

Text of the introductory address delivered by: PROFESSOR JAMES BROWNE, President, National University of Ireland, Galway, on 3 December 2008 in Dublin Castle, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Celtic Studies *honoris causa*, on HILDEGARD TRISTRAM

A Sheansailéar, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Tá an Léann Ceilteach á shaothrú ar bhonn eolaíoch nua-aimseartha ó d'fhoilsigh Johann Kaspar Zeuss an leabhar cáiliúil, *Grammatica Celtica*, sa Ghearmáin sa bhliain 1853. Is breá an rud é go bhfuil Ollscoil na hÉireann ábalta ar an aitheantas atá dlite do scoláireacht Cheiltise na Gearmáine a thabhairt di inniu trí chéim oinigh a bhronnadh ar an Ollamh Hildegard Tristram.

Hildegard Tristram studied English and French at the Universities of Münster and Freiburg in Germany, the Royal Holloway College of the University of London and the Université Stendhal Grenoble in France. She studied Celtic Studies at Freiburg University and Trinity College Dublin. Professor Tristram has taught at Freiburg University, the University of Konstanz, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and L'Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest, France. She held the Chair of English Historical Linguistics and Medieval English Literature at the University of Potsdam before returning to Freiburg University in November 2006.

Professor Hildegard Tristram is married to Dr Konrad J Tristram and they have two sons, Engelbert J R Tristram and Dr Konrad R W Tristram.

Professor Hildegard Tristram's contribution to Celtic Studies has been wide-ranging and innovative. Her own earlier university studies focused on English and Romance linguistics at Münster, London, Grenoble and Freiburg. In the early seventies a research fellowship enabled her to devote an extended period to the study of Early Irish and Celtic in Dublin, where she met leading scholars such as Gordon Quin, James Carney and Brian ÓCuív. Her mastery of diverse strands of medieval languages and learning has enabled her to bring welcome new insights and impulses to the comparative study of Old and Middle Irish. In doing this she has drawn on her extensive familiarity with Anglo-Saxon, Old Icelandic and Latin, as well as Welsh and Breton.

A work on the great Irish epic, *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, was the high point of an ambitious project on orality and literacy in early Irish literature, which she oversaw for ten very productive years.

Professor Tristram's courageous career move from a professorship of Medieval Studies in the University of Freiburg to a chair of English Historical Linguistics and Medieval English Literature at the University of Potsdam in a reunited Germany in the mid-nineties saw her also embark on the organisation of a series of ground-breaking international symposia on 'Celtic Englishes'. This initiative proved successful in prompting scholars from a wide range of disciplines to enquire into the multi-faceted relationship between Irish and the other Celtic languages and English in these islands and the New World.

And so it can be seen that while Professor Tristram chose Osborn Bergin's seamless garment of Irish language studies, she added Hiberno-English and other garments at times. The colours have mostly matched, occasionally they have set each other off. But, whatever the combination, Celtic Studies was always the beneficiary.

Perhaps most importantly of all, it is to be noted that for Hildegard Tristram, Celtic Studies has always been more than words, be they manuscript, printed or spoken. For her, Celtic Studies was nothing without its people – be they native speakers, fellow experts, or most importantly of all, young budding scholars. These latter she encouraged, and continues to encourage, not only by her

inspiring example and enthusiastic engagement in the pursuit of academic excellence, not solely by her judicious advice, but above all by her generous, scholarly friendship.

Most recently, she has embraced the opportunities provided by Irish Government funding for the teaching of Irish abroad to enable a new generation of young scholars at Freiburg University to follow in her own footsteps and those of her predecessors in the field of Celtic Studies in Germany.

The National University of Ireland is therefore greatly honoured to bestow in this, its centennial year, the honorary degree of doctorate on Professor Hildegard Tristram, for her outstanding contribution to Celtic Studies scholarship.

Tá gaisce déanta ag an Ollamh Tristram ar son scoláirí agus scoláireacht an Léinn Cheiltigh. Níl aon amhras ach gur scoláire idirnáisiúnta den céad scoth í.

Tá áthas ar Ollscoil na hÉireann an dícheall sin a aithint inniu agus céim oinigh dochtúireachta a bhronnadh uirthi. Tá an onóir mhór seo tuilte go maith aici.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis hanc meam filiam, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse quae admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Litteris Celticis, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.