

NEW EDITOR

After seven productive years as editor of the *ACIS Newsletter*, Janet E. Dunleavy has resigned to devote more time to other professional interests. The new editor is Patrick A. McCarthy, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Miami; book reviews will be handled by Laurie Kaplan, a doctoral candidate at Miami. News items and general correspondence should be sent to Professor McCarthy at the Department of English, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida 33124; review correspondence should be directed to Mrs. Kaplan at the same address.

IRISH SEMINARS AT VERMONT

The University of Vermont has awarded a grant, through its Vermont Seminar Program, to Professors Sidney Poger and Anthony Bradley to bring speakers on Irish subjects to the Vermont campus. For the first semester Thomas Brown, Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts, and Brian Friel, Irish playwright, will visit the campus and give public lectures and readings. Plans are underway for the second semester.

MLA MEETINGS

The 1978 ACIS-MLA seminar, chaired by Dillon Johnston, will center on "Irish Innovations in Literary Form." A complete list of paper topics and participants will appear in the December *Newsletter*.

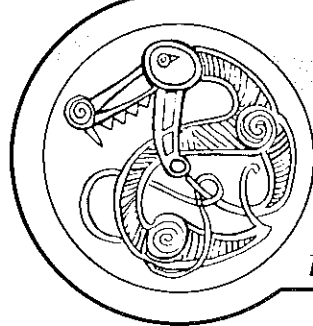
The chairman and topic for the ACIS session at the 1979 MLA meeting in San Francisco have not been selected. To volunteer or to make suggestions, write to Johann Norstedt, ACIS Secretary, English Department, VPI&SU, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.

At the 1980 MLA meeting, in New Orleans, the ACIS session will focus on "The Modern Irish Novel, Excluding James Joyce." Papers, running 15 to 18 minutes, and other correspondence should be sent to Herbert V. Fackler, English Department, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana 70504. Because the papers are to be printed as a volume before the MLA meeting, early submission is essential; a detailed prospectus should reach Professor Fackler by January 31, 1979.

JOURNAL NOTES

The Irish Renaissance Annual, a new journal to be published by the University of Delaware, will feature articles on figures associated with the Irish Literary Renaissance. Special attention will be paid to the political and social contexts of Irish drama, fiction, poetry, periodicals, and plastic arts in the late

american committee for



IRISH STUDIES

newsletter

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Volume VIII

October, 1978

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NEWS

Cortland Meeting

The sixteenth annual ACIS meeting, held at Cortland, New York in April, was attended by over two hundred people. The convention, coordinated by Gilbert Cahill with the assistance of Robert Rhodes and Gordon Beadle, featured a keynote address by Maurice Harmon and papers on various aspects of Irish studies. Tapes of all sessions are available; for information, write to Irish Studies Tapes, Sperry Learning Resources Center, SUNY College at Cortland, Cortland, New York 13045.

The following election results were announced at the General Business Meeting: President, Emmet Larkin (History, University of Chicago); Vice-President, Alan Ward (Political Science, College of William and Mary); Secretary, Johann A. Norstedt (English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University); Treasurer, Thomas E. Hachey (History, Marquette University); Social Science Representatives, Betty Messenger (Anthropology, Ohio State University) and Gordon Streib (Sociology, University of Florida); Literature Representatives, Maureen Murphy, (Hofstra University) and Robert Rhodes (SUNY College at Cortland); History Representatives, Joseph Curran (LeMoyné College) and Hugh Kearney (University of Pittsburgh); Irish Academic Representative, Maurice Harmon (University College, Dublin).

Future Meetings

The 1979 ACIS meeting will be held at James Madison University on April 26-28, 1979. James Madison University is located in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in the heart of the beautiful Shenandoah Valley. The theme of the conference, "The Individual and the Community," will be explored through sessions on such topics as "Parnell: The Individual in the Community," "The Individual Outside the Community," "The Irish Abroad," "Music in Ireland," and "Art and Architecture: The Creator and the Community." Some papers have been selected, but there are still gaps. To submit a paper or to ask for further information, write as soon as possible to Mark D. Hawthorne, Head, Department of English, or to Martha Caldwell, Department of Art; both are at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801.

If you're planning well ahead, you will want to know that the 1980 meeting will be at the University of Delaware and will be coordinated by Zack Bowen; the 1981 meeting, with John and Betty Messenger as coordinators, will be at Ohio State University; and the 1982 meeting will be at the University of Vermont, with Sidney Poger coordinating events.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Manuscripts and inquiries should be sent to Professor Zack Bowen, Editor, *The Irish Renaissance Annual*, Department of English, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711. The deadline for submitting manuscripts for the first issue is January 1, 1979.

Manuscripts are also solicited for a special issue of *MOSAIC* to be devoted to "The Irish Tradition in Literature." Submissions should be mailed to Dr. Daniel Lenoski, *MOSAIC*, 208 Tier Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada R3T 2N2. Preferred deadline: December 1, 1978. Final deadline: February 1979.

reviews

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

Maurice Harmon, *Select Bibliography for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature and its Backgrounds, an Irish Studies Handbook*. Dublin: P. D. Meany, 1977. 187 pp. \$17.50.

In the quaint lingo of the New Critics, Irish writers would have to be thought highly "impure," since they carry around all sorts of parochial Irish concerns inside their creative minds. Actually, though, these concerns are often the very determinants of their literary language, structures, and perspectives. Maurice Harmon observes in the introduction to his new handbook for Irish Studies that critics and scholars must enter whatever contexts the writers themselves lead them to. "If they find it necessary and valuable," he says, "to draw upon mythology, folklore, history, Gaelic literature, and so on, we have no alternative but to follow in their footsteps. The principle is fundamental to the development of a critical response that is adequate to the literature." Harmon's objective in this volume is to provide a students' handbook of these contexts.

To clear his decks, he reduces some ten thousand (let us guess) Yeatsian references back to just two: Wade's bibliography of the canon and Jochum's bibliography of the criticism. Joyce entries are similarly cut. After these brave excisions, Harmon is in position to advance into the contexts: history, archeology, topography, folk culture, the other Irish arts, the Anglo-Irish dialects, and the Gaelic language and mythology.

The authors who now come before us are thus no longer Northrop Frye, Cleanth Brooks, or Kenneth Burke, but Vivian Mercier, Sean O'Faolain, F.S.L. Lyons, Desmond Ryan, Austin Clarke, Brian O'Cuiv, Colm O'Lochlainn, Sean O'Suilleabhain, Frank O'Connor, Conor Cruise O'Brien, and Richard Hayes. Since Harmon's compilation is selective, some *de rigueur* citations are absent: for example, AE's *The National Being* and A.P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, both of them unreadable books, missing but not missed. At the same time it is gratifying to find Harmon bringing once again to the head of the parade a number of older classics of Irish commentary that have been long

ignored, not to say scorned. For example, Hyde's incomparable record of excited discovery, *The Literary History of Ireland*. Or Kuno Meyer's *Ancient Irish Poetry*. Or P.W. Joyce's lively *English as we Speak it in Ireland* and his *Irish Names of Places*, wherein we can learn why it is nicer to live in a place called "Greenan" than in one called "Shallon."

Being an inventory, Harmon's book automatically uncovers hiatuses in our Irish scholarly materials. This is an important matter. It is an open secret among us that some of our apprentice work is factitious, not perhaps out of perversity so much as out of simple misinformation on what tasks need doing next. As Harmon points out, our materials are very inadequately indexed, though Irish Studies are less shameful here than American studies. Richard Hayes actually did index many leading twentieth-century Irish periodicals, but ten years ago the work came to a halt. Griffith's *United Irishman* and *Sinn Fein* are not indexed at all. On the other hand, we have concordances beyond our needs, thanks to the glamour of computers.

A second hiatus Harmon finds to be the absence of an Irish biographical dictionary. Of course we do have the beginnings of an Irish *DIB* in James Carens's Irish Writers' Series. We certainly do need a similar series on Irish political leaders, but it seems unlikely that the titanic effort that went into Carens's series can be mounted again very soon, or ever. But regardless of the absence of a *DIB*, Irish literature is extraordinarily rich in full-figure biographical portraits. Though one of the splendors of our discipline, these are nevertheless rather hit and miss in their coverage, for we are without adequate biographies of John Mitchel, John Redmond, Arthur Griffith, the Sheehy clan of daughters and sons-in-law, Sean Lemass, Richard Mulcahy, and many others.

Harmon's book is oriented toward the student, but I must confess that though I must have passed out of apprenticeship some time since, I found dozens of citations in it that I had somehow missed along the way. Just which these citations were I am keeping secret.

Malcolm Brown
University of Washington

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

John Jay College in New York will be the site of the first ACIS Middle Atlantic Chapter meeting on Friday, October 27, 1978. The meeting will include panels on bibliography, curriculum, major figures in Irish literature, regional resources, and research. While there will be no registration fee, those planning to attend should give advance notice and send a \$1.00 contribution to Bonnie Scott, Department of English, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711.

The next meeting of the New England Committee for Irish Studies (formerly the Northeast Association for Irish Studies, and now an ACIS affiliate) will be held at Central Connecticut State Col-

lege on November 3 and 4. The meeting will include a two hour workshop at which NECIS members can present brief reports on their current projects. For more information write to John Conway, English Department, Central Connecticut State College, New Britain, Connecticut 06050.

The ACIS Midwest Regional conference, to be held at St. Mary's College on Saturday, October 21, will feature a morning session on the Irish Literary Renaissance and two afternoon sessions. Information about this meeting should have reached all ACIS members already; if not, it may be obtained from Anthony Black, History Department, St. Mary's College, South Bend, Indiana 46637.



The *ACIS Newsletter* is published four times annually in February, April, October, and December, at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida 33124. Vol. VIII, Serial No. 3.

Editor: Patrick A. McCarthy
Review Editor: Laurie Kaplan
Bibliographer: Jim Ford, Boston
Public Library

George Mills Harper, ed. *Yeats and The Occult*. Yeats Studies Series, Vol. II. Macmillan of Canada and the Maclean-Hunter Press, 1975. 320 pp.

First, a summary of this important and intriguing collection, necessarily brief: Biographical and bibliographical essays by Professor Harper, Richard Finneran, Laurence W. Fennelly, Geoffrey N. Watkins, and William Murphy. Three new documents of more biographical than literary interest, all capably transcribed and introduced by Professors Harper and Finneran and John S. Kelly and Walter Kelly Hood. Two background studies by Warwick Gould and James Olney. Three essays in literary criticism by William H. O'Donnell, Michael Sidnell, and Kathleen Raine.

Second, since ordinary readers no less than the critics here represented have a stake in Yeats and the Occult, a catalogue of representative responses to his magical pursuits: 1) Embarrassment and hostility. 2) Honest and more or less neutral scholarship which says: "It's there; it's important; I can document it; but I'm not wholly sure what to do with it." 3) Practical criticism, a reading of tests in light of beliefs. 4) Literary interpretation. 5) Substitution. 6) True belief.

Third, some thoughts from a reader who has occupied half of these positions; feels most comfortable with the fourth, though cannot resist moments of the first; and is worried about the fifth and the sixth.

There is a problem about the location of truth. Some of these essays are a little anxious about the fact that Yeats did not publish many of his occult or esoteric manuscripts. To decline to publish is not necessarily a repudiation, but it is a decision, and it does say something about Yeats's attitudes towards particular works. Scholars are inclined to assume that the unpublished material we have worked so hard to discover (and in Yeats's case, transcribe) gives us some special access, the drop on the poet, an insight into hidden thought or feeling. In most cases the reverse is true, the most *done* writing the most revealing. When Yeats wrote that doing revisions meant remaking a self, he was being entirely serious; and rejection or neglect is a form of revision. Because these essays are determined, understandably enough, to make the case for the importance of the occult, they do not always ponder the significance of Yeats's rejections. Nor, it seems to me, do they sufficiently attend to the tissue of irony in which he suspends so many of his pronouncements. Positivists read *A Vision* and find Yeats a charlatan; Miss Raine finds him a sage and prophet; neither notices the "impish humor" which AE said animated that strange book.

Three essays are distressingly short on practical criticism. I do not mean narrow, new critical explication, but close attention to the transforming imagination. "A poet writes always of his personal life," Yeats said, but quickly added: "he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria. . . he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he had been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete." *Yeats and the Occult* tells us a good deal about accident and incoherence, though it is the seance rather than the breakfast table, and something about phantasmagoria, but not enough about the rebirth. The most interesting moment in Yeats's account of the bleeding oleographs of The Sacred Heart at Mirebeau occurs when he attends the Mass celebrated by the Abbe who had announced the miracle: "Up to this I had not found myself moved. The miracle was to me a subject of investigation, but now I realized its place in spiritual drama." The drama is Yeats's own, and

that realization — making real — is what counts. In this book only Michael Sidnell fully considers the process and he attends to the last Romantic rather than the Adept; his essay, the collection's only distinguished literary criticism, depends upon close reading, thorough scholarship, and keen intelligence, not esoteric texts or occult activities.

Finally, we need to understand the implications of true belief. At the end of her essay Miss Raine says that "when he wrote 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz,' he was passing upon the politics of time the judgement of the politics of eternity as he had come to understand it. The judgement is one those who make a religion of politics at all times resent, but is nonetheless the teaching of every religion which holds the soul to be immortal." Well, reread the poem. It begins in snobbery and nostalgia, moves through a contemptuous dismissal of commitments (social welfare, revolutionary nationalism) which the two women sincerely and effectively maintained, and ends in an apocalyptic cry for destruction. Friendship and the imagination's apprehension of public events are equally betrayed by reactionary rage. One does not have to make a religion of politics (or literary criticism, or biographical scholarship) to be worried if this is the Yeats we are to cherish and celebrate in the new age a-dawning.

Douglas Archibald
Colby College

Roland McHugh. *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976. 150 pp. \$14.95.

As Walton Litz pointed out in *The Art of James Joyce* over a decade ago, there really can be no quibbles about the use of aids external to the text, such as early draft material, when studying the work of James Joyce. The MSS and notes are profusely available for our scrutiny — Joyce may well have intended them to be of assistance to future readers — and the study of them increases our ability to deal with and appreciate some very difficult texts. The great value in considering Joyce's preliminary formulations has been confirmed by Michael Groden's *Ulysses in Progress* and now by Roland McHugh's *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*, in which McHugh, who currently cares for the James Joyce Museum in the Martello Tower, Sandycove, has written much of great value to the reader of *Finnegans Wake*.

McHugh's book is the first (though I hope not the last) intensive study of the shorthand character-signifying sigla developed by Joyce in the *FW* notebooks now preserved at the Lockwood Memorial Library, University of Buffalo. These sigla seem originally to have stood for individual characters, but eventually covered whole condensed areas of characterization. Anyone who has grappled with the task of trying to unravel or explain the depths of meaning incorporated into, say, the initials HCE or ALP will immediately see the usefulness in McHugh's explanatory study and utilization of the accretive symbols \square or Δ . In his rich book (a richness perhaps conveyed in part by the over-inflated price) McHugh works out in useful detail various major components of these sigla figures and also has much to say of their place in the structure of *FW*.

McHugh employs the sigla in his description of form in *FW*, as he builds upon the interpretive foundation laid down by Clive Hart in his landmark *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* to sharpen our perceptions of *FW* as a massively reflective work, with Book I reflected and inverted in Book III, the two merging as we approach the center of Book II, as Joyce tunneled through his literary mountain from both

Continued on page 4

directions simultaneously. I can only hint here at the complexity of Joyce's final work, and I heartily recommend that the interested reader turn to McHugh's book, after having broached *FW* itself and also having enjoyed Hart's work, one of those pioneering books which contain a general wisdom and distanced humor necessary for humane scholarship.

McHugh's volume contains many structural observations and new notes on the Irish content that may be appreciated by the veteran reader of *FW*, but I think the book is of equal if not greater importance to the novice: McHugh's firm and careful presentation of the distinct tone and balance of each section of *FW* is of far greater value in appreciating Joyce's last book than is any simplified or predigested shortened *FW*.

It is inevitable that, when reading a study such as McHugh's, each reader with his own perspective on *FW* will note various lacks in treatment of *FW*'s plot structure or content. Here this reviewer must mount his hobby horse to point out that it is regrettable that most of us, including McHugh apparently, must rely on Christiani's inadequate and biased *Scandinavian Elements of Finnegans Wake* in exegesis of this aspect of the book. But McHugh's few excursions into areas not yet treated in scholarly fashion hardly detract from his extremely useful presentation of the sigla, and his book should be weighed on the basis of the great amount of solid information he conveys, and conveys clearly, in this concise and interesting book.

The concluding chapter of *Sigla* is marred by several poorly considered observations, as if the pressure of maintaining a tight focus had proven too much as deadlines neared. But again, this would seem to be a minor flaw. McHugh's trailblazing work with Joyce's shorthand abbreviations and their meaning, and his contributions to our understanding of the form of a most difficult work of art, will be appreciated by all readers of Joyce.

Mark L. Troy
Uppsala, Sweden

William M. Murphy. *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats (1839-1922)*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978. 680 pp. \$27.50.

Prodigal Father is a magnificent biography of a magnificent man. But it is far more. It is in effect the biography of a family — the most famous artistic family Ireland has produced or is likely to produce. Although the spirit of JBY hovers over almost every page, Bill Murphy has also developed in considerable detail the lives of three of the four distinguished Yeats children as well as the Pollexfens, the enigmatic family of their mother. In addition, Murphy has managed to cast new light on the characters and careers of many other important artistic and political figures, in England and America as well as Ireland, always as they affect the lives and careers of JBY and his brilliant children. The most significant of these minor sketches are those of Annie Horniman, John Quinn, and the Dowden brothers. Despite the "God's plenty" this suggests, I finished the book with a regret that it had not achieved more, as indeed it did in its first version—some 2600 typed pages. As a result of much condensation and many excisions, the book is now very tightly compressed (to approximately one-third its original length), and most readers will share with me the wish for expansion and further quotation from the thousands of unpublished letters and family papers Murphy has made use

of. We can only hope that many of them will be published *in toto* in the years ahead.

The biggest omission in the literary portraits is that of Jack B. Yeats, who is frequently mentioned but less fully developed than his brother and sisters—primarily because Jack left the family circle and the others did not. Despite the considerable space devoted to William Butler Yeats, most students and critics are sure to be disappointed that Murphy did not quote more extensively from the letters (about 700) of JBY to his famous son. Also, I'm sure, most students of literature will wish for further critical analysis of the fundamental psychological antagonism between father and son which runs through the book like a leit motif. Though Murphy has examined this tension more carefully than anyone else, and though he frequently suggests the basic causes, he is almost invariably sympathetic to JBY and may be occasionally unfair in overtone if not in fact. I am thinking, for example, of such critical judgments as this:

Yet it is clear that, except for his forays into the occult, the ideas on literature, art, and politics that William Butler Yeats made known throughout the world all grew from the seeds planted by John Butler Yeats, the sower who could not reap. Try as he might the demon of Blenheim Road was one Willie could never exorcise. (p. 172)

Murphy is not, of course, the first to trace many of W.B.'s aesthetic premises to his father. It has become a critical fashion among the well-informed to over-react to the long neglect of JBY by giving him more credit than he deserves. I have always been skeptical about the extent of the indebtedness, but I must be content merely to point out that some of JBY's critical assumptions are surely indebted to W.B.'s essays and letters (many not yet published). We will be better able to analyze the question of mutual influence when all the available letters are published in the comprehensive edition projected by Oxford University Press. If I suggest that Murphy is biased in favor of his protagonist, I ought to admit that I am biased in the other direction. Moreover, I hasten to add that he has a better basis for judgment than anyone else at this time, having read, transcribed, and analyzed more than two million words of family letters, diaries, and assorted papers (chiefly unpublished) in the many years he has spent on this biography. Nevertheless, when he describes W.B. as the "only adversary" of his sisters in the Cuala Industries, Bill implies that W.B. is the "villain," and he leaves unsaid the fact that the Industries could not have existed without W.B.'s contacts, contributions, and critical judgments—eccentric as they sometimes were.

But I am quibbling. In fact, I am over-emphasizing one relatively minor (though significant) biographical judgment. The last word about the tension between JBY and his famous son has not been written, but Murphy's distinguished biography will greatly assist F.S.L. Lyons in the further analysis of the father-son complex in the comprehensive biography of W.B. now underway. As Murphy points out in the Preface, *Prodigal Father* is not a biography of W.B. or his sisters, nor a history of the Abbey Theatre or the Cuala Industries; it is not "a critique of art," nor a "psychoanalysis or psychobiography." "But it is the story of the man himself . . . the very human story of a lovable, brilliant, and distressingly improvident man" (p. 10). Both the Yeats family and we students are fortunate that Jeanne Robert Foster's notes for a biography and fine Yeats collection should have been left in the good hands of an American Irishman with the talent and persistence of Bill Murphy.

George M. Harper
Florida State University

Irish University Review, Richard Murphy: Special Issue., Maurice Harmon, ed., vol. VII, no. 1 (Spring, 1977), University College, Dublin 4. \$4.75

Last spring's *Irish University Review*, devoted exclusively to the poet Richard Murphy, contains a clear introduction and a full chronology of the poet's life by Maurice Harmon, an essay on the poetry of Murphy by the illustrious poet Seamus Heaney, essays on the battle of Aughrim and on the High Island hermitage by J.G. Simms and Michael Herity respectively, notes on birds by Anthony Wilde and on terms in two narrative poems by Jonathan Williams, and, finally, a bibliography by Mary FitzGerald of writing by and on Murphy. The issue also offers seven new poems that illustrate the value of these eight articles on this mature poet of undefined stature.

For example, "Care" becomes an especially interesting poem after reading Harmon's biographical note concerning Murphy's benevolence toward Irish itinerants, some of whom have resisted his help. The poem recounts the taming of a wild goat whose domestication becomes fatal because her "gypsy head" loses the knack for survival. The poem concludes:

So when a child mistook a sprig of yew
And mixed it with her fodder, she descried
No danger: we had tamed her instinct too.
Whiskey, white of egg, linseed oil, we tried
Forcing down antidotes. Nothing would do.
The children came to tell me when she died.

The highly controlled *terza rima* impells the reader toward the conclusion, as "died" seems inevitable in "descried." Form ironically emphasizes Murphy's admiration for wildness, which Harmon's chronology tempts us to see as the poet's lesson from the itinerants. Furthermore, the number of Murphy's gypsy poems suggest the poet's identification with these people who remain aliens in the society of their birth.

Background information does not always benefit Murphy's reader. For instance, "Swallows" describes a woman's midnight excursion to a tin-roofed shed in search of her man: "Her beam dazzles birds/She can't identify." Her light-shaft discloses "A red boot unlaced" and "A white arm sticking up," images that are the more enigmatic for their clarity. Like the woman, we recognize the items without grasping their significance. As the title implies, the poet intends a breach between his knowledge and that of the reader, initially, and the woman, who cannot identify the birds. Background information might undermine or miss the point of the poet's intention to recreate raw experience at the moment between perception and understanding. For this reason, I find much of the information offered by Herity, Wilde, and Williams less essential to an understanding of Murphy's poetry than the articles by Harmon and Heaney or the study of the battle of Aughrim by Simms. Simms discriminates between modes of understanding by presenting "The Historian's View," which integrates the most recent studies on the battle into a clear account, and "The Poet's View," which reveals how the poet has blended and embellished historical data. Although literary critics can quarrel with his distinctions between *subjective* and *objective* narratives, Simms usually crosses disciplinary boundaries with ambassadorial ease. Finally, even the less germane essays earn the reader's attention and respect because they are clear and informative.

After FitzGerald's comprehensive bibliography, which renders the entire issue invaluable for Murphy's readers, the most valuable study is Seamus Heaney's. Heaney acknowledges that clarity and reticence are not incongruous and

demonstrates that the historical ambivalence of the earlier poems has been internalized and that, however enigmatically, in *High Island* Murphy is exploring his own feelings. Heaney suggests that sound effects and rhythms have matured in Murphy's poetry to accommodate the more subjective view: "Sound and self, not social and historical circumstances, are apprehended as the essentials."

After all, we may wonder why Murphy, rather than a more celebrated poet such as Kinsella or Heaney, has been honored with this special edition. Although the editor's intention is unstated, he will succeed in making more visible a fine poet whose progress has often seemed, like his corncrake's "involuntary migration," stealthy and private

Instead of upwards into the sun
And never where you're likely to be seen
(*"Corncrake"*).

Dillon Johnston
Wake Forest University

Vivian Mercier, *Beckett/Beckett*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. 254 pp. \$11.95.

With wit and patience, Mercier persuasively demystifies/appreciates his Anglo/Irish compatriot's French/Irish corpus. Since at a generation's remove he has shared Beckett's Dublin Protestant middle-class suburban upbringing, country Protestant boarding-school education, Trinity College Romance-languages training, he is qualified to judge Beckett from the inside. Since his own academic career has caused him to study what have been Beckett's avowed sources in literature and the other arts and disciplines, he is qualified to judge Beckett from the outside as well. The result for us is quite possibly a unique Crocean experience, for we can see Mercier first stock the shelves of the "foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart" and then assess the saleability of the wares. He is fond of Beckett, but he does not try to sell all the goods.

The slashes signify not that Beckett has a split personality (if he does, Mercier tells us, p. 202, that "is his concern, not ours"). Certainly not that there is an early Beckett and a late Beckett or even that there is an English Beckett and a French Beckett. The slashes signify a pervasive dialectic which has a special focus in each chapter. In each set, Mercier adroitly summarizes some of the better prior treatments of the dialectic dimensions and diffidently offers his own. He points out successively that Beckett's world is identifiably Foxrock (Ireland/The World); that his protagonists are Trinity types down on their luck (Gentleman/Tramp); that Racine's *Bérénice* is the pattern of the major plays (Classicism/Absurdism); that Beckett is an amateur in painting but a knowledgeable musician (Painting/Music); that neither French nor English poetry is the poorer for Beckett's abandonment of the genre (Eye/Ear); that he *uses* philosophical structures as artistic tools (Artist/Philosopher); and that the opinion of the Irish Censorship of Publications Board that *More Pricks than Kicks* was indecent and obscene is not without grounds (Woman/Man).

The most novel chapter is the last. It may be that many readers nearly repress the man-woman relationships in Beckett, but they are central to Beckett's discussion of the human condition. The chapter on painting and music may well be the most valuable since it situates Beckett in the artistic disintegration of the object throughout twentieth-century arts. Finally the chapter on art and philosophy may be the most necessary, for there is still a tendency to treat Beckett as if he intended to be a systematic philosopher.

All in all, it is a thoughtful, unpretentious yet authoritative reading of the major writer living today.

Marilyn Gaddis Rose
State University of New York at Binghamton

LITERARY AWARD

The American Ambassador to Ireland, the Honorable William V. Shannon, has announced that the winner of the 1978 American Irish Foundation Literary Award is Paul Smith. A self-educated Dubliner from a working-class family. Smith has won international acclaim for such novels as *Esther's Altar* and *The Countrywoman*. Previous Foundation awards have gone to Austin Clarke, Seamus Heaney, Thomas Kilroy, Dervla Murphy, John Banville, and Aidan Higgins.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Plans are underway to compile a *Dictionary of Irish Biography* under the general editorship of Robert G. Lowery. An editorial board is being set up. Thus far, those who have agreed to serve are Thomas Hachey, History; David Miller, Religion; Martha Caldwell, Art; Janet Dunleavy, Literature; Johann Norstedt, Journalism; Maureen Murphy, Folklore; and Dillon Johnston, Poetry. Each of these editors will choose an Irish editor to serve as equal counterpart; the pairs of editors will compile a list of subjects to be included, and volunteers will be sought for the actual writing of the biographies.

The project is currently under consideration by Colin Smythe in England. Suggestions and offers of help should be sent to Professor Robert Lowery, 114 Paula Boulevard, Selden, New York 11784.

Maureen Murphy's *Guide to Irish Studies* should soon be in the hands of ACIS members; those who do not receive copies may request them by writing to Professor Murphy at the Department of English, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York 11550. Professor Murphy has also requested that she be sent information for a proposed survey of major Irish collections in American libraries.

Copies of the ACIS Report on Current Research were mailed to all members this summer. Those who did not get their copies should write to William J. Feeney, English Department, De Paul University, or Joseph O'Brien, History Department, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

The Executive Committee has approved formation of a subcommittee to collect and study Irish folk music in the United States. Those who are interested in the project or who can provide information are asked to contact Sean Golden, Betty Messenger, or Bill Williams at the addresses given in the ACIS membership list.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Submitted by Thomas E. Hachey, Treasurer

Total balance of ACIS funds, as of July 11, 1977	\$5,140.96
Plus dues collected from members through July 10, 1978	2,372.69
Plus interest	50.61
Plus profit made by Peggy Walsh (Denver Conf.)	405.51
	\$7,969.77
Minus following expenses:	
1978 Conference Advance (Cortland)	\$400.00
Other 1978 conference expenses	346.50
1977 Midwest Conference (Waukesha)	85.00
1978 Mid Atlantic Conference Advance	100.00
1978 New England Conference Advance	200.00
MLA/ACIS Reception (Chicago)	87.00
Report on Research	102.50
Newsletter Subsidy (UWM)	550.00
Nominations Committee Expenses	32.00
Organizational postage, supplies, replicating costs, telephone & general inquiry expenses	255.99
Misc. (bad checks, Canadian exchange, etc.)	22.81
Total Expenses To Date	\$2,181.80
Total balance of ACIS funds, as of July 10, 1978	\$5,787.97

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Contributions of "Shorter Papers" (30 minutes) are solicited for the Sixth International Congress of Celtic Studies, to be held in Galway on July 6-13, 1979. The papers may consider any aspect of Celtic studies, but those dealing with modern languages or combining archaeology and linguistics or literary history are in greatest demand. If you are interested, send a title and a 150 word summary to Professor Gearóid Mac Eoin, Organizing Secretary, Sixth International Congress of Celtic Studies, University College, Galway, Ireland. Deadline: January 1, 1979.

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