

ACIS MIDDLE ATLANTIC MEETING PLANNED

Tentative plans for a first one-day regional meeting in October are now being made by the organizing committee of the newly formed ACIS Middle Atlantic Chapter. Meanwhile, area members have been sent the first issue of *ACIS Middle Atlantic Chapter Notes*, scheduled for publication three times each year to announce Chapter activities and report news of local interest. The first issue, in addition to inviting new membership, contains a questionnaire designed to help the fledgling group better serve its constituents.

Copies of the *ACIS Middle Atlantic Notes* and inquiries concerning membership should be addressed to Professor B. Kime Scott, 204 Memorial Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711.

STUDENTS INVITED TO ENCOUNTER IRELAND

Encounter Ireland, a "one-month homestay educational and travel experience," and Student Work in Ireland, two programs sponsored by the Union of Students in Ireland under the auspices of the Council on International Educational Exchange, offer Americans between the ages of 18 and 30 who are currently enrolled in an American college or university unique low-cost opportunities to spend a summer living and working in Ireland. Scholarships of \$300 are available to applicants in the Encounter Ireland Program, the total cost of which is estimated at \$785.

Application forms and additional information are available from the Union of Students in Ireland, CIEE, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017, telephone (212) 695-0291.

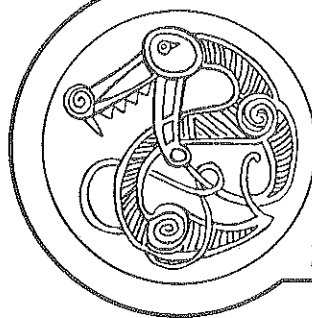
FLOWER, SAYRES, O'CROHAN IN PAPERBACK

Oxford University Press has announced publication of *The Western Island* by Robin Flower, *An Old Woman's Reflections* by Peig Sayres, and *The Islandman* by Tomas O'Crohan in paperback editions suitable for class use. Prices have been set at \$3.50 for Flower and Sayres, \$4.50 for O'Crohan.

APOLOGIES

The Editor regrets that personnel changes, illness, and production problems, as well as work involved in processing an unusual number of late membership renewals, have delayed the April, 1978 ACIS Newsletter past normal publication date.

american committee for



IRISH STUDIES

newsletter

Published at the Department of English

The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

Volume VIII

April, 1978

ETHNIC STUDIES THREATENED BY FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS

Elimination of all funding for the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act (PL 92:318-Title IX ESEA) will result in the elimination of programs now supporting research and teaching in ethnic studies, according to a communication from the National Ethnic Studies Assembly. Budget cuts recommended by President Carter in his message to Congress, warns Otto Feinstein, Vice Chairman of the Executive Council and Director of the Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center at Wayne State University, call for scuttling "one of the most cost effective programs ever handled by HEW" in the face of "enthusiastic interest and support from every state, territory, and ethnic group."

Interest Proved

"We find it unbelievable," writes Feinstein, "that out of the \$3.3 billion budget recommended for primary and secondary education that no funds have been requested for the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program—the only federal legislation which calls on our educational system to teach about the ethnic heritage of all of our people and the role all groups have, do, and will play in the life of this country." The success of the program to date, according to Feinstein, may be measured by the response it has received: from the educational community, "more applications for funds per available dollar than any other Office of Education program"; from local and state governments, additional ethnic heritage legislation, supplementing federal efforts, proposed or enacted in forty-four states; from Citizens' Advisory Councils, "massive participation of citizens previously uninvolved with their school systems."

Consequences of President Carter's budget recommendations, if approved by Congress, will include, Feinstein says, removal of "all federal support for the development of a pluralistic approach to education in our schools. Community groups which, for the first time, have begun to develop positive relations with their education institutions will once again be alienated. The seventy-five million persons who, in the 1969 special U.S. Census, identified themselves as 'ethnic' will once again disappear from the pages of the text books and the lesson plans of the teachers." Irish-American Studies, a previously neglected, newly developing area of interest to specialists in Irish Studies, will be among those affected.

Support Urgently Needed

Administrative response to criticism points to "a footnote to the appendix of the budget message" which states that the function of the present Ethnic Heritage Studies Act will be assumed under a "new social history initiative" of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Members of the National Ethnic Studies Assembly have met with officials of the Endowment, however, according to Feinstein, to discover that NEH has "neither knowledge of this action nor budget to implement it." The National Ethnic Studies Assembly therefore calls for specialists in ethnic studies and related areas and other interested citizens to support extension of the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act for five years and an appropriation of \$15 million, stipulated in the original legislation, for a continuing Ethnic Heritage Studies Program.

Letters endorsing the position taken by the National Ethnic Studies Assembly should be addressed to the President and to members of Congress. Further information concerning the proposed legislation and its potential consequences is available from Otto Feinstein, Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, 197 Manoojian Hall, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan 48202, telephone (313) 872-2225.

reviews

Bernard Benstock, *Paycocks and Others: Sean O'Casey's World*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976.; New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1976. 318 pages. \$23.50.

Paycocks and Others: Sean O'Casey's World was written by a professional who knows, loves, and is comfortable with O'Casey's canon. To a greater extent than predecessors, and in many ways anticipating what is currently gathering steam in O'Casey scholarship, Benstock draws firm connecting lines from the sprawling sparkling *Mirror* to the sprawling sparkling plays.

Paycocks and Others takes its direction from Lady Gregory's comment to O'Casey, "I believe there is something in you and your strong point is characterization." *Paycocks*, then, is a serious study of that strong point. The individual chapters identify assorted prototypes and discuss their development as O'Casey's Paycocks, Mothers, Heroes, Clerics, and Others share respective family resemblances but absolutely refuse to be interchangeable. There is only one Fluther Good, only one Bessie Burgess, and only one Father Domineer. What Benstock depicts, as his subtitle clearly suggests, are the ways in which O'Casey's characters ultimately result in a composite portrait of O'Casey's world—the dimensions of the characters themselves being formed by that world in much the same way that the citizens in *Dubliners* are shaped by Joyce's Dublin.

Benstock arranges his portrait gallery so that one proceeds from the most familiar paycocks and butties who sustain each other in their self-glorifying escapades and escapes from the demands of responsibility. Their fantasies and verbal calisthenics range from the consistently comic pratfalls of Juno's Paycock to the all-pervasive and malignant paycockery of the sixty-five-year old Poges in *Purple Dust*. As familiar as his paycocks are O'Casey's strong women, especially those examined in "A Veneration of Mothers." Juno, as many have failed to see, "takes on many of the characteristics of the slums" that she presides over, is occasionally petty and selfish, wants to be respectable, and does go down to Captain Jack's level to do combat when occasion demands. Juno—unlike the rogues, Down-and-Outs, and paycocks—rises above these mundanities and becomes the superior woman whom we do remember. She and Bessie Burgess (*Plough*) and Mrs. Breydon (*Red Roses For Me*)—only slightly more than Susan Casside—all all largely products of O'Casey's creative imagination. Susan Casside's weaknesses and human frailties are catalogued and docu-

mented by O'Casey throughout the six volumes of *Mirror in My House*. Her human weaknesses are incorporated in Juno and Bessie and Mrs. Breydon—all of them unlikely candidates for heroism, but all rise above the demands of their environment and emerge as strong, sensitive, but still unlikely, heroines.

Benstock's gallery includes all the usual portraits of expected heroes and heroines: Harry Heegan, the maimed hero of *The Silver Tassie*; Ayamonn Breydon, martyred hero limited only by his naiveté; Beoman, the foreman hero of *Behind the Green Curtains*, and his predecessor O'Killigain from *Purple Dust*. In addition, we get glimpses of O'Casey's poetic lovers, ranging from Donal Davoren (*Shadow of a Gunman*) and the Dreamer (*Within the Gates*) to the messenger in *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* and Jimmy in *Figuro in the Night*. Benstock isolates as O'Casey's best portraits of young heroines those of Mary Boyle (*Juno*), Nora Clitheroe (*Plough*) and Sheila Moorneen (*Red Roses for Me*). In "A Flourish of Strumpets," a subsection of "The Heroine as Hero," Benstock emphasizes the importance of Nora Creena and Daisy Battles as prototypes for an assortment of vital wenches ranging from Sheila Moorneen (*Red Roses for Me*) and Angela Nightingale (*Bedtime Story*) to Rosie (*Plough*) and Nannie (*Nannie's Night Out*). The excesses of these women, like those of Avril and Souhaun (*Purple Dust*) and those of the young in *The Drums of Father Ned*, are excesses in the name of vitality and, as such, are more than condoned by O'Casey, whose chief targets always include the closed minds and the meanness of spirit shared by respectable Johns.

"Argufiers and Leprechauns" followed by "Senior Citizens" are fun and include much that is helpful. In both, the frames are sometimes more spectacular than the portraits they enclose. The Leprechaun section and the "Gehenna of Harpies" subsection of "Senior Citizens" are cases in point—this despite the comments on O'Casey's articulate atheists who alone can bring the Protestants and the Catholics together against a common enemy; this despite the discussions of Codger Sleehaun and Robin Adair and his cock (*Cock-a-Doodle Dandy*) as Leprechauns.

"A Covey of Clerics" is a tightly written and tightly reasoned essay concerning O'Casey's artistic juxtaposition of opposites. On one side of this dichotomy are those whose hypocrisy and use of power are their stocks in trade (*Purple*

Continued on page 3

NEW BOOKS PIONEER REGIONAL IRISH-AMERICAN HISTORY

Irish-American contributions to San Francisco and Wyoming history are brought to light in two recently published books.

The San Francisco Irish, edited by ACIS member James P. Walsh, consists of ten essays and eleven photographs covering the period from the Gold Rush to the present. Available in a limited edition through support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, it may be purchased for \$15.00 from the Irish Literary and Historical Society, 80 Stonestown Mall #111, San Francisco, California 94132.

Peopling the High Plains, Wyoming's European Heritage, edited by Gordon Olaf Hendrickson, includes the Irish in a chapter on English-speaking settlers, "Country Squires and Laborers: British

Immigrants in Wyoming" by John C. Paige. According to Paige, senior historian of the Historical Research and Publications Division, Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, the Irish came to Wyoming as laborers and soldiers during the 1860s and 1870s, outnumbering English, Scottish, and Welsh immigrants in 1870. Irishmen in the Natrona County sheep industry settled an area of the Big Horn Mountains known as "Little Ireland."

Copies of *Peopling the High Plains* are available for \$7.10 until June 1, \$7.95 thereafter, from the Historical Research and Publications Division, Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, Barrett Building, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002.



The *ACIS Newsletter* is published four times annually in February, April, October, and December, at The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201. Annual subscription, \$6.00; \$3.00 students. Vol. VIII, Serial No. 2

Editor: Janet Egleson Dunleavy
Book Reviews: Nancy M. Walczyk
Editorial Assistant: Ruth Duffy
Bibliographer: Jim Ford, Boston Public Library

Priest in *Star Turns Red*, Canon Burren and Bishop Mullarkey in *Bishop's Bonfire*, Father Fillifogue in *Drums of Father Ned*, and Father Domineer in *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy*). On the other are those allied with life and vitality (the Brown Priest, Father Boheroe, Father Ned, etc.). Reverend E. Clinton in *Red Roses* is O'Casey's ideal clergyman and Father Domineer, his prototype of the humorless priest. The clerics, like O'Casey's Paycocks and Mothers and Others, have their parallels, in some cases their models, in O'Casey's life as remembered and created in his autobiographies.

Bernard Benstock's *Paycocks and Others* is a gallery of characters, an effort to display O'Casey's people in familial groupings. Bound by neither chronology nor genre, *Paycocks* takes O'Casey's whole world as its province. It is a valuable text that does what it sets out to do: it provides assorted family albums and a portrait gallery of Sean O'Casey's characters with detailed explorations of their resemblances and differences. Taken all together, the members of the gallery form a composite portrait of O'Casey's world.

Bobby L. Smith
Kent State University

Maurice N. Hennessy, *The Wild Geese. The Irish Soldier in Exile*. Old Greenwich, Conn.: The Devin-Adair Co.; 1973. 227 pp. \$9.95.

The romanticization of Irish history has brought it into disrepute as a fit subject for serious scholars. Anxious to escape the scepticism or contempt of their peers, historians in the present generation have sought to prove their academic detachment with arid analyses of voting patterns and agrarian treatises that examine a particular county pigfoot by pigfoot. There is a danger that we shall avoid the more picturesque aspects of Irish history simply because they are picturesque, without considering that under scientific scrutiny they may prove important as well.

Unfortunately, Maurice Hennessy is more interested in the anecdotal and the dramatic than in the socially significant aspects of his topic. His book is a rambling, poorly-organized amalgamation of O'Callaghan's hundred-year-old *History of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France* with miscellaneous articles from the journal of the Military History Society of Ireland. Arbitrarily and misleadingly, it extends the traditional use of the term "Wild Geese" to include not only Irish exiles in Old Regime Europe, but immigrant soldiers in the American Civil War and anti-British nationalists in the Boer War, with excursions as far afield as India and Argentina. It is precisely the sort of romantic, picturesque, and ultimately pointless book that, over the years, earned Irish historiography its reputation for theatrical boasting. Save for some vague speculation about the martial spirit or the quest for mercenary adventures, Hennessy draws no intelligible conclusion from his compilation; nor indeed, is it possible to make anything out of such a farrage.

And yet what a book could be written about the true "Wild Geese" of the eighteenth century and the Irish exiles' presence on the Continent of which the soldiers merely formed the core. During the hundred years between the Treaty of Limerick and the French Revolution tens of thousands of Irish men and women migrated to countries of Catholic Europe. They created an interlocking network of communities in France, Spain, the Low Countries and Italy, with their own churches, schools, and arrangements for communications, travel, and mutual assistance. They preserved language, customs, and a keen interest in the affairs of their homeland. They were to be found not only in the military and naval

service of the Bourbon and Habsburg monarchs, but in the civil administration, diplomatic corps, ecclesiastical hierarchy and commercial enterprises of the host states and their overseas dependencies. Their Jacobite loyalties influenced British policy toward Ireland well past mid-century, and their preservation of the aristocratic mystique of ancient Celtic society kept alive the poetry and the dreams of the peasant masses clinging to a suppressed culture at home.

A serious, detailed study of these Continental Irish and of their influence on the mind of the "Hidden Ireland" might tell us more than a prosopographical monograph on Grattan's Parliament. In the hands of raconteurs like Hennessy the Wild Geese remain merely the colorful but irrelevant "Fighting Irish" of a bygone day.

William D. Griffin
St. John's University

Austin Clarke, *Selected Poems*. Edited by Thomas Kinsella. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press, 1976. 207 pp. \$6.95.

John Montague, *A Slow Dance*. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press, 1975. 63 pp. \$4.25.

Ciaran Carson, *The New Estate*. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press, 1976. 42 pp. \$3.25.

John Montague speaks of John Hewitt as "that oddity in our literature, a poet of sustained political thought." This estimate seems odd to me, for Hewitt's social poetry is remarkable only for its moderation; his mind is too Reformed for any crusade. Montague ignores the obvious candidate for his position: Austin Clarke. Clarke has appeared to me, ever since I recognized that political poetry was one of the great genres of the century, as a writer committed to a revolution, however private some of its purposes might have been. He is truly subversive, too tough to be Quixotic, against the stratifications of the Irish State since independence. A look through this book will give some ideas how far his protest goes. The Rhythm method, the lack of fire escapes in an orphanage where children were burnt to death, the takeover of Larkin and his legacy by liberal clergy, illiberal clergy (is it the late Cardinal of Boston?) ring-kissed, academically gowned, eating dinner, the deluded fasting of pious spinsters, the paupers at Gort that Lady Gregory may have sentimentalized, and in that beautiful and topical poem, "The Subjection of Women," the names and political substance of Maud Gonne, Countess Markievicz, Helena Moloney, Louie Bennett:

"Women, who cast off all we want,
Are now despised, their names unwanted . . ."

Thomas Kinsella has selected Clarke's poems with devotion; his introduction is a model for its sober, just tone. Mr. Kinsella also explains aspects of Clarke that may not be familiar: his gigantic humor, his partly still unexplained great silence between 1938 and 1955 in poetry, the influence of the Gaelic mind not just in technique but in psychology. If I mentioned the achievement of his public poetry earlier it was to balance Mr. Kinsella's worry about "the lack of superficial glamour" in Clarke's work. For his poems are among the finest political testaments by a modern poet; he ranks with Brecht, Pound, and Neruda in this respect. His world is narrowly etched, it is true, but it reads all the more real. Several generations who have greedily dined on Joyce should have no problem enjoying lunch with Clarke. And I, for one, am tired by now of the reverence paid to Kavanagh's notion of the superiority of parochialism over provincialism which the editor quotes. Kavanagh worked at definitions, like every poet, to his own advantage; his poems have more contemplative and lyric

Continued on page 4

appeal than Clarke's, but even Kavanagh in his satires descends to gossip and innuendo for added power. A reason for the possible thinness of Clarke's reputation would be the fashionable concentration of attention on Yeats and contemporary poets now making reputations, ignoring the middle generation to which Clarke and Kavanagh belonged.

As with all selections one would not do it the same way. I, for instance, would drop the rhetorically empty "Song of the Books" for the strong poems on Poe and Whitman in *Old-Fashioned Pilgrimage*, with their circuitously elaborate travel metaphors and rhythms and glimpse of the sensual young Clarke and his mock marriage. I agree with Mr. Kinsella about the slightly flawed masterpiece, "Mnemosyne Lay in Dust," but I would have had doubts about the commissioned ring of "A Sermon on Swift."

John Montague's *A Slow Dance* is an organized and mellow book in contrast to its predecessor, *The Rough Field*, which despite its great familial moments tended to fall apart. Here, in the poems that deal with Northern Ireland, Montague has his eyes wide open. In "Falls Funeral" his reportage of the burial of a young Catholic child is accurate and fixed in its finger pointing. His "Northern Express" hits at the center of the terrorism that involves the most average citizen. Montague mythologizes current events well; his poem on the youthful I.R.A.:

In an odour of wet hawthorn
arm-swinging heroes march,
eyes chill with yearning.
They sport dark berets and
shoulder rifles as forthrightly
as spades . . ."

is not a song for these Samurai as Yeats might have written, it is merely descriptive. Montague's cool, sometimes icy approach, dissects the claustrophobic scene. There exist no ways out, no possibilities for sublimation. In this atmosphere Montague has shrugged off what had been over-noticeable in earlier work, language indulgences and coy gestures. Montague is the kind of poet who will continue to be more readable. Ciaran Carson, by contrast, does not make me feel optimistic. His restraint seems anemic; for a young writer he takes no risks. There are too many adaptations in the book: from Irish, Welsh, and Seferis!

James Liddy

The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

Daniel J. Casey, *Benedict Kiely*. Irish Writers Series. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1974. 107 pp. \$4.50 (paper \$1.95)

Bucknell is to be commended for including Benedict Kiely in its series, for Kiely does not deserve the neglect (if "neglect" is the right word for a writer whose short stories appear in *The New Yorker*) he has received in this country. None of his fiction is in print, and in this city at least, few of his books are obtainable through the public and university libraries.

Daniel J. Casey's overview of Kiely's work is a readable, competent, and balanced introduction. While much plot summary is inevitable in a book of this kind, Casey is generous with analysis and evaluation. He accurately conveys the way in which Kiely combines distress at human weakness and cruelty, regret for lost values, and depiction of the general grubbiness of much human behavior, with laughter, understanding, and acceptance, and he is appreciative of Kiely's stylistic mastery. Kiely can write rings around many a more prestigious novelist.

Casey properly emphasizes Kiely's dependence on symbol and points out the influence of naturalism, existentialism,

and the psychological novel, but Casey's tact prevents him from going too far. As he says, "[Kiely] might have been a realist, a naturalist, some sort of avant-garde experimentalist, but he has too much imagination to be any of those. Surely he is one of the last of the Irish romantics but with an abiding fascination for the darker side of man's nature." Casey resists the temptation to attempt to bring Kiely more fully into the mainstream of twentieth-century fiction by overemphasizing the existentialist or naturalistic aspects of his fiction. The fascination for the darker side of nature does not eventuate in meaninglessness nor an anguished confrontation with the void.

Rape, murder, and everyday destructive self-centeredness appear, but the characters are depicted not as monsters but as human beings: not excused or condoned, but understood; neither exalted as rebels against society nor abominated as beyond humanity. Kiely's most characteristic response to the evils found in his novels is resigned rather than rebellious. He knows that "for everything [people] gain they lose something or they may lose twice as much as they gain"; he does not expect life to offer perfection.

Viewed as a whole, however, Kiely's books are celebratory, finding an exuberance and a wild Irish humor in the midst of difficulty. His appeal lies in his presentation of a sane and balanced view of life; his setting, whether village or capital city is a microcosm of human society. In Kiely's world things "out there"—rocks and rivers, strand and sea, wind-twisted sycamores and blossoming chestnuts, mountain sheep, starlings, and trout—all are clearly independent of human perception and as substantial as the people who live among them. Fire is hot and water wet, and if life is filled with disappointment, indignity, and malice, it yet has vigor and flavor.

Casey also cogently reasserts the comparison of the Irish short story writers, including Kiely, with the *seanachie*. As O'Connor has said, the aim is for the sound of a man's voice, speaking. Irish writers cannot ignore the voice of the past, and Ireland remains, even today, a country of human size. Great as her woes have been, they have not yet become the oppression of the fear of dehumanization by technology. Dublin is a manageable, human-scaled city (a cab driver there pointed out to me recently that most Dubliners have never been in an elevator). If Kiely's stories seem over-conventional or conservative we must remind ourselves that he is shaped by such a society and country. He deals not with the terror of machines and institutions growing perhaps beyond human control, but the involvement of person with person. As he asks in the *The Captain with the Whiskers*: "Perversion? Poverty? Pride? Is blackvised, thoughtful detachment the worst perversion of all?" Daniel Casey offers us an interesting and valuable introduction to Kiely's work.

Peggy F. Broder

Cleveland State University

J. B. Lyons, *Oliver St. John Gogarty*. Irish Writers Series, Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1976. 89 pp. \$4.50 (paper \$1.95)

If for no other reason than that he is the prototype of Buck Mulligan in Joyce's *Ulysses*, a biography of Oliver St. John Gogarty is necessary and welcome. When, in addition, the man is a prominent member of that fascinating galaxy of poets, playwrights, novelists, artists, patriots, and geniuses of Dublin's late 19th and early 20th centuries, a biography becomes doubly welcome. J. B. Lyons, in one of those monographs in the Irish Writers Series severely limited in length, has written a serviceable biography of Gogarty, the doctor-poet-wit, whose intriguing personality has made him generally better known as a "character" than as a writer. The fact that

Lyons himself is both a medical doctor and a man of letters gives him an appropriate empathy with his subject.

In an unobtrusive style of sufficient clarity to enable easy reading, Dr. Lyons assesses the several kinds of literary works by Gogarty while dealing with the narrative of Gogarty's life.

Lyons divides his chronicle into five parts, treating his subject as young man, as Senator in the Irish Republic, as poet-doctor, as friend of and commentator upon most of the important Dublin personalities of the 1920's and '30's, and finally as sojourner in the United States until the time of his death.

Lyons hopes to establish or re-establish Gogarty's literary reputation and, toward this end, quotes numerous passages from Gogarty's verse. Though admitting that Gogarty is remembered primarily as a wit and secondarily as a "minor poet," Lyons calls his verse "exquisite" and applauds its classic qualities. The biographer feels that when tastes in poetry change, Gogarty will attain considerable reputation. His opinion is that ". . . since clarity is a virtue of Gogarty's verses it may be necessary to remind the obfuscated modern reader that in the House of the Muses, as in Paradise, there are many mansions." We are reminded that Yeats included no fewer than seventeen of Gogarty's poems in his edition of the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Lyons further observes that Gogarty ". . . is unfortunate that at present a metrical sense is as out-of-date as a Viennese waltz," and hopes that a rediscovery of pleasure in rhythmic expression will prevent Gogarty from being "permanently neglected," even though the poetic performance is uneven.

As to Gogarty's several plays, Lyons shows hardly more enthusiasm than does Lester I. Conner in his recent review in these columns (February 1976) of an edition of the plays.

Gogarty's prose works, particularly *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street* and *Tumbling in the Hay*, receive considerable praise from Dr. Lyons. Since *Sackville Street* has been reprinted a number of times, it may very well be the work upon which Gogarty's reputation, both as wit and literary man, now rests. Perhaps it is because that work reveals so clearly the man who wrote it that it has remained popular; the personality of Gogarty continues to fascinate. As Lyons notes, "A man of Gogarty's versatility offends mediocrity," but surely those qualities which "allowed him to walk with assurance into an operating room, a tavern, or a drawing room" will continue to delight those who come to know him through his works or through this biography.

Inevitably, one must compare Lyons' work with the earlier biography by Ulick O'Connor entitled *Oliver St. John Gogarty: A Poet and His Times*. The lengthier and more discursive work by O'Connor is pleasant reading for its storehouse of anecdotes and details, but as an introduction to students coming fresh to the literature and personalities of the Irish Renaissance, Lyons' biography of Gogarty will serve a most useful function.

Ralph Behrens
University of Central Arkansas

Des Lavelle. *Skellig: Island Outpost of Europe*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1976. 112 pp. \$10.95.

Sight of the Skelligs at sunset
restores our Hy-Brasil:
the Atlantic expands on the cliffs,
the herring gull claims the air
again that note!

above a self-drive car.

So writes John Montague in *The Rough Field*. Summarizing as they do the beauty and the magic of this tiny pair

of islands, as well as the threat that both will be obliterated, these lines would have been a proper epigraph for Des Lavelle's descriptive, evocative, and admonitory book. In this brief study (only thirty-six of the 112 pages are text), Lavelle aims for an impossible synthesis: "to strike a balance of interest for the historian, the bird lover, the archaeological student, the day-visitor who needs an answer to a multitude of questions and the Kerryman who hungers for more knowledge of his native ground." The result is closer to the needs of the last two groups than any of the others. I am neither a naturalist nor an archeologist, but there seems to me to be no new information here for either in Lavelle's lists of native birds and plants and his inventory of buildings belonging to the sixth-century monastery on Skellig Michael.

Still, the book is charming and fascinating, largely because it seems to have been a labor of love by this sixth-generation Kerry islander and fisherman. Lavelle writes with the freshness of the amateur enthusiast in the areas where the Skelligs contain priceless resources: archaeology, represented by the well-preserved monastic ruins, and ornithology, represented by the seabird colonies, including thousands of puffins, those rare and wondrous clowns. Lavelle also brings his own expertise as a professional fisherman to descriptions of the wild environment, where no boat can land in winter, and "this inaccessibility—in an age when we have access to the moon—is all part of the powerful magnetism of Skellig—the enhanced attraction of the unattainable!" The book is a diverse compendium of historical fragments from the Irish *Annals* and later sources, remembered tales of ghosts and shipwrecks from earlier generations of Kerryman, and personal observations by Lavelle himself. The whole patchwork quilt is stitched together by the marvelous illustrations: maps, sketches, and some seventy photographs, most of them taken by Lavelle, and ranging from magnificent aerial views of the islands to details of the hauntingly desolate monastery to a close-up of a kittiwake nest on a cliff-edge 600 feet above the sea.

Finally, *Skellig* contains a serious warning look ahead. Lavelle feels that this irreplaceable wild corner of Ireland is in danger. The tourist influx, somewhat mitigated by the weather, may cause problems, particularly as there is now a helicopter pad on Skellig Michael. Rabbits are overrunning the islands, and their burrowing may topple the monastery ruins unless a heretofore negligent Board of Public Works takes action. And the supertankers now entering Bantry Bay (to the TV-ad accompaniment of pseudo-Irish music) carry with them the ominous threat of a major oil spill, which would be disastrous for the Skellig sea birds. Lavelle has a reverence for these rocks that comes across in his photographs and lively text, and the book's ending question is pointedly apt: "History and Nature have placed their priceless and irreplaceable treasures in our hands, and have given us a heavy responsibility. Will generations yet unborn indict or vindicate our stewardship?"

Charles Fanning
Bridgewater State College (Mass.)

Seamas O'Catháin and Patrick O'Flannagan, *The Living Landscape: Kilgalligan, Erris, County Mayo*. Baile Átha Cliath: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1975. 312 pp.

Éilis Brady, *All In! All In! A Selection of Dublin Children's Traditional Street Games with Rhymes and Music*. Baile Átha Cliath: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1975. 195 pp.

Séamus O'Duilearga, *Leabhar Sheáin Í Chonaill: Scéalta agus Seanchas ó Íbh Ráthach*. Baile Átha Cliath: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann. 1977. 491 pp.

Continued on page 6

Review continued from page 5

Seán O hEochaidh, Máire Mac Neill and Séamas O'Catháin, *Síscéalta ó Thír Chenaill: Fairy Legends from Donegal*. Baile Átha Cliath: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1977. 404 pp.

Under their harvest knot logo, an appropriate symbol for fruits of forty years of field collecting by the Irish Folklore Commission, the Folklore of Ireland Council has published four collections from four parts of Ireland. In *The Living Landscape*, the first and most technical book in the series, the authors bring their joint experience as folklorist and geographer to the study of some 800 placenames of Kilgalligan, County Mayo. While placenames are usually considered one of the simplest kinds of verbal folklore, the authors demonstrate that the names people create for their environment reflect the relationship between man and land.

For those who think that Irish folklore is synonymous with rural, *All In! All In!* will reveal that there is a vital folk tradition in Irish cities as well as in the Irish countryside. Joyceans will be interested to know that rhymes like "Stephen, the Reephen, the Rix-Dix Deephen" still survive in the environs of Lower Drumcondra "where they speak the best English," and that seasoned hacking chestnuts, while not the conqueror of forty, are *conkers* all the same. Some rhymes and games preserve social history ("The Waxie's Darge"), but what the book best illustrates is the part children's folklore plays in the complicated process of acculturation for the Dublin families who move from the city center to Corporation housing estates in the suburbs.

Leabhar Shéain í Chonaill is a reprinting of the classic collection of the folklore of a Cillrialraig, County Kerry, farmer-fisherman, Séan O'Conaill (1853-1931), made by Séamus O'Duilearga between 1925 and 1931, when O'Conaill was over seventy. In the range of his narrative types O'Conaill was a master storyteller, a conscious artist who practiced his craft by telling his stories to his cart as he walked home from a fair. While the text is in Irish, O'Duilearga provides English summaries of the stories. This remarkable collection will be more accessible to the English reader when its translation by Máire Mac Neill is available.

Síscéalta ó Thír Chonaill. Fairy Legends from Donegal brings together some of the best of the Irish Folklore Commission/Donegal storytellers, veteran collector Séan O hEochaidh, translator Máire Mac Neill, and Irish editor Séamas O'Catháin. First there are the stories themselves: one-hundred and thirty-six fairy legends, the majority of which

were published as "Síthe-Scéalta" in *Béaloideas* (1956, 1961). In his review in *Éigse*, Gerard Murphy called them "the most representative collection of modern fairy-lore which has yet appeared in print."

Folklorists usually have considered fairy beliefs a pre-Christian survival and have been content to identify the tension between the countryman's belief in the fairies and his devout Catholicism. Máire Mac Neill's Introduction enlarges our understanding of Irish fairy belief by focusing on the way it functions. "It would seem that people did not accept untimely accidental death as real death—for those there had to be another explanation" (p. 20). She suggests that fairy belief was a strategy for dealing with anxiety about accident, loss, or other calamity in a remote farming-fishing village. In the legends of fairy rewards and punishments which usually reflected community values (hospitality, observing the Sabbath), fairy belief was an educational or socializing device; fairy belief further functioned as wish fulfillment (inexhaustible meal chest) or as fantasy (mortal man marries fairy woman). Since legend is particularly sensitive to location, the hillside setting of many legends in itself serves as a warning against solitary wandering in the hills after dark. Because these legends had a part in rural society other than entertainment, they were part of the fabric of daily life: fairs and fishing trips, housekeeping and harvesting, courtship and childbirth. The stories, then, are a valuable record of ordinary country life during the last generation.

Máire MacNeill's accurate rather than literal translation captures the conversational tone characteristic of legend-telling. In this she follows Douglas Hyde, who says in his Preface to *Beside the Fire* (1890), the last bi-lingual collection of Irish folklore, that he chose not to translate much of the Gaelic idiom literally, as his predecessor Campbell of Islay did, because the idiom was too highly colored. In editing the Irish text Séamas O'Catháin was faced with the problem of maintaining a balance between dialect and *caighdeán* Irish; the result is a step toward establishing a uniform spelling system for Irish texts in this series.

The Folklore of Ireland Council has brought Irish tradition from the archives to the reader's hand. One hopes that these books will not only be in university libraries and in the collections of Irish specialists but that they will be in Irish County and in Irish School Libraries as a reminder of a way of life that, like fairy belief, has disappeared from the Irish countryside.

Maureen Murphy
Hofstra University

The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee
Department of English
P. O. Box 413
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

Address Correction Requested

Return Postage Guaranteed

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MILWAUKEE, WIS.
Permit No. 864

Deadline for October Issue: August 31