AHA REPORT

The 93rd annual meeting of the American Historical Association (San Francisco, December 28-30) will include the following papers on Irish and Irish-American topics:


“The Church of the Irish Frontier in the Late Middle Ages” by W.R. Jones, at Seminar 47, The Closing of the Medieval Frontier, Circa 1300.

“Ireland and Holland: A Comparative Study of Industrial Failure” by Joel Mokyr, at Seminar 52, Nineteenth Century Wealth and Poverty.


JANUARY ACTIVITIES IN IRELAND

Poetry Ireland, a new organization whose first president is John Montague, plans to run a Poetry Week beginning January 5, 1979. Readings and workshops will be held in Dublin and possibly elsewhere as well. Annual membership in Poetry Ireland is £6; to join, send a check to John F. Deane, General Secretary, 89 Carrick Court, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin.

The Irish Humanities Centre will conduct its annual January Intersession in Irish Studies during January 8-19, 1979. Lectures will cover the Gaelic tradition, Easter 1916, Northern Ireland, modern Irish writers, and a host of other topics. For details write to Gratnall Freyer, Director, 23 Westland Row, Dublin 2.

LINEN HALL LIBRARY

Linen Hall Library in Belfast, which contains an extensive collection of works in the area of Irish studies, is supported largely through private subscription. Several members of ACIS have suggested that scholars may wish to make contributions to the library in return for using its facilities. In addition, the Executive Council has recommended, and the membership has approved, a $100 donation to the library, whose facilities have helped many ACIS members. A similar contribution was made a few years ago to the National Library in Dublin.

IRISH STUDIES AT MLA

The 1978 Modern Language Association meeting in New York will feature a dozen events of particular interest to ACIS members. Irish-related sessions scheduled for the meeting include the following:


Thursday, December 28, 1:00-4:00 p.m.: Seminar 168, Beckett’s Film and Antonioni’s Blow-Up will be shown in the Monte Carlo Room, Americana, in conjunction with the special session “The Grotesque in Film, which will follow at 4:30.


Friday, December 29, 1:00-2:15 p.m.: Seminar 403, Samuel Beckett in the Theater. Presiding: Ruby Cohn, University of California, Davis. Participants: Alan Schneider, Director, Julliard Drama School; Lee Breuer, Director, Mabou Mines; Joseph Dunn, Director, American Contemporary Theatre.


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Biography


Civilization


Current Events: Northern Ireland


Rona Fields, a social psychologist and fourth generation Irish-American, went to Northern Ireland in 1971. Inspired or assisted by Alfred McClung Lee, Eoin McKiernan, and Patrick Snoddy, President of the Gaelic League, and committed to the underdog, she began research into the effects of violence on children. (She does not relate how, through social action research, she became further involved in the problems of the North.) She learned “that I am not a pacifist. I have felt deep anger and desperately wanted to hit back at those who bullied and abused me” (p.xii). *Society Under Siege* may be her means.

Fields places her data in a sociopolitical context. The causes and motives she attributes to events and people, her discourses on the British Army, organized religion, health care, censorship, the economy, etc. in Ireland, north and south, plus feelings she expresses about the “record of vil lainy and corruption” (p.xiii) to be found in archives of Whitehall, Westminster, and Dublin, all closely parallel views held within the Official Republican Movement. More original is her main thesis. Admitting that there “can be room for argument on the issue of premeditated, organized, schematic destruction of the Irish people” (p. 2), she nevertheless posits that because the British government has hitherto failed to eliminate the inhabitants and distinctive culture of Ireland, the people in Northern Ireland now “have been marked for . . . . psychological genocide” (p.xiii) with “Internment . . . . the specific [destructive] instrument” (p. 70). Introducing a melange of theories, Fields attempts to show the social and psychological dynamics of the ongoing conflict. Hers are grave allegations. Space permits me to indicate only a few of the shortcomings of her research and reporting methods.

The sample of children to whom Fields administered projective and moral—judgment tests and with and about whom whom she conducted interviews was small (77 Belfast, 12 Dublin, 26 Derry Catholics and 75 Belfast, 10 Dublin Protestants) and unrepresentative (it evidences no awareness on her part of important differences between post-Famine ghetto and pre-Famine indigenous Catholics elsewhere in the North). By her own admission (to her credit), not only was testing carried out under far from ideal conditions, but trends revealed were often “statistically insignificant” (p. 42). She did not, as claimed, conduct a meaningful, longitudinal (1971-1975) study, inasmuch as she had apparently no comparable data on children before 1969, used different groups for comparison in repeat tests, and rested mainly Catholics, mostly from the Lower Falls area in Belfast. Like previous studies, hers indicates that a number of children suffered trauma from recent violence; her findings do not adequately support her contention that the entire population of Northern Ireland and its unique characteristics are therefore doomed to extinction.

Other data, obtained from testing and interviewing former internees “under the auspices of the [NICRA] Association for Legal Justice, and republican clubs” (p. 82), confirm the ill-treatment accorded some internees that has been noted in various official reports; they do not prove that techniques of coercive persuasion were part of a “sophisticated experiment in psychological genocide” (p. 69). How reliable are self-appraisals of physical and mental disabilities,

 mailed in by 83 former internees? How trustworthy are numerous undocumented statements, such as “Estimates indicate that in one or another fashion at least twenty thousand Catholics were subjected to one or more of the following experimental conditions” (p. 67)?

Perhaps to bolster a shaky thesis, Fields employs questionable reporting techniques. Typically, she speculates: “If one were to conceive of the troubles . . . . in terms of a huge experiment . . . . then the research design might read . . . .” [italics mine] (p. 65). She then describes events as if such were, in fact, the case. Her many references to Jews in Nazi Germany, Russians under the NKVD, and Armenians under the Ottoman Empire are also misleading; they imply that the experiences of the people in Northern Ireland are directly comparable. Even she indicates that it is difficult to compare findings from studies of diverse nature.

Fields’ research report on the “Women of Ireland: Slaves of Slaves,” reads much like a tract of the Women’s Liberation Movement. She writes, approvingly, of evidence of a matriarchy among the Piets (a concept unsupported anthropologically) and of the high status of women under Brehon Laws (ideal, not real laws: cf. Sean O’Faolain, *The Irish*, p. 44); alleges that “Torture of women in interrogation in many places features rape” (p.116, undocumented); attacks policies granting leave to internees to attend funerals, saying they reinforce “the role of the woman as breeder or martyr” (p. 124); and notes that the “sexist overtones of the word ‘chairman’ are entirely missing from the Irish equivalent . . . . and the [Irish] word for the Holy Ghost is of feminine gender” (p. 105).

Although she attacks Irish men for many things, she asserts that “puritanism afflicting women’s status—was . . . . a consequence of . . . . the infusion into secular life of the archaic domestic code imposed by the Cromwellian invasion” (p. 105), a questionable interpretation. Finally, her accounts of the activities of Irish women—from “Queen Eire” to “M. Drumm”—do not seem to substantiate her claim that the status of women has declined since partition.

It is unfortunate that Fields did not read more carefully *The Open and Closed Mind*, to which she refers. In that report of thorough, dispassionate research on the nature of belief systems, Milton Rokeach writes:

> It is often the case in psychology, and in other social sciences as well, that researchers select and formulate research problems because of their personal or ideological significance. This is undesirable to the extent that it leads to blind spots and to hidden value judgments, which detract from the scientific merit of the research (p.viii).

Betty Messenger
Columbus, Ohio


A letter from Maud Gonne to her friend Ella Young finds Joseph Hone’s book on Yeats “dry as the dust of Trinity College; but it contains valuable data for someone who may yet write a living biography.” Samuel Levenson’s biography of Maud Gonne is not always dry but his initial writing often bears the imprint of a pedant, an unfortunate characteristic
for so legendary a subject. The author apologizes for not offering a “modern” biography, but it is truly Maud’s point about valuable data that he too often ignores. He deplores her vagaries concerning accurate dates, yet his own sad omission of footnotes containing such information must draw the obvious criticism that a book of this sort provides the scholar with unnecessary mazes for even textual wanderings. If the author intended to aim his study at the general public, his writing requires a livelier style (say, in the manner of H. F. Peters in his accounts of un-Irish but remarkable women). The bibliography contains few unexpected sources and does not include the results of his unnecessarily explained sojourn at Collindale.

But of Maud Gonne: she emerges as a tougher woman than the reading of Yeats’s own writings would suppose; an impassioned, if disorganized social worker who by twenty-five cared deeply for the plight of evicted tenants and, later, near-starving school children. As a pseudo-terrorist, she attempted to agitate Franco-Irish union against her native country, England, hoping to reduce it to rubble. She was no intellectual, as the separatist John O’Leary quickly discovered; certainly John Quinn was obliged to explain James Joyce to her and to offer her an approach for aesthetic decisions. But it was not for her intellect that Yeats sought her, a point that deserves fuller interpretation, just as the account of the Golden Dawn activities is lightly dismissed and requires more accurate description from abundant, extant sources. An enrichment of the text here, for example, may have spared unnecessary padding elsewhere about policemen reading advertisements for Erect Form corsets.

Concerning the male players in Maud’s life: Lucien Millevoye’s portrait suffers from too little information, a point the author acknowledges, but Maud’s husband, John MacBride, is etched more solidly. The quirks of Maud’s needs to create war-gods or mongers of men are fully appreciated when she attempts to incite John Quinn to devote himself “entirely” to Ireland and to make “history as Parnell did.”

The book begins to acquire verve during the description of the Easter Rising, a point in time where the author is more at home, and is strengthened thereafter by hitherto unpublished, if sadly undocumented, letters, as well as from biographical and autobiographical material from Iscuit’s husband, Francis Stuart. It is with Maud’s old age that the study is at its best. Prematurely aged, as the fine photographs clearly support, and with “witch-craft” in her voice, her fine madness and insipid understanding of Yeats are very well handled. Accounts of Maud’s children, Iscuit and Sean MacBride are equally useful.

Levenson deserves commendation for his restraint to linger unduly with Yeats. When he does, it is regrettable that we read Yeats “clinched” an argument, or Maud was “keeping him on a string.” In spite of occasional indecorous style, the book is an important ancillary addition to Yeats studies, and although the author regards Maud’s primary value to be the object of Yeats’s “obsessive pursuit,” he has presented a fascinating woman whose study is interesting in itself.

Josephine Johnson
University of Miami


The final three volumes of the DePaul Irish Drama Series are given over to curiosities, plays performed once seventy years ago and known today, if at all, through anecdote and footnote. They include the only product of the improbable collaboration of George Moore and William Butler Yeats, a futuristic play by the critic-historian and 1916 martyr, Thomas MacDonagh, and two playlets by the Theosophist who made his passage to India, James Cousins. The plays are stylistically and thematically diverse, and yet they have much in common apart from accidents of date and nationality; three of the plays adapt tragic narratives from Old Irish mythology and the fourth is a tragedy set during a future war for Irish liberation. Although their republication might appear only an archival service, these previously inaccessible plays give us an enlarged understanding of the Irish Theater, 1900-1910.

For obvious reasons our attention is first drawn to the Moore-Yeats Diarmuid and Grania. One of a dozen modern treatments of the well-known Fenian narrative, the play, until now, has been best remembered for the levity it inspired. In a contemporary caricature Max Beerbohm portrayed Yeats introducing Moore to the Queen of the Fairies. In a frequently quoted passage from his memoirs, Moore asserts that he planned to write a play in French which Lady Gregory would translate into English; Taidgh O’Donoghue would translate this text into Irish which Lady Gregory would put into English. Then, added Moore generously, Yeats would put style into it. The 1901 extravaganza premire (with incidental music commissioned from Elgar) was a failure, and the manuscript was not published and thought lost until twelve years after Yeats’ death. Published previously in The Dublin Magazine and the Variorum edition of the plays, it here finds its most convenient edition.

In reading the play we find Moore’s bon mot instructive. As Anthony Farrow shows in his introduction, the best criticism of the play yet published, the themes, characterization, and tone of Diarmuid and Grania unite it with the rest of Moore’s canon. For example, all elements of the supernatural have been expunged or rationalized. The fleeting lovers strive for the impossible idea of the beautiful life in this world, much like protagonists in The Strike at Arlingford and other Moore works of the previous decade. Their exile is in a peasant milieu, a contribution we would ascribe to Yeats if Diarmuid had not been transformed into a sheep-shearing commoner. Worse, there is only occasional evidence that Yeats “put style” into the proy, sometimes bathetic dialogue.

Grania: Kill me if you will, kill me with your sword, here is my breast. . . . If you would go to this hunting, you must do it; for while I live, you shall not go.

Although Diarmuid and Grania is unlikely to be revived on the boards, it does make rewarding reading, even with its flaws. Characterizations such as the coarse, woodland Finn and the reduced Diarmuid give the play a unique flavor among the treatments of saga narrative.

Thomas MacDonagh’s When the Dawn is Come, first performed in 1908, is set fifty years in the future in an unfinished war for national liberation. Far from being the tract one might expect (one reviewer misleadingly called it “the first sin fien drama”), the plot is an awkward shell game of intrigue in which Thurlough, a poet of “eternal song,” finds himself pitted against his short-sighted colleagues. Thurlough, who frequently compares himself with Savonarola, has been elected head of the Council of Ireland where his antagonist is Réamonn, a caricatured parliamentarian. Thurlough must also contend with a spy and ballad-singer, Connor, who argues that art should be no more than propaganda. We learn in a useful appendix to this edition that MacDonagh had originally designed that his hero would be
misperceived and killed by his own side. In the present ending of the play, rewritten under the urging of J. M. Synge, then manager of the Abbey, MacDonagh has Thurlough prepared for a death for Ireland.

When the Dawn is Come was a failure at its premiere, in part because of an indifferent performance. In its cogent introduction Chester Garrison refuses to make any inflated claims for the play and counsels that we see it as a personal rather than a professional achievement. It is must reading for all scholars of Easter, 1916, for what it has to say about feminism, tradition, and the role of art in revolution.

The third discovery from the DePaul plays is the Belfast-born poet and playwright, James Cousins (Seumas O Cuisin), whose Sleep of the King (1902) was one of the earliest plays of the revival. After a falling out with Yeats, Cousins left Ireland, arriving in India in 1915 where he lived until 1956. He is the most substantial of the unknown early playwrights, more prolific than Alice Milligan and much more of an artist than William Boyle. Both of the plays republished here are taken from mythological narrative and show the influence of the Yeatsian theater. The Sleep of the King, in verse and first performed behind a gauze curtain, portrays Connla's mystical awakening and abandonment of his throne. It appears modeled on the classical masque as understood, perhaps, through Milton. The second play, The Sword of Dermot (1903), is a three act tragedy in prose which portrays the death of star-crossed lovers. Cousins separates himself from the Yeatsian theater in a passage of comic relief in which a gallowglass ridicules the craft of poetry. Despite this, echoes of Yeats appear frequently in the heavily mannered prose: "one can see crowds of stars," "a new moon treads on the heels of the sun across the Curlews."

William Dunbleton's introduction helps us to locate this diverse and elusive poet-playwright, sometimes thought of as a third poet of the Renaissance, after Yeats and A. E. Like the editors of the other two volumes, Prof. Dunbleton is fully professional and a pleasure to read.

Whatever the quality of the plays reprinted in the DePaul series we regret seeing it come to an end. It yielded some lost treasures, like A. E.'s Deirdre, gave us texts that were easy to use, and was blessedly inexpensive.

James MacKillop
Harvard University and Onondaga Community College

O'HARA JOURNAL

The John O'Hara Journal will include articles on all aspects of O'Hara's life and work. Subscriptions ($6 annually for two issues) and manuscripts (8-25 pages) should be sent to Dr. Vincent D. Balitas, Editor, John O'Hara Journal, 1401 Mahantongo Street, Pottsville, Pennsylvania 17901.

CURRENT THEATER

Mother Jones, a new play by ACIS member Victor Power, will run at the Body Politic Theater in Chicago from November 16 through December 16. The play concerns the famous "Joan of Arc of the Miners" whose struggle for the rights of laborers and of children has become legendary. Power, an Irish-born Chicagoan like his subject, has won awards for his 1974 play The Escape and, this year, for his translation of the Gaelic book Apple on the Treetop by his brother, Richard Power.

In New York, meanwhile, Hugh Leonard's Da continues its successful run at the Moroso. Leonard's comedy, winner of a Tony and other awards, revolves around the plight of an Irish dramatist who is haunted by his father's ghost.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please help us keep down the cost of ACIS membership by paying your 1979 dues by the end of December. Dues remain $6.00 for individual and institutional memberships, $9.00 for couples with joint memberships, and $3.00 for students and retired persons. Checks should be sent to Professor Thomas E. Hachey, History Department, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233.

GAELIC LANGUAGE POSITIONS

Two recently advertised positions require a knowledge of Gaelic. The College of St. Thomas wants a temporary employee who is familiar with library cataloguing rules and can read Gaelic and Welsh. The project, which will take about thirteen weeks, will involve the cataloguing of 1300 Irish, Scottish, and Welsh items for the O'Shaughnessy Library. For further information write to John B. Davenport, Celtic Librarian, College of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105. Deadline: January 1, 1979.

Also, the University of Pennsylvania has a "possible opening" for a scholar in the field of "Celtic Renaissance and Irish language." To apply, write to Stuart Curran, Chair, English Department, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104.

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