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Foreword by the Guest Editor: Text, Performance and Community

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FOREWORD

Text, Performance and Community

This special edition of the *Journal of Franco-Irish Studies* focuses on the theme “Text, Performance and Community.” It explores the diverse interactions between textual expressions, performative practices and communal dynamics within the contexts of Ireland and/or France. The published articles come from a wide range of disciplinary approaches that engage with the multi-faceted relationships between text, performance and community. When we explore the relationships between these concepts, we begin to understand and witness a certain complementary in how the contributors and their work address the theme of this issue of JOFIS.

The word text originates from the Latin term *textus*, and *textus* is further derived from the Latin *texere*, meaning woven or tied together. This reflects the idea of words being interwoven to create meaning. From the fourteenth century in the English language, “text” referred to written works, particularly those that were significant or authoritative, such as religious or literary manuscripts. Over time, the meaning expanded to include any written or printed material, encompassing everything from books to digital content. In 1993 the meaning for the word text shifted slightly in Western society after the first “text message” was sent via a digital network. In 1999 this began a much-used method to spread news across a wide range of communities in multiple locations.

In this special edition, our contributors embody the age-old concept of text, where the authors’ thoughts are transformed into written words. They are like weavers of stories, becoming poets and storytellers as they skilfully interlace their articles and book reviews. The word performance, from its origins, ties in very well within the context of the issues contributions also. The Latin word *performare* combines *per* which means through with *formare*, which means to form or shape something and relates to the Old French word, *performer* which means to complete or carry out. Although the word may originally have meant to carry out or complete a task, performance has also evolved its meaning over time to encompass artistic and theatrical presentations, emphasising the execution of a work in front of an audience, or the effectiveness of an individual or system in fulfilling its intended function. Once again, for the word community, we see how it derives from the Latin language also. The Latin term *communis*, means common or shared and combines *com*, meaning together with *unus*, meaning one. This also reflects the idea of a group of people, coming together through shared interests, common

values and goals. Today, community can encompass a broader range of meanings, including geographic communities, social groups, and online networks who are connected by shared experiences, interests, or identities.

This special edition of the *Journal of Franco-Irish Studies* accomplishes all of this by bringing together and sharing our knowledge. It disseminates findings through the performance of text, making this information freely available to a community united by a common purpose.

Brian A. Murphy's article "Accreditation Rendezvous: A Confluence of Tradition and Progress" links community through accreditation. University accreditation serves as a crucial nexus between tradition and progress, reflecting the evolution of educational standards across time and geography. This article explores the historical roots of accreditation, tracing its evolution from medieval Europe to modern standards. While it examines the global context, the primary focus is on recent accreditation developments in Ireland. This article highlights the critical role of accreditation in shaping career development amidst the evolving landscape of higher education and business. As universities and companies adapt to rapid changes, effective accreditation frameworks become essential in ensuring quality and relevance in education and training. France's contribution to these frameworks is significant, reflecting a commitment to establishing standards that not only benefit local institutions but also resonate on a global scale. Accreditation serves not only as a mark of quality but also as a bridge connecting diverse educational practices and career pathways. As we move forward, it will be crucial for stakeholders to engage in dialogue and innovation to keep pace with the demands of the digital era, ensuring that accreditation continues to empower learners and enhance employability worldwide.

Vicki O'Reilly's article "*Un Silence Assourdissant!* Listening to What's Not Being Said: Addressing the Silence around and Impact of Intersectionality for Leaving Certificate Applied Students in Irish Second Level Education" cleverly links the sense of community through her title, connecting both Irish and French scholars through their vested interests in her topic. Vicki discusses how it is often in the silence, what is not said or discussed, that we can determine the significance of something. She examines words and often the unheard words and the power and the impact these can have over an individual, group or a community. In Vicki's own words,

there is power in our words, and in the lack of them. By taking time to understand why, where this power comes from and how its impact can be seen and felt, if not heard, that we can then proactively address the silence.

Vicki highlights how we are multifaceted individuals, woven within threads of history, family experience, upbringing, and traditions, telling others who we are and how this can lead to a community's interpretation of an individual or group. This can lead to misunderstanding, potential bias, exclusion and incorporating multiple layers of challenges to overcome. Through a participatory action research study, Vicki illustrates

an approach to manage and spotlight intersectionality, addressing the gaps and the silence that facilitates its continuation, the power dynamics and current opinions can be challenged in a positive and non-accusatory way.

Following from the above works, Taylor Still brings us another riveting piece called "Texts, Affects and Teenagers: (Im)Material Transmissions Across France and Ireland." In line with the journal title, Taylor discusses text, reading and technology and how we embody these. She explores this cat-and-mouse game of being-exposed-to and imposing oneself-on a text; it seems that we are inevitably entangled with the texts that we read, write and engage with, whether we like it, or not. Still uses Felski's¹ (2008) ideas around how to examine our communities which we develop through our social media activity, friends, work and scholarship. Whether they be as humans or as non-human computers, the interconnectivity of these communities becomes entangled with that of others. This happened through the text itself and the technology we use to transmit or send the text. According to Taylor, her article

seeks to examine the circulation (or sending across) of texts between people, spaces and cultural perspectives – and more specifically, within a Franco-Irish context. Drawing on affect theory, this article considers the affective impact of this very circulation.

Included within this special edition of the journal we have several book reviews also.

It's Not Where You Live, It's How You Live: Class and Gender Studies in a Dublin Estate, by John Bissett and reviewed by Tony Kiely.

This compelling book takes us deep into the world of a public housing estate in Dublin, showing in fine detail the life struggles of those who live there. Combining long-term research into residents' lived experience with critical realist theory, it provides a completely fresh perspective on public housing in Ireland and arguably, beyond.

¹ Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 3.

From Landscapes to Cityscapes: Towards a Poetics of Dwelling in Modern Irish Verse, by Marjan Shokouhi and reviewed by Camille d'Alençon-Pinettes.

This is a book that tells the story not just of language learning in Victorian Ireland but, by using languages as an entry point, it weaves a much wider and deeper story, that of nothing less than the shaping of modern Ireland. Camille states that Heidegger's concept of dwelling" serves as a guiding thread throughout, highlighting the fact that we have lost our basic relationship with the environment.

Foreign Tongues: Victorian Language Learning and the Shaping of Modern Ireland by Phyllis Gaffney and reviewed by Grace Neville.

This book explores how history shifts languages; and how languages shape history, which was a deep-rooted, dynamic process manifested in Victorian Ireland. This wide-ranging, detailed study draws on multiple sources to cast a fresh light on aspects of Irish history, viewed through the complex lens of language education. As Grace so eloquently states, "it is a feast for the mind and for the soul - or to put it more colloquially - there's eating and drinking in it."

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