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**Outline of Paper "The Bibliography of Irish Literary Studies"  
Presented at the American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS),  
Southern Conference Meeting, University of Montevallo, Alabama**

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OUTLINE OF PAPER PRESENTED AT ACIS, SOUTHERN MEETING,  
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## I. Introduction

A. When the able organizer of this conference asked me to present a paper, she insisted that I agree to two conditions. The first was that I limit my remarks to an area within my expertise, and the second was that I limit my remarks to no more than 10 minutes. It was only with the greatest of reluctance that I agreed to the former. This onerous restriction in subject matter has the agreeable side-effect of a natural compliance with the latter restriction. 10 minutes should be sufficient for me to completely exhaust any of the topics within my ken.

B. The title of my talk is "The Bibliography of Irish Literary Studies." My intention here is to concentrate my remarks on the annual Bibliography Bulletin of the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature, published in the fall issue of the Irish University Review. I would like to preface my remarks with a quote from Frank O'Connor, from a speech he delivered in Dublin in 1964.

"It is absurd. I have complained often enough that our books are being exported to America by the thousand. The

Irish librarians apparently have no use for them. That

attitude ...[is] of a famine stricken beleaguered people who don't seriously believe they have anything of their own to be proud of....

But it's about time that some Irishmen said publicly what foreign scholars have been saying privately--that Ireland is the last country in the world in which to study Irish literature. One--and not the least eminent--said to me recently 'Outside the Communist countries, there is no other country in the world in which you cannot study the national literature.' He had discovered that though his scholarship was to study in Ireland, he had to go to the British Museum to read the important books of the Young Ireland movement.

...Some weeks ago I was asked by the Library of Congress to give them my manuscripts. As the Library of Congress is one of the half dozen greatest libraries in the world I was honored and I shall probably give them my manuscripts anyhow, but I was grieved that no Irish Library had asked me. No library had asked my masters--Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Joyce or O'Casey. The Gregory papers were recently sold to an American library for a vast sum ... Yet, I knew Lady Gregory and I knew perfectly well if the Library of UCG had asked politely for her manuscripts they need never have left Ireland. Why was she not asked? Why were Yeats and Joyce and Synge and O'Casey not asked? If their manuscripts were now available in bulk, it would

cost this country a million or two pounds to buy them back, but literary property running into millions was allowed to leave this country because we could not budge from the attitudes of 1848."

There are indications, that if O'Connor was wrong then, it is no longer the case today. Recently, UCD purchased the Kavanagh papers, once housed in New York, and brought them home to Dublin. It may very well be the case that UCD was willing to overpay for this collection. Indeed Prof. Martin valued the Kavanagh papers more than most American libraries and scholars.. But there are other, broader circumstances which indicate a change in both the loci of primary materials, and the underpinnings of support for the study of Irish literature since O'Connor's speech more than twenty-five years ago. Certainly O'Connor is correct that the interest in Irish literature, and the study of that literature has been of continuing interest to scholars abroad. A manifestation of that interest is this present conference and the organization which sponsors it.

At the time O'Connor spoke, there was no continuing bibliography of Irish literary studies. However by 1970, planning was underway to establish such a bibliography, and by 1972, there was the means as well to bring this to fruition. The medium was the establishment, under the auspices of UCD, and grants from the Irish government to publish the Irish University Review. The first general editor was Maurice Harmon of UCD, one of the foremost Irish literature specialists, and the author of the Select Bibliography for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature and its Background (1977).

In the Spring 1972 issue (v.2, #1) of the Irish University Review, a 'Bibliography Bulletin' of the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature (IASAIL) consisting of over 30 pages of citations appeared. In the introduction to this report, Paul Pollard, who chaired the Bibliography Sub-Committee of IASAIL for the first few years, stated:

"It is the aim of this subcommittee to produce an annual bibliography listing every publication concerned with Anglo-Irish literature which has appeared during the previous year ... We would obviously like to see a bibliography that would bring together all publications on Anglo-Irish Literature, whether or not these were repeated in the more general lists and indexing services, but this task is at present beyond us."

In the first three issues of the 'Bibliography Bulletin', there were separate reports for each country who contributed, some with retrospective coverage (ex. 'The Arabic Speaking World, 1914-1970'). In the early reports as well, there was included notable additions to library manuscript collections in Ireland and elsewhere. Disrupting the regularity of the journal and the bulletin was the bankruptcy of the Irish University Press. But once this was resolved, the periodicity was regularized, until

the present when each annual bibliography for the previous year is published in the fall issue of the Irish University Review. In fact I received the 1989 bibliography last Tuesday (postmarked 13-December 1990)

With the publication of the third year, Paul Pollard, a librarian at Trinity, resigned as editor. She was replaced by the publisher Colin Smythe, who was the editor from 1973 to 1977. Since 1978, the chair of the Bibliography Sub-Committee has been Dr Maureen Murphy, the Dean of Students at Hofstra University.

There has been continuing and steady support for this publication from IASAIL, the UCD English Dept., and the broader academic community as evidenced by the expanding national representation on the Sub-Committee. While all geographic areas are not consistently covered, attempts are made to keep the bibliography complete with retrospective

additions as identified. In recent years the coverage within the UK has been sporadic at best (I saw no UK entries in the most recent report), but this will surely be remedied in future issues.

I would like to give you some idea of the relative merits of IASAIL's listing compared to the standard literary index MLA, and some lesser efforts such as the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (the UK counterpart to MLA), and a French entry published annually in Etudes Irlandaises as 'Irish Literature in English: The Year's Work' (for this last title there are minor variations in the title over the years).

The following comparisons will conclude my remarks:

To give you some idea of the bibliography of Irish literary studies, I have looked at the citations included in the aforementioned 4 bibliographies for both Seamus Heaney and for Oliver Goldsmith. I chose Heaney because he is still vigorously publishing poems, essays, plays etc., and there is much contemporary interest in him. I chose Goldsmith because he is an established author, with listing of primary sources of minor concern, and for differences in approach taken by each of the bibliographies.

Currency

I chose 1986 as the year to analyze because it is the latest year where all sources have been published. The Annual Bibliography (ABELL) for 1986 publications was not published until 1990. If present publication schedules continue, MLA will be the quickest to publish. The 1989 citations were available quite early in 1990 through the on-line service and the CD-ROM product. The CD-ROM product was distributed to libraries long before the printed volumes were available.. It has always been somewhat of a joke at the inordinate delays in producing the annual MLA

Bibliography. This is no longer the case. The most current source is now MLA, and will probably continue into the future. I have already mentioned that IASAIL publishes the previous year sometime by the end of the following year.

As the U.S. Contributor to the bibliography, I can relate to you that I am asked for my contribution about St. Patrick's Day, to be sent off by May 1. This past year for the first time, Dr. Murphy asked that submission be done on diskette, which must have helped the final editing process enormously. The French entry is not quite an exact match for my purposes because each of the annual numbers are done on an academic year rather than a calendar year. In any case in comparison to years past, the currency of all but ABELL is quite good indeed.

#### Format

Both IASAIL and 'Years Work' have a very general section, followed by the main listing of author as subject. MLA as you probably know is arranged by language, then chronologically, and within each timeframe by author as subject. MLA now has an Irish Literature section which supplements the English literature section. ABELL however lists English, Irish, American, Canadian etc. writers within a chronological sequence.

Each of these serial bibliographies has its own special advantages and idiosyncrasies. For example, ABELL intends to include unpublished dissertations (it does, but incompletely and erratically), while IASAIL makes no effort to (but does. To my complete embarrassment as I was working on this paper I found five Russian dissertations listed in the 1978 report which I had failed to include in another work of mine). In the 1988 report a Nigerian Ph.D. dissertation was cited. These idiosyncrasies aside, the French publication is really more of an index to certain Irish interest journals and a listing of books, while MLA and ABELL generally limit themselves to listings of scholarly books and journal articles. MLA purposely excludes primary citations, book reviews, and other non-scholarly sources. Because of the unique intentions (and generally its performance as well), IASAIL should be

the first source consulted by those scholars interested in Anglo-Irish literature and Irish writers in general.

#### COMPARISON

##### HEANEY:

Included in our 4 sources, there were 59 separate entries under Heaney. IASAIL listed 36 citations (10 of which were book reviews, and 12 interviews, poems, etc.). MLA had 15, ABELL had 15 and EI 7. All citations seemed to be accurate. MLA, given its intentions, was the most current

and the most complete. As a professional (rather than a literary) bibliography, it had the most unique citations,

and IASAIL only picked up the gap in its coverage at a later date. But it is readily apparent, that in spite of some deficiencies, scholars interested in contemporary Irish literature must use IASAIL before any other bibliography. In fact, scholar's whose main concern is contemporary Irish writers have only one source: IASAIL. Due to the excellent coverage provided by the Irish contributor, it is the only access we have to the work of Irish writers published in the Irish newspapers, minor literary quarterlies, and other ephemeral publications.

#### GOLDSMITH:

The example of Goldsmith is of interest because MLA, for some reason, includes Goldsmith within the English Literature section, and not within Irish Literature. It points out the necessity that all scholars interested in Anglo-Irish Literature, must have an intimate knowledge of the bibliography of English literature as well. In any case, our comparison found a total of 21 entries on Goldsmith, with 7 each in IASAIL and MLA, one in EI, and 12 in ABELL (however, half of these were pre 1985, covered in the other sources previously). Five of the citations were unique to IASAIL, and two were unique to MLA.

Before concluding my comparison, I should note that in spite of the lack of full coverage of literature in Etudes Irlandaises, there is a companion bibliography published with the 'Years Work' covering history, culture, etc. which makes Etudes Irlandaises quite useful if other serial bibliographies are not readily available.

#### CONCLUSION:

My opening remarks citing Frank O'Connor points to the change which has taken place over the past 25 years in Irish literary studies. To my mind, the major literary journals covering Irish Literature, are now published in Ireland. Irish University Review is the preeminent journal in its field. The organizing force and impetus for IASAIL

and its bibliography is centered in Ireland, and other journals (such as Irish Review of UCC), and tools such as Irish Publishing Record are flourishing. Indeed Irish publishers are surviving within this changing environment. More collections and individual manuscripts and rare editions are finding permanent homes in Irish Universities, and the National Library. All of these radical changes are reflected in the bibliography of Irish Literary studies.

Thank you.