Editorial

In this issue of *Critical Survey* we present a selection of essays which demonstrate a range of critical approaches to a variety of material within Anglo-Irish writing. The recalcitrant traditionalism that previously marked this arena has long gone, replaced now by a broadly analytical approach. Likewise, the traditionally established and highly selective, mostly male canon of Anglo-Irish writing has been replaced by a more inclusive arena and these articles represent the diversity of scholarship and research across this expanded area. One of the most significant changes within Anglo-Irish criticism in the last decade has been in the volume of attention given to women writers. Several essays here focus on women's writing, recognising Irish women writers' legitimate inclusion across a range of genres. Kathy Cremin examines the disparity between Irish women's increased opportunities in terms of determining their own lives and the elisions and ambivalences regarding these at the heart of Patricia Scanlan's best-selling fiction. Helen Kidd explores the particular poetic strategies of three of Ireland's leading women poets, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanain and Eavan Boland. Mary King couples the plays of J. M. Synge and one of Ireland's leading contemporary playwrights, Marina Carr, in a timely exploration of the treatment of 'the other' in Irish drama.

While Anglo-Irish writing has long been associated with poetic excellence and Seamus Heaney's recent Nobel prize endorses this association Marcella Edwards's essay explodes the myth of a poetic renaissance in Ireland in the 1960s. Exploring the literary debates and the editorial policies of Ireland's publishing industry at that time she demonstrates a high level of conservative nationalism limiting intellectual and poetic progress. Her essay also explores the poetry of Trevor Joyce as an example of a truly innovative, modernist poetic, equally powerful then and now.

Debates on the relationship between poetry and politics surface periodically in all literary arenas and Anglo-Irish writing is no exception. Demands for a politicised poetry are frequently made, and resisted. Several of Ireland's leading poets avoid the direct expression of political allegiances, preferring instead to operate in

more occluded ways as Steven Matthew's essay demonstrates. He explores the role of the fetishised object in the poetry of Seamus Heaney, Ciaran Carson, Paul Muldoon and Eavan Boland.

Offering an individual and sophisticated approach, Richard Kirkland's essay explores the difficulty of representation in relation to terrorism in Northern Ireland. He examines the award winning film, *Elephant*, and offers valuable and timely insights into this phenomenon. My own contribution centres on two important figures in Anglo-Irish writing, separated by half a century; the critic and scholar Declan Kiberd and the celebrated satirist Flann O'Brien. Applying Kiberd's recent critical approach to O'Brien's fiction this essay demonstrates a fruitful application of recent critical approaches.

While the field of Anglo-Irish studies has been extending for some time now, it is hoped that this collection of essays reflects the interesting developments which currently mark this cultural and scholarly landscape and that it helps, in its own way, to enrich this territory.

EIBHLÍN EVANS
(Guest Editor)