

ACIS Newsletter

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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 Hernon, 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 intergrating 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."

IHS 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

Nightwalker and Other Poems. Thomas Kinsella. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968. \$4.00.

I

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 flesh 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 him 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 infirmity. Sloppiness 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 Gaelic literature." Aogán O Rathaille, a poet writing at the end of the seventeenth 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 thousand 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 concision--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 rearward 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 this 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 shrieking 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
Hollins College

Editor's Note: These paragraphs have been selected from the essay in the October, 1968, Hollins 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)

White, James. National Gallery of Ireland. London. New York, Praeger, 1968. \$27.50. With 32 color plates and 190 in black and white. A history and a commentary.

Biography

Clissold, Stephen. Bernardo O'Higgins and the Independence of Chile. London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968. 55s. First full account in English of how Spain's domination in Latin America was broken by the English-reared son of her Irish Viceroy.

Lyons, F. S. L. John Dillon, A Biography. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968. 75s. "A massive and scholarly contribution to an understanding of the whole period after the Young Ireland Movement and the Fenians to the setting up of the free state." T. L. S.

Mangan, James Clarene. Autobiography. Dublin, Dolmen Press, 1968. 10s 6d. James Kilroy has edited the manuscript in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy. Contact Dufour Editions, Inc., the American distributor of Dolmen items.

Moore, George. George Moore in Transition: Letters to T. Fisher Unwin & Lina Milman, 1894-1910. Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1968. \$12.00. Edited with a commentary by Helmut E. Gerber. Contains some 300 previously unpublished letters by Moore.

Reid, B. L. The Man From New York; John Quinn and His Friends. New York, Oxford University Press, 1968. \$12.50. The life and letters of John Quinn, friend of writers and extraordinary collector of art and literary manuscripts.

O'Connor, Frank. My Father's Son. London, Macmillan, 1968. 42s. New York, Knopf. The second and final volume of the autobiography; the first was An Only Child.

MacDermot, Frank. Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times. Dublin, Anvil Books, 1968. 7s 6d. Paperback reprint of original edition of 1939.

Celtic Studies

Carney, James and David Greene, eds. Celtic Studies: Essays in Memory of Angus Matheson, 1912-1962. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968. £2. Angus Matheson was in charge of Celtic studies at University of Glasgow and these essays reflect his wide range of interest in the field.

Corkery, Daniel. The Fortunes of the Irish Language. Cork, Mercier Press, 1968. 6s. Reprint of the work published in the Irish Life and Culture Series by the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland -- long out of print.

Description and Travel

Dublin--The Ideal Guide to Ireland's Capitol by Endymion. 9th edition. Dublin, Mount Salus Press, 1968. 4s.

Education

Dowling, Patrick J. The Hedge Schools of Ireland. Cork, Mercier Press, 1968. 6s. Paperback revised edition of a work that first appeared in 1935.

Food and Drink

Fitzgibbon, Theodora. A Taste of Ireland. London, Dent, 1968. 42s. A book of traditional Irish cookery. Illustrated with 60 pages of historic photos of Ireland and joins the growing list of Irish cook books by Maura Laverty, Monica Sheridan, and Frances Budin.

History

Edwards, Owen Dudley (and others). Celtic Nationalism. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968. 45s. 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)

Hand, Geoffrey. The Church in The English Lordship 1216-1307. Bound in one volume with Gwynn, Aubrey, Anglo-Irish Church Life 14th and 15th Centuries. Dublin, Gill, 1968. 7/6. (Volume in History of Irish Catholicism Series.)

(History of Irish Catholicism Vol. 2)

Millett, Benignus. Survival and Reorganization 1650-1695. Bound in one volume with: Corish, Patrick J. The Origins of Catholic Nationalism. Dublin, Gill, 1968. 7/6. (Volume in History of Irish Catholicism Series.)

(History of Irish Catholicism Vol. 3)

Gwynn, Denis. Great Britain, England and Wales. Bound in one volume with: Handley, James E. Scotland. Dublin, Gill, 1968. 7/6. (A volume in History of Irish Catholicism.)

Macardle, Dorothy. The Irish Republic. London, Corgi Books, 1968. 12/6. Paperback reprint of an important work.

MacNeill, Eoin. Phases of Irish History. Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1968. 10/6. Reprint of one of the best summaries of Irish history from the earliest times through the period of the Norman Invasion. (Original edition 1920)

- Moody, T. W. ed. Historical Studies: Papers Read Before the Irish Conference of Historians. Volume 6. Dublin, June 2-5, 1965. New York, Barnes & Noble, 1968. \$6.50.
- Piggott, Stuart. The Druids. London, Thames & Hudson, 1968. 42s. (Volume in the series: Ancient Peoples and Places.) With 75 illustrations.
- 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

- Hayman, Ronald. Samuel Beckett. London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1968. 6s. Volume in Contemporary Playwright Series contains commentaries on all the performed plays.
- Donoghue, Denis, ed. Swift Revisited. Cork, Mercier Press, 1968. 6s. The Thomas Davis series of lectures honoring Swift's anniversary here in book form.
- Jeffares, A. Norman, ed. Swift. London, Papermac, 1968. 42s. (18s paper) Collection of 14 essays (6 of which appear in the earlier collection): Fair Liberty was All His Cry (1967).
- LeBrocqy, Sybil. Swift's Most Valuable Friend. Dublin, Dolmen Press, 1968. 25s. (Paper 15s.) Continues thesis stated in her introduction to Stella's Birthday (1967).
- Ronsley, Joseph. Yeats' Autobiography. Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1968. An analysis of the Autobiography--as a work of art, in an attempt to discover the underlying design.

Literature-Fiction

- Brawn, Dympna. Before Summer. London, Dent, 1968. 25s. Novel of life in London in the early 1950s of Naomi and her young Irish writing "genius" of a husband.
- Cleeve, Brian. You Must Never Go Back. New York, Random House, 1968. \$4.95.
- Corkery, Daniel. The Stormy Hills. Cork, Mercier Press, 1968. 6s. Paperback reprint of collection which first appeared in 1924.
- Donleavy, J. P. The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B. New York, Delacorte Press (a Seymour Lawrence book), 1968. \$6.95. This novel of an Irishman in Paris is Donleavy's eighth book and his best since The Gingerman.
- Kavanagh, P. J. A Song and A Dance. London, Chatto & Windus, 1968. 25s. First novel from the author of play: A Perfect Stranger deals with contemporary London life and some of the Irish there.

- Kiely, Benedict. Dogs Enjoy The Morning. London, Gollanz, 1968. 30s.
- Moore, George. Celibate Lives. London, Chatto & Windus, 1968. 21s. Reprint in new series The Landmark Library.
- O'Brien, Edna. Casualties of Peace. London, Penguin Books, 1968. 3s 6d. Paperback reprint of latest O'Brien novel (1967).
- 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

- Mahon, Derek. Night Crossing. London, Oxford University Press, 1968. 15s. Autumn choice of Poetry Book Society.
- Yeats, William Butler. Yeats' Last Poems. London, Macmillan. (30s) 12s 6d for paperback. Edited with a bibliography by Jon Stallworthy.
- 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

- Cullen, L. M. Life in Ireland. London, Batsford, 1968. 25s. Illustrated portrait of Irish social life from early days to the turn of the century.
- Healy, John. The Death of An Irish Town. Cork, Mercier Press, 1968. 8s 6d. Here in book form is the series of articles No One Shouted Stop which appeared in the Irish Times.

Compiled by James Ford

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