).

The most frequent methodological perspectives, or rather the most common approaches, are intercultural aesthetics, intermedia relations, deconstructionism, Gender Studies and Post-colonial Studies. The latter has over the last two decades experienced a real boom, especially in countries formerly dependent on Great Britain, above all in India (thanks to the fundamental contribution of Homi K. Bhabha *The Location of Culture*),²¹ in the USA, in Australia and of course in Éire.

As far as linguistics is concerned, in that sector too the interdisciplinary structure which characterizes literary studies has emerged, with particular emphasis on the interaction with modern technologies. In the various universities themes like *Translation Studies* (at DCU there is a specific *Centre for Translation and Textual Studies*), the didactics of *Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF)* – in particular in a multicultural context, as many scholars specify – theories of media and e-learning, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and self-directed learning have proliferated; in addition, there are rather frequent issues related to the psycho-pedagogical aspect in the learning of foreign languages; rarer still however is a standard course like History of the German Language.

¹⁹ “Figurationen. Gender Literatur Kultur”, XI (2010), n. 1, *Britannia/Helvetia*, edited by Lorena Silos Ribas.

²⁰ Among the most recent contributions to the theme see Siobhán Donovan, *Ein keltisch-helvetisches Netz. Mythen, Märchen und Magie in Gabrielle Alioths Kinderromanen*, in *Zur Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion des Mythos Schweiz*, edited by Jürgen Barkhoff and Valerie Heffeman (Göttingen: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 309-321.

²¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).



Translations: trilingual texts

A discussion on the literary translations used in Ireland cannot ignore that, as is natural, the translations in use at universities, as in general those for sale throughout Éire, are published by Irish, American, Canadian, etc. publishing houses. A tour of literary translations published in Ireland, or of those that are carried out by *Germanisten* operating there, must be inserted into a much wider context that regards all of Anglophone German Studies.

Here we will only report a fact that appears really typical of German Studies in Éire, in other words, the existence of trilingual (German-English-Gaelic) literary texts, published by the Dublin press Coiscéim (<http://www.coisceim.ie/Udair.html>), specialized in Gaelic publications. Some of the German speaking authors, all contemporary, who have had trilingual texts appear are Hansjörg Schertenleib (*Gib mir dein Aug / Give Me Your Eye / T'rom do Shúil. Ausgewählte Gedichte / Selected Poems / Rogha Dánta*), Hilda Domin (*Bittersüßer Mandelbaum / Bitter-sweet Almond Tree / Crann Almóinni milis agus searbh. Ausgewählte Gedichte / Selected Poems / Rogha Dánta*), Günther Kunert (*Der Alte Mann spricht mit seiner Seele / The Old Man Speaks with His Soul / Agallamb an tSeanóra lena Anam. Ausgewählte Gedichte / Selected Poems / Rogha Dánta*), Günther Grass (*Letzte Tänze / Last Dances / Dambsaí Deireanacha, Ausgewählte Gedichte / Selected Poems / Rogha Dánta*), Elke Schmitter (*die steine fragen mich nach dir / the stones are asking about you / tá na cloche ag cur do thuairisce. Gedichte / Poems / Dánta*), Matthias Politycki (*Sphärenmusik / Music of the Spheres / Ceol na Sféar. Ausgewählte Gedichte / Selected Poems / Rogha Dánta*). All of the volumes, till now eleven of them, published starting in 2000, contain English translations edited by Hans-Christian Oeser and Gaelic translations by Gabriel Rosenstock. The comparative analysis of these poetic texts seems to constitute a real interesting challenge for Anglo-Irish translation.

Training of German teachers

For aspiring school teachers of German, after receiving a BA containing specific German exams, another year of study of a primari-



ly pedagogical character which finishes with the title *Higher Diploma in Education* (HDip) is expected. The courses related to this second phase of the curriculum are offered by the Pedagogy departments of the individual universities, which, moreover, lament the lack of an organic national linguistic policy related to the training of teachers of foreign languages.

Internet sites

In a correct and innovative manner and without any abstract *geisteswissenschaftliche* considerations, indeed with the calm pragmatism that characterizes Anglophone countries, the websites of the various universities invite one to the study of German language and culture by providing information – generally clearly and analytically structured – about the various aspects of teaching, research and possibilities of professional employment post-diploma. In order to motivate aspiring first-year students, the basic information is complemented by enthusiastic first-person accounts from current students and alumni of the university under the headings *student profile*, *graduate profile* and so forth.

The undeniable competitiveness between the different universities, in particular between those with the advantage of a longer tradition and those of more recent founding which instead emphasize their “modernity”, makes them seek to identify the most appropriate strategies to promote their courses and resources available. The sites seek to highlight *in primis*, through a mixture of textual typologies, the importance German knowledge has at a professional level in general before continuing on to describe specific aspects of their didactic activities and research.

So, the home page of the Department of Germanic Studies at Trinity College Dublin – which moreover displays Erasmus’ dictum “Ein verborgenes Talent kann man nicht respektieren”²² – quotes articles from respected journals about the “many opportunities for expansion in Europe’s largest consumer market” and press releases

²² http://www.tcd.ie/Germanic_Studies/about (05/04/2012).



like that of the Chief Executive of the German-Irish Chamber of Commerce which affirms that “it would be a good investment if our school children learned German and more schools offered German as a subject option”;²³ it then highlights the fact that “the Department today combines the strength of [...] tradition with a modern, dynamic, interdisciplinary approach to German Studies”.²⁴ Cork, which has the advantage of being “a small but vibrant Department of German”,²⁵ emphasizes that German, the most widely-spoken language in Europe, “opens the gateway to the intellectual, economic and cultural riches of Central Europa”, adding from a particularly cultural perspective that it is the idiom “of many ‘international icons’ in the areas of [...] philosophy (Kant, Hegel, Heidegger), economic and political philosophy (Marx), literature (Goethe, Kafka, Grass), music (Mozart, Bach, Beethoven)”.²⁶ Galway too – which underlines its Department’s “supportive and very approachable teaching staff”²⁷ – focuses on the job possibilities that the knowledge of German opens up, in as much as it is the language of the third strongest economy in the world (while on other sites it occupies fourth place),²⁸ represented in Ireland by at least 250 companies and industries. In addition, it focuses on the possibility that every single student has of going abroad, a fact that appears in the description of numerous courses at various Irish universities (in many cases going abroad is in fact obligatory). DCU’s approach is more pragmatically linguistic and subtle, explaining the common German origin of English and German, and thus the relative ease with which Anglophones can learn German, seeking then to illustrate a less well-known fact, which is that a knowledge of German can help one understand “some taken-for-granted features of English, such as the difference between ‘who’ and ‘whom’”.²⁹ Brief observations on job possibilities in the Ger-

²³ http://www.tcd.ie/Germanic_Studies/about (05/04/2012).

²⁴ http://www.tcd.ie/Germanic_Studies/about (05/04/2012).

²⁵ <http://www.ucc.ie/en/german> (08/04/2012).

²⁶ <http://www.ucc.ie/en/german> (08/04/2012).

²⁷ <http://www.nuigalway.ie/german> (10/04/2012).

²⁸ Compare the DCU site: <http://www.dcu.ie/salis/german.shtml> (08/04/2012).

²⁹ <http://www.dcu.ie/salis/german.shtml> (08/04/2012).



man speaking countries are also included, as are those on students' opportunities to spend one year in Austria or in Germany, while Switzerland, here as in various other cases, tends to play a secondary role as a potential study abroad destination.

Associations and societies

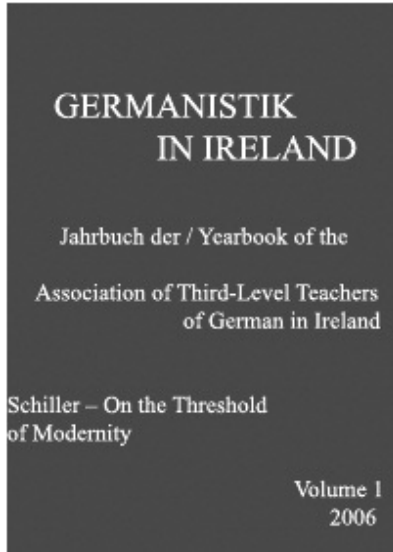
The largest German Studies association of Anglophone European countries is the *Association for German Studies in Great Britain and Ireland* (AGS: <http://www.ags.ac.uk>). Created in 1932, its website lists the German Studies departments of various universities in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Éire.

At the end of the 1990s, Irish *Germanisten* founded the aforementioned *Association of Third Level Teachers of German in Ireland* (where Third Level indicates the teachers of the tertiary level of education, in other words, university). Since 2006 they have published the annual *Germanistik in Irland* whose full issues contain contributions of both linguistic and literary character. Among the other periodicals worth mentioning – to bring up only two examples – there is the bilingual (English-German) on-line journal “SCENARIO. Journal for Drama and Theatre in Ireland”,³⁰ published by the University of Cork; and the Yearbook of Irish-German Studies from the homonymous center in Limerick, a journal that after the first four issues was transformed into the series entitled *Irish-German Studies*.

Conclusions

The field of German Studies in Ireland is continuously moving forward seeking dialogue with other disciplines, opening itself to at times uncommon connections and escaping from traditional research models and stereotypical fields of research. This peculiar imprint, without a doubt also motivated by, in part, economic considerations

³⁰ “SCENARIO. Journal for Drama and Theatre in Foreign and Second Language Education. Zeitschrift für Drama- und Theaterpädagogik in der Fremd- und Zweitsprachenvermittlung”, edited by Manfred Schewe and Susanne Evan (<http://ucc.ie/en/scenario>).



which induce universities to consolidate departments and incentivize collaboration, produces significant results both in research and in teaching. Furthermore, it contributes to the creation of specializations that in turn give rise to new professional profiles.

Undoubtedly projected toward the future and opened both vertically (as for example interest in fields like paraliterature and, more recently, trash, commonly considered below “high” literature, or rather, *Dichtung*, suggest) as well as horizontally (as the tendency to

including forms like mass media, new technologies and the “exact” sciences show), the field of Irish German Studies does not fail to seek a position in the native context as well. This fact is exemplarily illustrated in the aforementioned English - German - Gaelic trilingual series and gives evidence of how the field manages to effectively combine innovation and tradition.³¹

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