

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing away of Professor Werner Huber on 28 April 2016 at the age of 63. Werner Huber was born in Hassloch, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, in 1952 and studied English and German at the University of Mannheim, Amherst College, the University of Mainz and Trinity College Dublin. He received his Ph.D. in 1980, with a thesis on James Stephens's early novels, from the University of Mainz and subsequently became a research assistant and assistant professor at the English Department of the University of Paderborn, where he collaborated closely with Rainer Schöwerling on the Corvey Library Project. In 1995, he received his *venia legendi* in English Philology with a *Habilitationsschrift* on Irish autobiographies of the 20th century. After a short period at the University of Tübingen he became Full Professor of English Literature at the Chemnitz University of Technology in 1999, before being appointed Full Professor of English and American Language and Literature at the University of Vienna in 2005.

In Vienna, Werner Huber tirelessly promoted the cause of Irish Studies in his teaching and research, founding the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies in 2009 and initiating the Distinguished Chair in Irish Studies programme, co-funded by the Embassy of Ireland and the University of Vienna, which brought a string of eminent scholars (such as Gerry Smyth, Séan Crosson, Robert Mahony) to our department. Through his involvement in the "Irish Itinerary" culture programme, he contributed to the city's vibrant cultural scene by welcoming numerous renowned Irish authors, film makers, and musicians, such as Medbh McGuckian, Julian Gough, and Glenn Patterson. He also brought two major Irish Studies conferences to Vienna. In 2009, he organized the 7th Conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS) on the theme of "Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges"; Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney accepted his invitation to deliver a celebrated keynote lecture on "Mossbawn via Mantua: A Reading with Commentary". Papers from the conference were published in two volumes, entitled *Contemporary Irish Film: New Perspectives on a National Cinema* (2011) and *Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges* (2012). In 2011, marking the centenary of Flann O'Brien's birthday, Werner Huber co-organized the inaugural conference of the international Flann O'Brien Society, with keynotes by Anthony Cronin, Frank McNally, Keith Hopper, Kurt Palm, and Harry Rowohlt. The conference resulted in a much-noted volume of Flann O'Brien scholarship, entitled *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies* (Cork University Press). Plans to host the 2017 annual conference of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) sadly did not materialize due to his sudden illness.

Werner Huber's central role in the field of Irish Studies is further illustrated by his function of Vice-President for IASIL Europe (2000-2009), his membership of the EFACIS Executive Committee (1999-2016), as well as editorship of the EFACIS book series "Irish Studies in Europe" (six volumes, WVT). The enormous appreciation of his achievements as a champion of Irish Studies has come to the fore in numerous tributes pouring in from the Irish Studies community all over the world upon the news of his death. "We salute Werner as a world scholar in Irish literature and drama and as a steadfast champion of Irish studies and Irish culture within Europe

and beyond," writes IASIL Chairperson Margaret Kelleher. "We will miss greatly his wisdom, his deep and quiet generosity to fellow scholars, and his infectious sense of humour."

Outside the field of Irish Studies, Werner Huber made notable contributions to the foundation and development of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE), whose president he was from 2001 to 2009, concluding his presidency as host of the society's 2009 conference in Vienna on the theme of "Staging Interculturality". A book of the same title, with papers from the conference, appeared in 2010. His long-standing research interest in British Romanticism is reflected in his position as Secretary-Treasurer and Vice-President of the German Society for English Romanticism (1982-1996) and his influential co-edited volume on *Biofictions: The Rewriting of Romantic Lives in Contemporary Fiction and Drama* (1999). His broad expertise is further reflected in a large number of editorial board memberships (e.g. *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, *Irish Studies Review*, *Irish University Review*) and in his editorial work on numerous scholarly essay collections (e.g. *Intermedialities*, 2007, *Self-Reflexivity in Literature*, 2005, *The Corvey Library and Anglo-German Cultural Exchanges, 1770-1837*, 2004).

An engaging speaker, Werner Huber will be greatly missed by his students for his lectures and seminars in Film and Cultural Studies, where his enthusiasm for British popular culture (*Downton Abbey*, *Game of Thrones*) proved contagious and his dry sense of humour and attention to quirky details were much appreciated. Students benefitted from his excellent contacts not only in academia but also in the arts world. They had the unique opportunity of hearing talks by Academy Award nominees Lenny Abrahamson and Peter Morgan, as well as distinguished authors such as Claire Tomalin, and Michael Frayn, one of the big names in contemporary British drama. A whole generation of students will fondly remember Werner Huber's annual London theatre "field trips", where the groundling experience in the Globe Theatre – sometimes in the pouring rain – was regularly followed by a convivial pint in the local pub.

Werner Huber was not only an exemplary scholar and charismatic teacher but also a kind, generous and inspiring supervisor and mentor, whose advice and continuous support will be keenly missed by his students and also the junior colleagues who had the privilege of working with him. For those who knew him, he was a true "scholar and gentleman" – an amiable and "cultured allroundman", who leaves a large gap in the department's life and the university. We will always remember him with gratitude and affection. Our hearts go out to his wife Edith and their family.

Dieter Fuchs, Julia Lajta-Novak, Sandra Mayer