ACIS Elections

The new Secretary of ACIS, Robert Rhodes of the State University at Cortland, New York, has confirmed the following officers of ACIS. Their terms of office begin May 1969:

Chairman: John V. Kelleher, Harvard University
First Vice-Chairman: Harold Orel, University of Kansas
Second Vice-Chairman: John R. Moore, Hollins College
Treasurer: Joseph Herron, University of Maryland
Secretary: Robert Rhodes, State University College at Cortland (Professor Rhodes begins now because the last officer will be on leave for this semester.)
History Representatives: Joseph Curran and Helen Mulvey
Literature Representatives: Leo McNamara and Kevin Sullivan
Anthropology and other disciplines: John Messenger

As moved at the May meeting, the Executive will maintain the counsel of David Greene, Larry McCaffrey, and Emmet Larkin.

Annual Meeting: Place Change

The officers of ACIS at the New York meeting on 28 December voted to change the venue of the 1969 meeting to Marquette. The dates of the meeting are May 9th and 10th.

Because of this late change of plans, members with papers or suggestions for topics or speakers, should get in touch with Larry McCaffrey immediately. As has been the practice with past conferences, the host director has suggested the opening theme of this meeting. It is "The Irish-American Experience." The theme is one that has been barely touched upon in previous conferences, and it can serve as an excellent opportunity for integrating history, literature, and sociology at the session. Those members who have been studying any Irish American literary or historical figures should forward ideas to McCaffrey. He suggests the ghetto experience and its manifestations in literature as one way to promote interdisciplinary work at the opening day.

The Saturday session will be concerned with the more traditional approaches to Irish Studies.
Eire-Ireland

All paid-up members of ACIS who have not received the Fall 1968 issue of Eire-Ireland should notify Robert Rhodes at Cortland for a copy.

Membership Listing

Either the new Secretary or your editor will be forwarding a current membership listing shortly.

Your editor suggests again that you notify him when your dues have been paid. Although there is a regular correspondence between the Secretary and the editor, frequently enough time passes between letters so as to exclude a member from a current mailing of the Newsletter. All that is needed is a copy of the letter to Rhodes or a postcard.

ACIS Newsletter: Libraries

During the past year an increasing number of college and university libraries has asked to be included on the mailing list of this organ. Charge for this is the same as ordinary membership. Your editor mentions this now because he has discovered that the reviews and book lists are used to help the always busy librarians keep up their Irish/Irish-American holdings.

Irish Historical Studies

The March 1968 issue of this journal continues with its bibliographical survey series, "Thirty Years' Work in Irish History." This second installment considers the work of the last three decades done on "Ireland Before the Normal Invasion" (Francis John Byrne) and "Sixteenth Century Ireland, 1485-1603" (R. Dudley Edwards and David B. Quinn). A third installment is planned for a later issue.

The March issue also contains reviews of several books of literary and historical note to do with the early years of the present century and ACIS member Alan Ward's essay, "America and the Irish Problem, 1899-1921."

The is published bi-annually, in March and September. Annual subscription is 30s. payable to the treasurer, Dr. L. M. Cullen, 40 Trinity College, Dublin 2.

ACIS Newsletter
Review Supplement
January 1969


The poet of Nightwalker and Other Poems finds himself at a dividing of the ways: he must come to an accounting with himself to account for anything else. Well acquainted with both inner and outer darkness, he has discovered that loneliness is necessary, inevitable, and intolerable. But how to connect things? The will demands structure, but both mind and body report chaos and contradiction. Is there any center that can hold? The poet is not prepared to say so, though he knows a good deal about centers that once held and will no more. The courage to go on, it seems, can only come from an intense, dangerous, very personal and private love.

Kinsella knows that this is "mere idea"; not the truths of love as "your body knows them." Yet love is both physical and mental or it is nothing. In his dialectic, fragilities confront each other: ghosts of structure that somehow persist without substance, delicate files eaten by time as the helpless lover looks on. There is no steadiness in either reason or madness. One takes his chances, offers his vulnerability, descends into the darkness—leaving comforting preconceptions behind.

Kinsella's verse, however, has remarkable solidity. Never rushed, never flimsy, he explores his bitter relativities with the cool poise of a surgeon determined to arrive at a correct diagnosis, even when the body he is dissecting is his own. Not for him the wildnesses of the new schools of experimental poetry. From short, tight lyrics he has gradually moved toward a longer, more meditative form that allows his space to move back and forth between recollection and fantasy, anecdote and commentary. As a nightwalker he regards himself as "a vagabond tethered" to the people on the other side of the windows he observes from outside. His arrogant awareness of the spiritual sickness and grublike existence of the TV watchers is tempered by an equal awareness of his own lack of immunity from human infirmities. Slowness of speech or sentiment, however, is not one of his infirmities. He can portray hallucination or nightmare with brutal directness as in the first section of "Nightwalker," and his satire is often harsh and abrasive, but he prefers the stance of impartial observer who takes in everything with steady and unblinking gaze to the role of fool or sage drunk or maddened by the vision he sees. He writes a good deal about love; few poets have made it seem more harrowing. If anything rings false in his work—and he gives the impression of striving for an ever greater honesty—it is the suggestion that he is a virtuoso of agony who has succeeded in carrying the weight of an albatross of sorrow which would have sunk most other poets, not to mention more ordinary mortals. In "Soft Toy," for instance, he imagines himself reduced to a kind of teddy bear by the love-hate demands of his partner (though nothing so vulgar or sentimentally dangerous as any particular toy pet is specified). It is a true horror poem, ending with the poet staring sleepless into the dark. Unlike a soft toy, he is petrified by the cold will that Sleeps beside him:
Between your tyrannous pressure and the black
Resistance of the void my blankness hardens
To a blunt probe, a cold pitted grey face.
Kinsella allows us access to the scene, the gestures, the sensations of catastrophe,
but he is reticent about personal circumstance.

II

In a recent issue of Poetry Ireland (Spring 1968) Kinsella writes on the continuity
of tradition. He looks around at his colleagues. "And the word 'colleague' fades
on the lips before the reality: a scattering of incoherent lives. It can seem,
on a bad day, that there are a few madmen and hermits, and nothing more. They can
show me nothing about myself except that I am isolated." He says nothing about
the good days, when perhaps the considerable recognition he has received may cast
a softer light. His point, however, is essentially impersonal and objective. For
the Irish writer who writes in English, practically the only useable poet ("those
whose lives in some sense belong to me, and whose force is there for me to use if
I can, if I am good enough") is Yeats. Beyond him stretches a century of silence
in which, at least in poetry, almost nothing rises above the level of competence
in Ireland. And back of that is "a great cultural blur." Irish must replace
English in the eighteenth century, but then a poetry "suddenly full of life" is
available; unfortunately, it represents "the tragic (almost doggerel) end of
Gailec literature." Aogán Ó Rathaille, a poet writing at the end of the seven-
teenth century, is a truly major poet, "the last great poet in Irish, and the
Irish poet, until Yeats, whose life can be seen as a true poetic career." The
thousands years before that is rich in poetry of a great variety and skill, a great
inheritance but largely a lost one:

The inheritance is mine, but only at two enormous removes—across a century's silence, and through an exchange of
worlds. The greatness of the loss is measured not only
by the substance of Irish literature itself, but also by
the intensity with which we know it was shared; it has an
air of continuity and shared history which is precisely
what is missing from Irish literature, in English or Irish,
in the nineteenth century and today.

Perhaps some can make this past their own; for Kinsella the great rift between
makes this impossible. The discontinuity he feels "is a matter of people and
places as well as writing—of coming, so to speak, from a broken and uprooted
family, of being drawn to those who share my origins and finding that we cannot
share our lives."

His translations—and they are distinguished by a lovely force and conclusion—are a kind of sacrificial peace offering to his wish that the case were otherwise.
For many years he has been working on the prose epic Táin Bó Cuailnge. It
promises to be a classic contribution to Irish literature in English. Such
efforts, however, and the need for them only confirm the death of an Irish culture.
This calamity goes deeper than literature; it means in Daniel Corkery's words,
that every Irishman's education "sets up a dispute between his intellect and his
emotions." What he reads has no vital connection with the life of his surroundings.
Yeats's career shows one kind of solution to this dilemma—withdrawal into a still
greater isolation. He creates an aristocratic Anglo-Irish tradition with Swift
and Burke, Berkeley and Goldsmith as its writers and stations himself in the
position of rear-guard defender of a nobility that is passing. From a "graceful
elegiac height above the filthy modern tide" he can distribute his curses and
praises with magisterial hand. He too was torn between love and hate of Ireland
and his English inheritance, but "Yeats is a great artist, and it is clear that
his passionate frustration, though deep, did not take over his soul. Sanity is
embodied in his career, in his final rejection of practical politics and its
shrinking women, and his rejection of the people as an audience for his work."
Joyce's isolation, on the other hand, "is a mask. His relationship with the
modern world is direct and intimate. He knew the filthy modern tide, and immersed
himself in it. In rejecting Ireland he does so on its own terms. Finally
Kinsella comes to the crucial question: is there any particular virtue in the
continuity of tradition? He thinks not. Even a broken tradition will do "however
painful, humanly speaking, it may be. I am certain that a great part of the
significance of my own past, as I try to write my own poetry, is that the past
is mutilated."

III

And so we come back to Nightwalker. I think it is Kinsella's most accomplished
book, and that is saying a good deal. Kinsella had to convince himself that he
could do what the poets he admired did. He set himself to learn how to handle
the metaphysical conceit, how to combine the familiar and exotic, how to use myth
while ironically questioning it. He worked at putting the old themes of song into
strict patterns of rhyme and meter. Among the masters he schooled himself in are
Donne and Herbert and Marvell, Keats and Wordsworth and Arnold, Yeats and Eliot
and Auden. And his debt to the old ballads and carols, and to the wisdom and folk
poetry of Ireland is obvious. But I am not competent to judge the effect on his
work of his Gaelic heritage. At least on the evidence of his own poetry, he has
not much interest in the techniques of association or the theories of correspondence
developed by the French symbolists or in the free-flowing inclusiveness of Whitman
and his latter-day followers. He likes a poem to focus its meanings, even when
these are logically inconclusive or emotionally unsettled, with force and lucidity.
His quest for form in poetry mirrors, or parallels, his quest for order in life.
If his earlier poetry could be said to choose its occasions for their adaptability
to styles of traditional lyric, the later poetry, by contrast, may be said to
seize its occasions from whatever is most pressing in the poet's life as though
confident that, however grim the subject, the words could be relied on to perform
their poetic duty.

John R. Moore
Rollins College

Editor's Note: These paragraphs have been selected from the essay in the October,
1968, Rollins Critic.
CURRENT BOOKS OF IRISH INTEREST

Art
Arnold, Bruce. *A Concise History of Irish Art*. New York, Praeger, 1968. $7.50 cloth. ($3.95 paperback)


Biography
Clissold, Stephen. *Bernardo O'Higgins and the Independence of Chile*. London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968. 59s. First full account in English of how Spain's domination in Latin America was broken by the English-reared son of her Irish Viceroy.


Celtic Studies
Carney, James and David Greene, eds. *Celtic Studies: Essays in Memory of Angus Matheson*, 1912-1962. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968. 8/. Angus Matheson was in charge of Celtic studies at University of Glasgow and these essays reflect his wide range of interest in the field.


Description and Travel

Education

Food and Drink

History
Edwards, Owen Dudley (and others). *Celtic Nationalism*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968. 43s. The historical background and present-day account of Irish, Welsh and Scottish Nationalism are here set down in three separate essays: Edwards for Ireland; Gwynfor Evans and Ioan Rhys for Wales; and Hugh MacDiarmid for Scotland.

(History of Irish Catholicism Vol. 1)

(History of Irish Catholicism Vol. 2)

(History of Irish Catholicism Vol. 3)


Younger, Calton. Ireland's Civil War. London, F. Muller, 1968. 50s. This account of the "brothers' war" by an Australian has been called "probably the least partial work so far." Author had access to British Cabinet papers and also interviewed the survivors.

Literature-Criticism


Literature-Fiction


Pearse, Padraic. Short Stories of Padraic Pearse. Cork, Mercier Press, 1968. 8s 6d. This collection has the stories in both Irish and English. Edited by Desmond Maguire.

Literature-Poetry


Liddy, James. Blue Mountain. Dublin, Dolmen Press, 1968. 21s. A second collection of poems; the first In A Blue Smoke was published four years ago.

Social Life and Customs


Compiled by James Ford

Editor's Note: Names of American publishers and dollar prices are not always available at time of compilation.