

## Reminders from ACIS Secretary

Members and would-be members who have not yet paid 1971-72 dues should forward their checks for \$4.00 to the Secretary, Robert E. Rhodes, English Department, SUNY-Cortland, Cortland, New York 13045.

Agenda items for the 1972 business meeting should be forwarded in writing to the Secretary.

Members interested in hosting the 1973 Annual Conference of ACIS should write to the Secretary for procedures and other necessary information.

The data-collecting project on ACIS members, their research interests, etc. begun by the Secretary some time ago will be continued under a new scheme; members and other interested parties are urged to cooperate.

## Milwaukee: Curtin's Home Town

Jeremiah Curtin, Irish folklorist, was a native of Milwaukee, the site of the 1972 Annual Conference of ACIS. The Curtin homestead still stands on Granger Avenue near South 92 Street, at one time the heart of the Irish colony that dated from the late 1830's. Scholars investigating the Irish in America will be interested in the June 1971 issue of the *Historical Messenger*, available from the Society for \$1.00; in addition to an article entitled "Jeremiah Curtin's Boyhood in Milwaukee County," it contains an essay on "John Gregory and Irish Immigration to Milwaukee."

## MLA Forecasts Irish Interests

Growing interest in Irish Studies was reflected in the 1971 MLA program. In addition to the ACIS-sponsored Seminar on Daniel Corkery, it included a Celtic Section and Centennial Seminar on Synge; a Seminar on "Swift and His Heirs: Joyce and Beckett"; a paper in a Contemporary Literature Section on James Joyce and George Moore; and a discussion of Beckett and Albee in a Literature and Religion Seminar.

ACIS members participated prominently in Seminars and Sections, although program information for most did not reach your editor in time for announcement in the December *Newsletter*. Next year's Celtic Section will be on Ulysses; papers should reach Richard Finneran, Tulane University, by April 1. Proposals for the 1972 Seminar on "Swift and His Heirs" should be sent to Janet Egleson Dunleavy, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Topic and chairman for the ACIS-sponsored Seminar will be announced in the next issue of the *ACIS Newsletter*.

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íRISH STUDIES

newsletter

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## Irish Studies Section Introduced at NEMLA

Thanks to the persistence of Professor Phyllis T. Dircks of C. W. Post, the 1972 Annual Meeting of Northeast MLA (April 7-8, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York) will feature a section on "Irish Writers and Writings to 1900." This year's section will be chaired by Professor Dircks; ACIS member Professor William Dumbleton of SUNY-Albany will serve as secretary. Participants will include William Linn, Hunter College, CUNY, on "Sybils from the Big House: The Ascendancy Sensibility in Anglo-Irish Fiction from Lady Morgan to Elizabeth Bowen"; Janet Egleson Dunleavy, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, on "The Nimble Genius of Samuel Lover"; and William Griffin, St. John's University, on "Ireland in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Views of Visitors and Observers."

Next year's program, which will be chaired by Professor Dumbleton (the secretary spot is open), will feature papers on "Irish Writers and Writings After 1900." Professor Dircks reports that thereafter the subject matter will continue to alternate between pre-1900 and post-1900 writers and writings. ACIS members are urged to provide an attendance figure at the 1972 meeting that will justify continuation of the section and to submit ideas for the 1973 meeting to Professor Dumbleton.

## ACIS REPRINTS FOR 1972

Two ACIS reprints are now in press: *Matthew Arnold* by John Kelleher which will lead off the series in modern Irish literature, and *Town and Country in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (which includes essays by Maureen Wall and J. G. Simms on the Catholic Merchants of Dublin and Connacht in the 18th Century) in the modern Irish history series. Both should reach ACIS members early in 1972.

## AHA PROGRAM ON OLD LEFT

"The Old Left in Irish Politics" was the title of the Irish session at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association which met in New York in December. Chairman of the session was Jesse Clarkson of Brooklyn College; papers on James Connolly and W. P. Ryan were read by James D. Ryan of CCNY and Martin Waters of Cooper Union respectively; the commentator was Galen Broeker of the University of Tennessee.

## ACHA TO NOTRE DAME

"Catholicism and Irish Identity," the featured session of the American Catholic Historical Association (Notre Dame, April 7-8) will be chaired by Msgr. John Tracey Ellis (University of San Francisco); panelists are Andrew Greeley (National Opinion Research Center, Chicago), Emmet Larkin (Chicago), and L. J. McCaffrey (Loyola).

## LANDRETH BOOK REPRINTED

When Mr. John Cudahy was Ambassador to Ireland in 1938 he insisted that all new arrivals at the Embassy in Dublin read Helen Landreth's *Dear Dark Head: An Intimate Story of Ireland* at once, to help them understand the Irish. When the book first came out it was recommended by the Irish Ministry in Washington, replacing the four or five titles previously recommended. Long out of print, Miss Landreth's book soon will be brought out in hard cover edition by Kraus Reprints, 16 East 46th St., New York.



## reviews

*Medieval Ireland* c. 1170-1495 by P.W.A. Asplin. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1971. xv 139 pp. £1.50 (hardbound); £1.00 (paperback)

The board of editors of the nine-volume *New History of Ireland*, in progress under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy, announces this bibliography of medieval Ireland as the first in a series of "Ancillary Publications." The promise is that the series will provide "bibliographical, statistical and other aids to study and research, both to facilitate and expedite work on the *New History* and also to assist in the progress of Irish historical scholarship generally."

The restrictions placed on the compiler (P.W.A. Asplin, Glasgow University Library) of this bibliographical survey are clearly set forth in the editors' preface. He is concerned only with printed secondary writing and although he records bibliographies and guides to sources "he does not include source materials, either manuscript or printed, as such." At the outset of his own introduction, Mr. Asplin alerts the future user of the *New History* to the regrettable fact that his bibliography has 1495 for its terminal date whereas volume two of the *New History* will cover the period 1169-1534.

The compiler has established eighteen major topics beginning with "Bibliographies and Guides" and running through "Heraldry." The arrangement of sub-topics under "Bibliographies and Guides" is admirably complete, and Americans will be particularly thankful for the entries that direct users to reliable guides to the documents held in the public record offices of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and London. The second main topic, "Serials," gives not only the major Irish scholarly journals, but also the less widely known but often important regional historical and archaeological journals. Under the major topic heading "Historical Geography" the user will find a full listing (with cautionary notes) under the sub-topic "Place Names." For example, P. W. Joyce's *Origin and History of Irish Names of Places* (1869-1913) is described accurately: "The work predates the disciplined study of the subject, and many of the explanations are speculative translations since refuted by examination of documentary evidence for earlier forms" (p. 25).

### REPRINTS IN IRISH STUDIES

Four titles listed by W. B. Yeats among his "46 best Irish books" have been reprinted by the Lemma Publishing Corporation, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017. They are Standish Hayes O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica* (I-XXXI); Standish James O'Grady's *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period, Cuculain and His Contemporaries*; Jeremiah Curtin, *Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World*; and T. Crofton Coker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*. Other reprints of interest to ACIS members that did not receive the Yeats endorsement include works by Eugene O'Curry, H. D'Arbois de Jubainville, William Patrick Ryan, Standish James O'Grady, Alfred Webb, Stephen J. M. Brown, Richard Irvine Best, David James O'Donoghue, and John Quinn.

### CURRENT BOOKS: ADDENDA

Omitted from December *ACIS Newsletter* were following titles in literary criticism from Bucknell University Press: Benstock, Bernard. *Sean O'Casey* Kilroy, James. *J. C. Mangan* O'Brien, Darcy. *W. R. Rodgers* Marcus, Phillip L. *Standish O'Grady* Doyle, Paul A. *Paul Vincent Carroll* Saul, George Brandon. *Seumas O'Kelly* Begnal, Michael. *Sheridan LeFanu* All contain approximately 100 pages; \$4.50 hard cover, \$1.95 paperback.

### HELEN MULVEY AT UW

President of the New England Historical Association, 1971-72, and Visiting Professor of History, The University of Wisconsin—Madison, spring 1972, Helen Mulvey of Connecticut College serves both East and Midwest this year.

*ACIS members who wish to review books or special issues of journals should write to the Editor, stating specific areas of academic interest.*

The formidable listing of studies (118) under the main topic "Ecclesiastical History" (pp. 61-80) reflects the close attention that this field has received over the past forty years as does also the main topic heading "Archaeology" (pp. 104-107).

The compiler also has thoughtfully pointed out fields of Irish medieval history that are awaiting ploughing and tilling: "There is no comprehensive work on Irish constitutional or administrative history" (p. 56). And, "There is no comprehensive account, of the Irish exchequer" (p. 57). The reviewer would add here that the same might be said about the study of the growth of towns in medieval Ireland, although there are several adequate studies of individual towns. The slender number of entries for "Anglo-Irish" under the main topic heading "History of Literature" suggests that the work begun by St. John Seymour over forty years ago needs to be pushed more aggressively in the graduate literature departments of the universities. There would also appear to be a need for a closer look at Ireland's intellectual contact with the Continent that would go beyond Gwynn's "Irish Society in the fifteenth century," published in 1957.

Inevitably, a compilation of this sort reminds the scholarly community of its debt to individuals whose productivity has set the pace for all, here notably, A. J. Otway-Ruthven and Aubrey Gwynn.

Gareth W. Dunleavy  
The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

David Hayman, ed. Beckett Issue. *James Joyce Quarterly*, VIII (Summer, 1971). pp 426. \$3.00.

This provocative collection would have been even better if more than four of the fourteen essays had explored Hayman's opening assertion that Beckett "by severing ties . . . has become a purer representative of the . . . Anglo-Irish psyche, speaking out of a subtler sense of islanding." Or if all its university critics' academic hind-sights were as succinct as Dylan Thomas' journalistic foresight.

Thomas' 1938 combined review of Beckett's *Murphy* and Williams' *Life Along the Passaic River* not only puts the work of a now ennobled writer in the context of his unimpressed contemporaries, but it formulates also the essential conflict in Beckett's subsequent writing: as Thomas says, Murphy is a "complex and oddly tragic character who cannot reconcile the unreality of the seen world with the reality of the unseen." Murphy is presented, Thomas concludes, with the "Freudian blarney" of "Sodom and Begorrah."

This conflict has only been dilated in scope through the years. That it is a constant is demonstrated in the discussions of epistemology and biblical and literary allusions by Elaine Scarry, Jan Hokenson, Gerald Bruns, John Grant, and Raymond Federman. Their essays are carefully organized, smoothly written, and, while unpretentious, are clearly the labors of university trained minds.

So also for the essays demonstrating "Sodom and Begorrah." Vivian Mercier, Ruby Cohn, Hugh Staples, and Hayman himself treat Beckett's Irishness with humor and academic discipline. Staples and Hayman record some Joycean echoes.

What Thomas had not foreseen are the original comparatist insights of Stanley Gray, who juxtaposes Beckett and Queneau, and Reinhard Kuhn, who places *No's Knife* in the literary tradition of the self-inflicted wound. These may well be the best essays in the lot.

Nor could Thomas have foreseen that Gail Godwin's pastiche or Hayman's review of the corpus of Beckett criticism would ever be justified. But the latter, at any rate, is useful for the rest of us.

On the whole, the collection is one more proof that a criterion of a great writer is the quality of the critical response which he provokes. (Beckett may fare better than Thomas in this respect.) Hayman is to be commended on his choice of essays which show that Beckett is not inaccessible to a reader of good will.

Marilyn Gaddis Rose  
State University of New York at Binghamton

De Burca, Seamus. *Brendan Behan: A Memoir*. Newark, Delaware: Proscenium Press, 1971. 44 pp.; \$1.95.

If Brendan Behan would have approved of anything written about him, Seamus de Burca's *Brendan Behan: A Memoir* would probably be one of the few books on the approved list. Seamus de Burca is the Irish pseudonym of Jimmy Bourke, Brendan Behan's cousin, and his book demonstrates on every page his loyal affection for his famous kinsman. The Behan depicted here is the familiar romantic figure—too much given to drink, staunchly nationalistic, vulgar but endearing, good-natured on most occasions, and tragically unable to cope with fame. De Burca tells us of Brendan's family, whom he knew all his life, of his plays, and of his steady decline in his last years; interspersed throughout the narrative are assorted anecdotes and background information. The discussions of Brendan's plays and his problems in getting them produced in Dublin are especially interesting since de Burca is himself a playwright of some note; his recollections of the early plays, *The Landlady* and *Gretna Green*, will be valuable aids in any study of the development of Behan's art.

For those who enjoy reading one Irishman's recollections of another Irishman, the book is lively and entertaining. Others

very likely will find the selection of materials arbitrary, sometimes confusing, and occasionally annoying. One wonders, for example, why de Burca could spare only a page for *The Hostage*, while he feels compelled to devote half a page to Boucicault's *Arrah-na-Pogue*, a play of significance in Brendan Behan's life only because Brendan memorized several lines and, perhaps more importantly, his uncle P. J. Bourke, de Burca's father, played a part in the drama. Throughout the book de Burca gives us a series of more or less related stories about Brendan and his family; he frequently switches from one story to another, often in the middle of a paragraph and usually without warning. But Seamus de Burca is a good spinner of tales, and eventually the reader accents the odd construction of the narrative and settles down to enjoy a fascinating collection of memorabilia.

The high points of the book are the description of Brendan's last years and the discussion of *The Quare Fellow*, the roots of which lie in Behan's experience in Mountjoy. De Burca's most obvious qualification for writing the memoir is the fact that he understood the complex of ideas and emotions that made up Brendan Behan's character; at his best he infuses his narrative with empathy and devotion. The book is overpriced and sketchy, and the quality of the writing is uneven, but it is nevertheless a valuable addition to the expanding literature on the already legendary life of one of the giants of the Irish stage.

Patrick A. McCarthy  
The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

*Irish University Review*, Vol. I, no. 1 (Fall 1970) and Vol. I, no. 2 (Spring 1971)

In this transformation of *The University Review*, the editor, Maurice Harmon, seems affected by all possible forces. Fair or not, he receives all criticism unless the role of the very impressive advisory board is explained: Richard Ellmann, David Greene, Rene Frechet, T. R. Henn, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Shotaro Oshima, Patrick Rafroidi, Ann Saddlemeyer.

Since some Irish writers from the time of Yeats still live and more writers are being born in Ireland every day, notice must obviously be made of the living body of Irish literature. Vol. I, no. 1, contains one of John Montague's best recent poems, "The Leaping Fire"; a nostalgic comment in the style of the thirties by Sean O'Faolain, "A Story, and a Comment"; and Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" gratuitously rehashed by Austin Clarke, "The Impuritans: A Play in One Act." The second issue has only Seamus Deane's "Poet's Progress: A Sequence," which though often vivid suffers from a confusedly varied diction. Absence of works by Kinsella, Plunkett, and McGahern must be regretted.

Each issue has paid obeisance to contemporary politics. In the first appeared Conor Cruise O'Brien's parting public lecture at New York University, "What Exhortation?" This expectedly facile summary of his liberal political experience (with some major digressions on the trouble with America) contains as well Cruise O'Brien's announcement that he will stand as a candidate in the next election and that he will not in his speech address himself to the troubles in Ireland. The second issue contains a different kind of political speech: the chairman's address by A. Norman Jeffares to the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature.

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REVIEWS continued from p. 3

The first issue contains articles by Thomas Flanagan, William Murphy, Phillip Marcus, and Thomas Hachey, certainly names familiar to all of us. Eoin MacWhite, Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands, however, has the most provocative contribution: "A Russian Pamphlet on Ireland by Count Markievicz" which suggests a better understanding of the gun-carrying Countess. The second issue also has familiar names: Donald Torchiana, Gilbert Cahill, and John Kelleher. The last of these in a modestly titled article, "Identifying the Irish Printed sources for *Finnegans Wake*," questions the sancrosanct—the artistic viability of the *Wake*. More scholars willing to voice the unfashionable would improve the profession and enliven our reading, if they have John Kelleher's information, understanding, and tenacity. Donal McCartney in "James Anthony Froude and Ireland: A Historical Controversy of the Nineteenth Century" continues in the way of Larkin, Cahill, McCaffrey, to mention a few of the ACIS historians, to convince those of us in literature that Irish history can be written about, if not spoken about, with brevity and vitality.

Frank L. Kersnowski  
Trinity University

Denis Johnston. *The Golden Cuckoo*. Newark, Delaware: Proscenium Press, 1971. (The Irish Play Series: 6).

Considering the high critical esteem in which modern Irish drama is held in this country, to say nothing of the size of our Irish-American population, it is surprising how few Irish plays we see on our stage. Outside of the small canon of popular favorites by Synge and O'Casey, and the rather special cases of Shaw and Beckett, the stage histories are brief, indeed, and many writers of quality are totally ignored by our theatres. This neglect seems particularly surprising in the case of Denis Johnston, in view of his long residence in the United States at Smith College.

Still, it's a bit too easy to put all the blame on the provincial narrowness of our stage repertory, even though this narrowness deserves all the blame it can get. Irish plays do have a tendency to see the world in terms of nothing but the "troubles", either directly in their subject matter or indirectly as an image for the human condition. This tendency often limits their accessibility. Irish writers also have a disconcerting

proclivity for approaching serious matters with a full measure pixie-like humor, and this attitude is very upsetting to our Puritan/"business is business" mentality. I rather imagine that these factors will help limit the interest here in *The Golden Cuckoo*, despite its basic attractiveness.

The play is a pleasant, rather casually written fable about a free-lance obituary writer named Alphonsus Maria Liguori Dotheright, B. A. (pronounced Duthery) who sets out on a campaign to obtain payment for an assignment done for the local newspaper. (The paper refused payment because the subject turned out to be still alive.) His campaign soon becomes a crusade for justice for the little man, moves into a one-man rebellion under the guidance of "voices" and ends with the old man embracing life in an insane asylum in preference to a return to the hypocritical world of "reality." The play gets a bit preachy every now and then, but it usually pulls itself back in time with a wry grin and avoids lecturing. Some of Johnston's humor is a bit cute or literary, but on the whole it is appealing. I particularly enjoyed Mr. Boddy, the chemical manure magnate who is falsely reported dead and then conveniently makes the report come true. (As the C. I. D. man observes, "There's rather more in this than Chemical Manure. . .") The gallery of Irish *Commedia* figures surrounding the hero is not strikingly original, but it is deftly drawn with an agreeably light touch. The play ends with a delightfully ironic miracle involving a fowl of uncertain sex.

*The Golden Cuckoo* is hardly a major work, but it has a good measure of charm and wisdom, and it probably hasn't a prayer of finding much of a place in our theatre.

Corliss Phillabaum  
The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

#### AMERICAN CONCERN FOR JUSTICE IN ULSTER

Members of the American Committee for Ulster Justice (Room 333, 353 West 57 Street, New York 10019), concerned that full civil rights be granted to all in Northern Ireland and that peace and stability be established, will go to Washington on January 26 to support Kennedy-Ribicoff Resolution 180 and Carey Resolution 563. In a separate effort, Professor Alfred McClung Lee's petition, signed by many ACIS members, has been sent to Stormont. A lengthy reply offers to arrange meetings between Stormont officials and signatories who visit Northern Ireland.

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