

11. AHGBI Conference 2014: A report by Regina Whelan Richardson, Subject Librarian for Music & Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Maynooth University Library



Regina Whelan Richardson (left) and Susan Leyden (right)

The annual conference of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland (AHGBI) took place at the National University of Ireland, Galway from Monday, 14th April to Wednesday 16th April, 2014.

Galway city on the western seaboard of Ireland has long-standing links with the Iberian Peninsula, some romantic and unsubstantiated, some well documented such as the import and export trade. From the middle of the 15th century Galway traded extensively with the Continent, especially Spain, exporting local produce such as fish, wool and leather, horses, hawks and hounds. Imports from Spain which continue to the present day included fruit, salt, oil and especially wine. Many legends surround the Armada ships wrecked off the coast of Ireland. Two hundred Spaniards who came ashore after a shipwreck in Galway Bay were executed by order of the Lord Deputy. Of the fate of the rest various stories abound: they were killed for their valuables by the Irish, conversely, they were aided and given refuge by the Irish, and most popular – the black hair and dark looks of Galwegians is a legacy of those Spaniards who came ashore and stayed. Referring to the possibility of an invasion from Spain in 1601, the Secretary of War in Ireland warned of support from the

inhabitants of Galway "many of whom have Spanish hearts". What is certain is that Galway retains a Spanish air with its Spanish Arch and Spanish Parade, and a strong awareness of its own history, along with the unique atmosphere of a small friendly city bordering the Irish-speaking area, or Gaeltacht. It was the perfect place to hold the 2014 conference of the AHGBI, hosted by the Spanish Department of the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Representing Maynooth University (National University of Ireland, Maynooth) and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, archivist Susan Leyden and I had submitted a poster *The Salamanca Archive & The Irish Colleges in Spain: new online catalogue and current research*. Walking along the rushing Corrib to the sea we set out for Galway University past the Quadrangle building, built in local limestone in a Tudor Gothic architectural style, modelled on Christ Church at the University of Oxford. We set up shop in the modern Arts Millennium building where the conference sessions were taking place and were on hand to answer questions on the Salamanca Archive (See separate entry.) Alongside us was a lovely exhibition of book covers of *Platero y yo* in translation, curated by José Luis Penón (University College Dublin): *Juan Ramón Jiménez and the Centenary of Platero y yo (1914-2014)*. There was also the opportunity to see an illuminating film on the author's life – the documentary *Los viajes de Juan Ramón Jiménez*, with a discussion panel afterwards. We were welcomed by Bill Richardson, Professor of Spanish at NUIG who introduced Professor Rafael Olea Franco (Colegio de México), the speaker for the first plenary session: "Intertextualidad y ética en la narrativa de José Emilio Pacheco". This was a timely homage to the recently deceased Mexican poet and writer. The second plenary lecture was an excellent talk by the AHGBI President's guest Professor Nieves Baranda (UNED): "Desde el margen: espacios y modelos de la autobiografía femenina en la Edad Moderna".

The Conference covered a wide-ranging number of topics, with some 85 sessions including History and Politics, Medieval studies, Golden Age, Linguistics, Spanish and Latin American film, Catalan and Galician studies, Lusophone histories and cultures and more. These were presented in the form of panels with linked topics. For example, the panel on Hispanicizing Memory Studies (II) covered four topics in the allotted two hours:

Cara Levey (UCC): "Of Hijos and Niños: Revisiting Postmemory in Post Dictatorship Uruguay"

Diletta Panero (NUIG): "The problem of historical memory in contemporary Chile"

Carolina Orloff (Edinburgh): "Refiguring the Past in Contemporary Argentina: Constructing Collective Memory through Education"

Dunja Fehimovic (Cambridge): "Cuando la muerte es el pretexto para hablar de la vida". Reconfiguring the Past in Contemporary Cuban Cinema"

Of particular interest in the panel Medieval Studies (I) was the presentation: "Digital editing of medieval chronicles: the *Estoria de Espanna*" by Aengus Ward (Birmingham). The *Estoria de Espanna* is an extensive thirteenth-century history of Spain composed under the direction of Alfonso X of Castile and León (reigned 1252-1284). The project aims to provide an electronic edition of the chronicle which will allow comparison of the three major versions and provide full searching ability for any of the text. Dr. Ward introduced us to this wonderful manuscript and described the experimental method of crowdsourcing to enable this comparison.

http://estoria.bham.ac.uk/blog/?page_id=2

Two topics on the Medieval Studies (II) panel which I attended linked nicely to Professor Baranda's lecture. These were fascinating insights into the situation and writings of medieval women. Juan Carlos Conde (Oxford) spoke about "Teresa de Cartagena, la mujer que sabía demasiado", an extraordinary woman of her time (15th century), who argued for equality of men and women, and for disabled persons, along with writings on biblical interpretation and belief. Lesley Twomey (Northumbria), with "Court and Convent: Senses and Spirituality in Hispanic Medieval Women's Writing" gave us an insight into their thoughts and situation. Almost one year later, I would happily listen to and enjoy these two talks all over again

The archive of Irish poet Pearse Hutchinson (1927-2012) had been recently acquired by Maynooth University Library and I made sure to attend the talk of Richard Mansell (Exeter) on "Pearse Hutchinson and the Translation of Josep Carner". (See separate entry on this acquisition). Residing in Barcelona for much of the 1950s and 60s, Hutchinson's first book was a volume of translations of this Catalan poet and Dr. Mansell, a senior lecturer in translation, gave us a unique view of Hutchinson's very personal approach to translation. (*José Carner: Poems*. Oxford, The Dolphin Press, 1962). I recommend the article "Jasmine and Lagarto: Pearse Hutchinson's poetry of Spain" by Vincent Woods in *Estudios Irlandeses*, no. 5, 2010, pp. 113-18. Extract: "at the heart of this work is his poetry of Spain. From his first visit there in 1950 to today Hutchinson has been inspired by the landscapes, people and languages of Spain, translating from Catalan, Castilian and Galician and writing memorable poems based on his own experiences and the history and politics of a country which he loves".

Adjacent to Galway's University Library is the new Hardiman Research Building, named the 2014 Irish Building & Design Architectural Project of the Year. Here is a space for research for students and staff, with collections facilities for storage and access to archives and special collections, digitization, research services generally and public engagement through exhibitions and other events. The building is also the new home for Special Collections and Archives, which we visited on our own initiative and we were able to view digitised programmes and photographs from the Abbey Theatre Archive (Ireland's national theatre) and Druid (Galway's theatre of renown). A Druid production in February 2014 of *Yerma* by Federico García Lorca

was the first of a number of exciting projects in which students on the NUI Galway Drama programmes can act and work closely with Galway theatre professionals in public productions.

There were plenty of opportunities to meet and mingle with Hispanists, not only academics but many students from NUIG's Spanish Department, including some from abroad, who were friendly and enthusiastic participants. The conference was supported by the embassies of Chile, Mexico and Spain, with Mexico providing appropriate refreshment in the form of margaritas and Corona for the opening reception. Partaking in Galway's famous pub life was of course de rigueur, sometimes literally as one could be hi-jacked on the streets and vociferously persuaded to join in the conviviality in city pubs Ó Neachtain's or the Quays.

The conference and visit to Galway was a great opportunity for us not only to promote our archives and special collections but also to gain an awareness of current topics, directions and needs of researchers and academics in the field of Hispanic studies. And hence to assist us in meeting the needs of researchers, academics and students in our professional work in academic libraries and in archives.

The full programme may be viewed at:

http://www.nuigalway.ie/lrc/documents/ahqbi_galway_2014_academic_programme.pdf

