

## ACIS ELECTION RESULTS

Results of the triennial ACIS elections, as reported at the General Business Meeting on April 25, establish the composition of the 1975-1978 Executive Committee:

*President:* Lawrence J. McCaffrey, History Department, Loyola University.

*Vice-President:* Emmet Larkin, History Department, University of Chicago.

*Secretary:* Johann Norstedt, English Department, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

*Treasurer:* Thomas Hachey, History Department, Marquette University.

*History Representatives:* Gilbert Cahill, History Department, State University of New York at Cortland; Joseph Curran, History Department, LeMoyne College.

*Literature Representatives:* Maureen Murphy, English Department, Hofstra University; Robert Rhodes, English Department, SUNY-Cortland.

*Representatives from the Social Sciences and Other Disciplines:* John Messenger, Anthropology Department, Ohio State University; Alan Ward, Political Science, College of William and Mary.

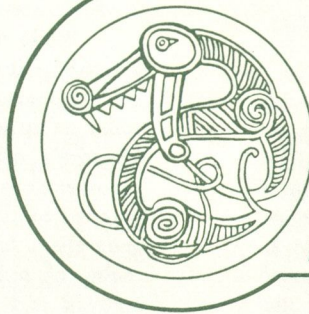
*Irish Academic Representative:* Maurice Harmon, University College Dublin.

*Ex-Officio Members:* John R. Moore, English Department, Hollins College; Janet E. Dunleavy, English Department, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Members of the American Committee for Irish Studies are encouraged to communicate with the Executive Committee on any matter of concern to the general membership. Address all letters to the Secretary; announcements and other items for publication in the *ACIS Newsletter*, however, should be sent to the Editor, Janet E. Dunleavy; information for the ACIS Archives should be sent to Robert Davis, Tarkio College, Tarkio, Missouri; dues should be paid directly to the Treasurer. Suggestions for program content and other items related to the Annual Conference may be addressed either to one of the representatives from the various disciplines or to the Conference Coordinator. Coordinator of the 1976 Conference will be Blanche Touhill, Associate Dean, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

**IN MEMORIAM:** *Martin J. Waters of the Department of Humanities, Cooper Union, died in Dublin last May, while on sabbatical leave, following a three-month illness. A candidate for office in last year's elections, Professor Waters had been a member of the American Committee for Irish Studies for nearly ten years. He leaves a widow and two children, to whom ACIS Secretary Johann Norstedt has expressed regrets, on behalf of all who knew and worked with him during his ACIS years.*

american committee for



IRISH STUDIES

newsletter

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## University of Missouri—St. Louis To Host 1976 ACIS Conference

For the second year in succession, the Annual Conference of the American Committee for Irish Studies will focus on a theme related to the celebration of the American Bicentennial: "Irish Nationalism: Ireland and America." Scheduled for Thursday through Saturday, April 28-30, 1976, at the University of Missouri—St. Louis, the Conference will be under the local direction of Blanche Touhill, Associate Dean of Faculties, with the assistance of ACIS elected representatives from the various disciplines. Describing the theme as "twofold," Dean Touhill has announced that she will welcome program recommendations. ACIS members are urged to make their plans now to attend the 1976 Annual Conference and to watch the *ACIS Newsletter* for further details.

Other conference invitations received for 1976 were equally attractive, making the final choice of 1976 conference site especially difficult for the Executive Committee and for members who attended the General Meeting. On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, members voted to ask new ACIS Secretary Johann Norstedt, elected for the 1975-1978 term, to explore the possibility of these invitations being postponed for acceptance in specific future years.

Members are reminded that, in general, ACIS attempts to vary conference sites from year to year in order to assure all members of the opportunity to attend a conference reasonably accessible to them at least in alternate years. However, since most of the ACIS membership is concentrated in the East and Midwest, those situated west of the Mississippi, by necessity, have been under the greatest disadvantage. Plans for a future western conference are now under discussion.

As in the past, the ACIS Executive Committee welcomes all inquiries about and suggestions for future conferences. Communications should be addressed to Professor Johann Norstedt, ACIS Secretary, Department of English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.

### ACIS VOTES EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE, BONUS FOR CURRENT MEMBERS

At the recommendation of the Executive Committee, members attending the 1975 Annual Conference voted to establish an ACIS job opportunity information exchange.

Members seeking jobs should list themselves with the Secretary, Professor Johann Norstedt, English Department, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061. Members having any information about possible job openings, even temporary or visiting positions, should describe them to the Secretary, with the understanding that sources will not be identified unless the Secretary is otherwise instructed.

The Secretary will notify all job seekers of all potential openings, leaving it to each to evaluate his or her own qualifications and to determine whether or not an application for a specific position is warranted.

#### And the Bonus—

In a separate action at the 1975 General Business Meeting, a vote to change the membership period from the academic to the calendar year was approved. To effect the change, the 1974-1975 membership period has been extended to December 1975, when 1976 membership fees will be due. Unpaid memberships will be cancelled on January 1, however,

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## reviews

W. A. Maguire, *The Downshire Estates in Ireland, 1801-1845*, London: Oxford University Press, 1972, vi, 284 pp.

The use of estate records in studying the Anglo-Irish society and economy in the nineteenth century is a comparatively new and significant historiographic approach. The potential for such scholarship was first shown by John Bateman in 1876 in his survey of *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*. The strength of this pioneer work, however, lay chiefly in its sifting and arranging of the facts of land ownership, not in any kind of rigorous analysis of the subject matter. More recent studies, particularly since the Second World War, have been more analytical. Monographic studies, such as J. Barry's 1962 study of Hillsborough parish or B. A. Kennedy's work on "The Struggle for Tenant-Right in Ulster," have focused on particular geographic areas or special problems connected with estate management. This kind of scholarship has promoted a better understanding of such upheavals as the great famine or the nineteenth century land evictions and provided a firmer basis for the writing of Irish social history. Such is the intent of the present work.

In his statistical analysis of the Downshire estates in Ireland W. A. Maguire provides an interesting microscopic view of the operation of a great estate in the early nineteenth century. He ably complements his facts and figures with a humanistic study of the Hill family and the third marquis in particular. The latter is portrayed as a remarkably devoted and efficient administrator. Downshire's transactions are further placed in perspective by the inclusion of much comparative material from the studies of other estates. The chief importance of the work, however, lies in its systematic analysis of the practice of subdividing lands on the Downshire estates in the years preceding the famine. More than any other factor, he maintains, subdivision was responsible for the agrarian distress in Ireland during these years, and it was more prevalent in Downshire's southern lands than those in Ulster. Maguire concludes that "there is little or no evidence in estate records to suggest that landowners initiated or even actively encouraged, the trend towards subdivision." Indeed the author attributes this practice not to the greed of the landowners, but to the hunger of the Irish masses for more lands to feed an increasing populace.

### NEW JOURNALS IN IRISH STUDIES

Edited by Andrew Parkin, the University of British Columbia, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* published by the Canadian Association for Irish Studies replaces *Yeats Studies*, formerly included in CAIS membership. Annual subscriptions, available to nonmembers for \$5.00, cover two issues. Each issue will carry articles, reviews, and CAIS news.

*Anglo-Irish Studies*, an interdisciplinary periodical scheduled to appear last August, includes reviews, scholarly contributions, and surveys of literature and current research, according to an announcement recently received from the Editor, Dr. P. J. Drudy, St. Edmund's House, Cambridge CB3 0BN, England. Hardbound and jacketed, it is priced at \$7.50 per issue for individuals, \$12.50 for institutions and libraries.

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

While the depth of the author's investigation may justify his conclusions about the operation of the Downshire properties, it cannot be broadened sufficiently to explain the attitudes of other landowners in Ireland. It would appear from Maguire's own evidence that Downshire was an unusually conscientious landlord and unlike many others spent a great amount of time in residence in Ireland. It is when the author generalizes his perspective from the Downshire estates to the realm of political and social history that his link between analysis and explanation breaks down. To state that all Irish landlords administered their estates in the manner of Lord Downshire, based only on a cursory investigation of the secondary sources on other estates, is a seriously misleading presumption. Similarly the author attributes most of the agrarian distress to overpopulation without citing a shred of demographic data. It appears to be his intent to vindicate the landowners from any responsibility for the famine and to place the burden of blame squarely on the shoulders of those who suffered most from it. Such conclusions would be more justifiable had a more Malthusian approach of analysis been employed. There is little in Maguire's statistics or explanations which would either please or convince an Irish nationalist. Although the book jacket is green, it conceals an interpretation which is distinctly orange.

Nevertheless the book has considerable value, if only for its utilization of much original source material. More work needs to be done on nineteenth century estate records, which can be found in abundance in the ancestral dwellings of many of the present members of the aristocracy, or in county borough record offices. Only by comparing the present work with other similar studies will its conclusions be strengthened or adjusted. More care, however, needs to be exercised in deriving social and political generalizations from conclusions of studies on specific estates. This should be done in separate works of synthesis, not in monographs such as the present study. Then perhaps a more accurate picture of nineteenth century Ireland will emerge.

John D. Fair  
Auburn University at Montgomery

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so it will be necessary to pay the 1976 dues notice promptly to avoid interruption of *Newsletter* and other mailings.

Finally, members voted to support a six-page *ACIS Newsletter*, increasing space available for reviews, and to continue the work of the ACIS archivist, Robert B. Davis, and the ACIS Reprint Editor, Emmet Larkin. Criticism of Modern Language Association scheduling of programs in Irish studies was directed to the Secretary, who will communicate ACIS members' complaints to MLA.

### INFORMATION REQUEST

ACIS member Susan N. Tarrant, English Department, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana 47374 would appreciate information about letters, unpublished essays, etc. by poets Kavanagh, Kinsella, Montague, and Murphy.

Oliver St. John Gogarty, *Many Lines to Thee, Letters of Oliver St. John Gogarty to G. K. A. Bell from the Martello Tower at Sandycove, Rutland Square and Trinity College Dublin 1904-7*, edited with a commentary by James F. Carens, Dublin, The Dolmen Press, 1971.

Oliver St. John Gogarty was a many-sided man—poet, autobiographer, surgeon and brilliant conversationalist. The portrayal of him as Buck Mulligan in Joyce's *Ulysses* gives one side of the man, the profane, blasphemous wit, the mocker, the Swinburnian neo-pagan. There were other sides to the man, and the correspondence with G.K.A. Bell reveals another Gogarty than the "Buck Mulligan" side. The wit and brilliance are still there, as well as the neo-paganism, but it is cleaned up, subdued, as befits a man writing to a future bishop.

The major cross-current in Gogarty's life in 1904, the year in which the letters begin, is the pull on his cultural loyalties between Dublin and Oxford. The "Joycean" Gogarty was a Dublin wit in full and caustic reaction to middle-class Catholic Irish society. After winning the poetry prize at Trinity College, Gogarty went early in 1904 to spend two terms at Worcester College, Oxford, in an attempt to win the Newdigate Prize for poetry. Gogarty achieved a *proxime accessit* and George Bell, the recipient of these letters, won the Newdigate. The intellectual atmosphere of Oxford seems to have been more self-assured, less provincial than Dublin. The letters that continued the friendship formed at Oxford give a picture of two brilliant young men who had formed a very intimate friendship—a meeting of souls. In these letters two young poets slowly move away from an intense intellectual experience, and are finally carried off in different directions, Gogarty to become a famous surgeon, Bell to become eventually the Bishop of Chichester.

What is the predominant impression left by these letters? They reek of literary allusion and frequent parody of scripture. The passages from Gogarty's poetry show a range of achievement from poems similar to the more conventional poems in Joyce's Chamber Music to poems which gave promise of more mature achievement. For Joyceans, the letters afford an invaluable insight into the man who struts across the opening pages of *Ulysses*. The letters begin with a description of the Hill of Howth in the spring of 1904, and in the early letters are scattered descriptions of the Martello Tower which Gogarty was sharing with Joyce. The first letter, of June 26, 1904, contains anecdotes of Joyce selling a stolen book, of Joyce drunk at Yeats's theater. The fourth letter, of August 27, 1904, mentions the rupture in the friendship with Joyce:

I have broken with Joyce, his want of generosity became to me inexcusable, he lampooned AE, Yeats, Colum & others to whom he was indebted in many ways. A desert was revealed which I did not think existed amid the seeming luxuriance of his soul, so.

When we consider that Gogarty was sharing a tower with Joyce and was frequently meeting with Yeats and George Moore, the surprise of these letters is to discover that not these men but Swinburne was the reigning influence on Gogarty's life. These letters bear a heavy freight of neo-paganism. The tone is frequently precious, over-cooked. Such a torrent of wit and allusion might be dazzling at an impromptu occasion, but written down the brilliance is sometimes garish.

The letters are rich in inside literary gossip of the contemporary Dublin scene, and the more wrong-headed or satiric the opinions are, the more genuine do they sound. The following opinion on Yeats in 1905 could not possibly be faked—it is so wonderfully wrong: "Yeats in a word, has outlived his singing season and he is now a bare ruined choir save that an attractive kind of mannerism helps him yet."

"Bare ruined choir" seems a good description of the great poetry of Yeats's old age but Gogarty had something else in mind.

The letters show Gogarty as a deeper, more serious person than one might have suspected from *Ulysses*. His mother forced him to go on a retreat to a monastery, and the results are amusing but also sobering. He rejected Christianity, particularly in its monastic, life-rejecting aspects, in favor of what he thought was a sterner code of morality. "Surely not the least part of the cross each man must take up and bear is the knowledge that life is at best a burden: a knowledge that makes men best who face it: a knowledge that our greatest, from Sophocles to Matthew Arnold have not shirked?" Noble words, but one sees in Gogarty a tendency to compromise which must have turned Joyce off—Joyce with his seemingly chaotic life but with a steely determination to develop his literary talent to the fullest degree.

The introduction to the volume and the headnotes to the individual letters are excellently done, with a full knowledge of the literary milieu. The footnotes supply some information on Gogarty's literary allusions, but not all. If one considers what thickets of literary tags Prof. Carens has had to deal with, one is satisfied with partial identification. It took an expensive liberal education to write these letters and a similarly expensive education is needed to read them. There are a few typos in proper names (perhaps Gogarty errors un-sic-ed) such as "Euripedes," "Terrence," "Johnsonian lyrics" when "Jonsonian" is probably meant, "Lawrence" for "Laurence" Housman.

The letters are a pleasure in themselves, but for anyone interested in the world as seen from the viewpoint of June 16, 1904, they are indispensable. The villain, the betrayer of Bloomsday, speaks on his own behalf and he is obviously a charming person whom Joyce could not fully understand, or whose charm Joyce found it necessary to resist.

J. P. Frayne  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Grattan Freyer, *Peadar O'Donnell*, Irish Writers Series, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1973. 128 pp., \$4.50.


This brief but stimulating biography gives much-needed information on the life and achievements of a man who is in himself a living legend. It comes as a welcome reminder of the personal worth of Peadar O'Donnell and the merits of his literary works at a time when the political and social ideals for which he so valiantly fought hold little appeal for the average Irishman and still less for the reader abroad.

Grattan Freyer gives us the man, and shows us how his life experiences determined the contents and direction of his writing. O'Donnell's six novels, autobiographical works, and shorter pieces are for the most part set in the poverty-stricken West of the first half of the present century—a world of simple and devout peasantry whose often tragic lives are lived out against the background of a poor Donegal farm off the wild Atlantic coast. It was a setting that he knew well; as Freyer points out, his distinguishing marks as a writer and social reformer are his "unerring observation of countrymen and the country scene" and "his knowledge of the details of poverty," which he knew firsthand.

The substance of O'Donnell's novels is in part autobiographical, a fact which makes them a valuable commentary on the crucial years of the Rebellion against England, the ensuing Civil War, and the subsequent years of effort to build up Ireland as a free nation. O'Donnell gained a wealth of

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american committee for



irish studies  
newsletter

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Editor: Janet Egleson Dunleavy  
Book Review Editor: Nancy M. Walczyk  
Editorial Assistant: Garth Wangemann  
Bibliographer: Jim Ford, Boston Public Library

experience of Irish life as a schoolmaster, IRA freedom fighter bitterly opposed to the 1921 Treaty with England, political prisoner under the Free State, trade-union organizer, editor of revolutionary newsheets and weeklies for his party, socialist agitator for the betterment of the poor (particularly those of the West), reporter on the Spanish Civil War, playwright (though not successful in his one published dramatic work), literary academician, being managing editor of *The Bell*, a semi-literary monthly, which he co-founded with Sean O'Faolain.

This varied career is quickly and effectively sketched by Mr. Freyer and integrated into his critiques of O'Donnell's works, which, considering the limited number of pages, give thought-provoking appraisals of O'Donnell's major novels: *Islanders*, *Adriagoole*, *The Knife*, *On the Edge of the Stream*. Indeed, Mr. Freyer deserves commendation for his skill in compressing so much of O'Donnell's life and literary achievement into his nine short chapters without giving a sense of undue pressure. He manages to touch on every important aspect of O'Donnell's life, not only as biographer but also as evaluating critic and judicious interpreter of his subject's social ideals and activities. He mentions O'Donnell's occasional spars with the Church, his active dislike of censorship, and his evident disgust with small-minded social climbers among some increasingly affluent Irish; but he does not dwell unnecessarily on aspects of his life which often earned him unfavorable criticism from the clerical, social, and civic powers—criticisms which account for his being remembered unfavorably in some quarters today to the detriment of his obviously talented accomplishments in writing. The biography ends, however, rather abruptly with a short chapter on O'Donnell's last novel, *The Big Windows*. A summary paragraph is not enough to give the work the final sense of unity it needs.

From Grattan Freyer's account emerges the picture of a man considerably gifted as a writer but intensely engaged in movements of social and political reform which were practically all doomed to failure. Though he may seem to be a fighter of lost causes, O'Donnell's literary work well deserves our attention; and it is to be hoped that Freyer's biography (complete with bibliography of O'Donnell's published works) will do much to stimulate interest in this brilliant but sometimes irascible Irish writer and politician, and that it will shortly be followed by popular editions of all his important novels and works, so that present and future readers will live again in their pages that fascinating but almost vanished rural life of Western Ireland.

Eileen M. Cotter  
University of Redlands

Malcolm Brown, *The Politics of Irish Literature*, From Thomas Davis to W. B. Yeats. Seattle: University of Washington Press, Washington Paperback edition, 1973. 413 pp. \$3.95.

In Ireland, historical facts clarify literature in ways that escape purely literary annotation because modern Irish literature sprang from the passions and frustrations of the long, tragic, and sometimes tragi-comic struggle of Ireland's independence from England. Embittered by Irish factionalism, it resulted often in a heroic but careless waste of idealism and courage. Over and over again Ireland against itself gave the rule to England.

Professor Malcolm Brown, in his Preface to *The Politics of Irish Literature*, explains the unprecedented difficulties of his undertaking. It demands, he says, like old-time religion, a baptism through total immersion. With an objectivity enlivened

by the warmth of personality, he has made of history the art it should be but often is not. He is a master of the brief biography, the thumb-nail sketch, and the ordering of events so that they yield the personal drama involved. With wit and irony and sympathy, he makes the plots woven by idealists and betrayed by informers—or sometimes by practical uncertainty—breathe with human life.

Describing the Old Liberator Daniel O'Connell's ability to sway his listeners, he says: "One of his political talents was a humorous, palavering manner, a habit for which his somber contemporaries used the term 'undue levity.' The Irish word game was his special pleasure. He invented the nickname 'Orange Peel' to deflate the redoubtable Sir Robert. It was his opinion that the lord chancellor, Sir Edward Sugden, bore a name one must hesitate 'to give to a pig. . . His oratorical rhetoric was not florid, but was blunt, lucid, sarcastic, and devoid of genteel ornament."

*The Politics of Irish Literature* is divided into four parts: The Peculiar Irish Setting, Young Ireland, Fenianism, and Home Rule. Since Irish political historians have scarcely touched Irish literature, this social history—what Thomas Davis called "felt history"—has been drawn from the Irish press, ballads, old wives' tales, chance episodes, and local personalities, "especially such type specimens like [sic] William Keogh, Pierce Nagle, John Kenyon, or A. M. Sullivan, all of them insignificant in formal history, but extremely important carriers of true meanings and genuine affections in 'felt history.'" From Robert Emmet's eloquent speech to the court after he was sentenced and his bloody execution before St. Catharine's Church on Thomas Street in 1803 (a recurrent nightmare for Irishmen for years to come), through the rise of Daniel O'Connell's leadership, to Parnell's disgrace and his martyrdom, the patterns of Irish history play: attack, defeat, convalescence, and attack again. They include the recurrence of a murderous factionalism and an overwhelming urge to draw together in common grief; a tendency to refuse the bold stroke that required more courage but was hopeless; a disenchantment with Ireland in Irish patriots themselves; and the Judas theme (which provoked Joyce's statement that Ireland is an old sow who eats her own farrow). We may laugh to keep from crying as the repetitive patterns emerge. But more than once out of stumbling and frustration "a terrible beauty is born." As Professor Brown points out, "If the Irish theme were deleted from the works of Synge, Colum, Lady Gregory, Stephens, O'Casey, Joyce, O'Faolain, O'Connor, or Kavanagh, nothing at all would be left. If it were deleted from Yeats, most of the best would be gone."

Irish historians will no doubt find some matters they can quarrel with in this book. Literary critics may argue in a few cases that the historical reference suggested by Professor Brown is of little consequence for the understanding of the literary work in question. (For example, his note on "The Second Coming.") But the political figures that animate Irish literature, especially the works of Yeats and Joyce, are here brought forth in the round. Literary critics will find this book invaluable for its historical insights. Historians will find it so for its highly readable and artistic presentation of literary movements. It is obviously a reading requirement for any course in Irish literature. For the general reader it is a lively guide to a complicated period of history. But particularly for Yeats scholars, the noble names set down in verse—"Macdonagh and MacBride and Connolly and Pearse," and Emmet, Fitzgerald, T. O'Leary, Roger Casement, Parnell—are given a new dimension.

Betty L. Moore  
Virginia Western Community College

David W. Miller. *Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973. 579 pp., \$14.95.

Until recent years, lack of research prevented a reliable assessment of the Catholic Church's role in Irish politics since the Union. The pioneering studies of scholars like Emmet Larkin, E. R. Norman, and John Whyte marked a welcome advance in this important area; in this book, David Miller continues that advance. Working without access to diocesan archives or clergymen's private papers, Professor Miller has produced a solid study based largely on politicians' papers, government records, and newspapers. The book's title aptly describes the author's conceptual framework, for this is an examination of the Catholic hierarchy's relationship with nationalist movements and the British government during the period from the foundation of the United Irish League through the struggle for independence. While it is sometimes hard to tell where Irish nationalism ends and Irish Catholicism begins, Miller's approach is generally effective. He defines the conventions of the Irish political system, shows how the interests of Church, State, and Nation coincided and differed, and traces the patterns of institutional interaction. Emphasizing the bishops' overriding concern with clerical control of education, Miller discusses in detail their efforts to come to terms with nationalist and agrarian movements in order to safeguard that control. This accommodating attitude, combined with careful avoidance of identification with the British regime, eliminated any threat of popular anti-clericalism and secured the hierarchy's desired end. Miller's treatment of developments from 1898 to 1909 is especially useful, not only for the light it sheds on them, but also because it helps explain the bishops' response to the revolutionary events of the following decade. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the book is its discussion of the bishops' divergent opinions on almost every issue, something which reminds us how misleading it is to think of the Church as monolithic.

For the most part, the author's conclusions are balanced and well-informed, but some can be questioned. Given the stubborn opposition of Ulster Unionists to any kind of all-Ireland settlement, even the qualified optimism which Miller expresses about the 1917 Convention may well be unjustified. He probably also exaggerates the bishops' political influence from 1916 to 1919. Quite apart from the hierarchy's internal differences, I doubt that any episcopal condemnation of Sinn Fein would seriously have impeded its rapid growth. With successive British blunders driving most of nationalist Ireland, including large numbers of lower clergy, into the arms of Sinn Fein, discretion was surely the better part of episcopal valor. Finally, Miller is wrong when he claims that Sinn Fein's leaders put a low priority on national unity as opposed to the symbols of independence. While they neither solved nor really even understood the Ulster problem, they wanted a united Ireland more than a Republic—and this was true of de Valera as well as Griffith and Collins. Such reservations, however, do not seriously diminish the value of this work. Students of Irish history should read it and profit from it.

Joseph M. Curran  
Le Moyne College

Beatrice Behan. *My Life with Brendan*. Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Corp., 1973. 253 pp. \$8.95

There appears little reason for writing this book, much less publishing it. We learn the details of an unending sequence of barroom brawls and arguments, each worse than the last. Whether in Dublin, New York, Los Angeles, London, Spain, or

Connemara the end of the evening is predictable, for as Beatrice Behan nee Salkeld observes, "Brendan had a trick of reducing my dream places to the dimension of smoky bars with police cars waiting outside" (p. 192). In their marriage she certainly got more than she bargained for, but Brendan may have also. She continually maintains that he needed her to take care of him or to nurse him along—yet he came home less and less as the years went by. Since he never told her outright to leave, she never went. When she followed him unbidden to New York with the happy news of her pregnancy, she found him having an affair with another woman. When retelling these events, she betrays little bitterness and appears almost incapable of reflecting upon what happened or why.

Her chronicle appears embarrassingly complete, yet despite her incredibly detailed accounts of who wore what, where, we learn little more about the Behans' private lives than gossip already whispered, and we learn nothing really new about his writing. Compared to John Malcolm Brinnin's *Dylan Thomas in America*, which is filled with insight and incident, *My Life with Brendan* pales and fades away. Little is made, for example, of Brendan's experience as a Dublin housepainter, yet his attitude towards work and money throughout his life seems derived from that experience: work when you have to for a brief time, collect the money due you, spend it all on a good time and return to work only when it is all gone. Generous to a fault, Brendan loaned money and gave it away recklessly. He stood many more rounds than fell to his share and left his widow with a medium-sized mountain of debts. He was lionized and taken advantage of by the great, the near-great and all sorts of hangers-on. Mrs. Behan does perceive this quite clearly when discussing the aborted Arthur Cohen jazz revue. She fails utterly to see it operating in the Christmas Eve parties given by the Guinness heirs, "where you could say anything you liked provided you didn't take too long and were witty" (p. 37), but where everything implies that Brendan was invited as a court jester.

Mrs. Behan's comparison of Brendan with Joyce and O'Casey is as unwarranted as her vision of him after death "drinking with Shakespeare, Jonson and Marlow" in some "heavenly bar." First and last Brendan Behan was of the earth, earthy, for as he himself once remarked, "my interest in the next world is purely academic." It is this element in him which is so evident in his best writing and which gives *The Borstal Boy*, *The Quare Fellow* and *The Hostage* their power; but it is this side of him which Beatrice Behan apparently never really comprehended or accepted, but tried to ignore, reform, or explain away. While this ignorance may not excuse the book's publication, it may help account for its unsatisfactory nature.

Donald E. Morse  
Oakland University

Robin Skelton, *J. M. Synge*. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1972. 89 pp. \$4.50; paper, \$1.95.

A book such as this contribution by Professor Skelton to the Irish Writers Series suffers a paradoxical existence. Those most likely to read it will be least able to evaluate it. The chronology, bibliography, and introduction will conveniently guide newcomers to Synge's life and writing. But Professor Skelton makes an argument which only those familiar with Synge's works and critics can follow with the necessary discretion.

On page 12, Professor Skelton states his theme: "although everything [Synge] published in his lifetime appeared to be intended to affect the public's attitude towards the problems and glories of his country, and much of his prose and drama has obviously polemic intentions, he once told Padraic Colum

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IRISH SESSION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

On November 15, the joint meeting of the National and Southern Conferences on British Studies, to be held at the Folger Library, Washington, D.C., will feature an Irish session entitled "Religion, Politics, and Society in Ulster." Chaired by Josef L. Altholz of the University of Minnesota with commentary by Gilbert A. Cahill, SUNY-Cortland, the program will include papers by Hugh Kearney, University of Pittsburgh; Joseph Curran, LeMoyne College; and Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Loyola University.

Irish sessions scheduled for the December MLA and AHA meetings will be announced in the December *ACIS Newsletter*.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Submitted by: Thomas E. Hachey, ACIS Treasurer	
Total balance as of May 1, 1974	\$3,643.82
Plus dues collected from members	2,285.23
Plus interest through March 1, 1975	186.90
	<u>\$6,115.95</u>
Minus following expenses:	
1974 ACIS Conference expenses (V.P.I., Blacksburg)	\$597.96
ACIS Newsletter subsidy	419.88
ACIS Secretary's expenses, including cost of duplicating and mailing of membership list	159.30
ACIS Treasurer's expenses, incurred in preparation, mailing, collection, disbursement, and correspondence involved in record keeping of dues	177.89
ACIS telephone calls	16.00
ACIS Research Report (Robert B. Davis)	138.00
ACIS-MLA and ACIS-AHA receptions	120.96
	<u>1,629.99</u>
Total balance of ACIS funds, as of April 24, 1975	\$4,485.96

NOTE: Outstanding obligations and bills not yet rendered (hence not included above) include 1975 conference expenses, printing and mailing charges for two titles in the ACIS Reprint Series, and additional expenses for the ACIS Research Report.

REVIEWS, continued from page 5

that all his work was subjective and came out of moods in his own life." Professor Skelton, however, emphasizes the polemics and interprets every work as an analysis of cultural alienation. He accuses Synge of always "preaching a sermon" (p. 50) and lays on his back the "... cause of liberty of the individual..." (p. 84). Synge's characters carry banners. The tinkers are, "in contemporary jargon, dropouts" (p. 49) and tax conventional society with the "wildnesses and simplicities of the human heart" (p. 50). Christy is a hero "not simply because of his poetry, but because he symbolizes in his murderous act the the peasant's attitude toward moral and political authority" (p. 64). Deirdre, "like others of Synge's protagonists, rejects the world of convention in order to find spiritual and emotional richness and freedom" (p. 84).

Synge's work was influenced less by the cause of liberty than by traditional oral and written literature, by his desire to write something which the Abbey could produce, and by the moods of which he spoke to Colum. Readers unfamiliar with Synge should find more here about his frustrating years in Germany and Paris where he failed as a musician and critic. But Professor Skelton largely ignores the intellectual and cultural background. Readers should learn more here about the painstaking dramatic poet revealed so clearly under Professor Skelton's editorship of the *Collected Works*. But Synge's language is not discussed in detail, the jacket flap notwithstanding. The reader should discover here Synge writing for Sara, Molly, and "Dossy" at the Abbey, but Professor Skelton does not even mention Frank and Willie Fay.

Mechanical and quotation errors give a rushed appearance to this expensive, short book. Synge, who was more than an orthodox rebel, deserves more than seventy-one pages of text. Professor Skelton doesn't mention it, but Synge once wrote: "The drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything" (*Collected Works*, IV, 3.). During the Playboy riots, Synge wrote a letter to the newspapers attacking the "senile and slobbering" doctrines of the Gaelic League and Irishmen in general who "fear any gleam of the truth" (D. H. Greene and E. M. Stephens, *J. M. Synge*, London, 1959, p. 264). He never sent it. While Yeats attacked the mob from the Abbey stage, Synge went to bed with a cold and wrote letters to Molly. In contemporary jargon, Synge was a lover, not a fighter.

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