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ity, Cormac Kavanagh examines Irish and British governmental policy towards the Irish volunteers, and Tracey Connolly inspects how Irish workers were treated in wartime Britain. Of other interest is Eunan O'Halpin's detailed account of covert operations within MI5 as well as Geoffrey Roberts's thorough examination of the historical narratives surrounding neutrality. Although the importance of neutrality is often downplayed, *Ireland and the Second World War* reminds us that, in appearing to do nothing during the war, Ireland in fact laid the groundwork for everything that it would achieve in the latter half of the twentieth century.

∞ PATRICK HICKS

Tráithníní by John Ennis, pp 104. Dublin: The Dedalus Press, 2000. \$19.95 (cloth); \$13.95 (paper). Distributed by Dufour Editions, Chester Springs PA.

It is possible for a reader to cruise through Emily Dickinson's poems in an hour—bouncing along on her rhythms, seeing (but not seeing) the passing landscape, hearing (but barely) the poems' hum, so intent on surviving the trip that you miss most of the details. You could say, after that time, that you have "read Dickinson"; but you would surely falter in the recounting. Memory would miss the weighty substance of her work, packed into the ironies and paradoxes of her poems' existence. So it is with John Ennis' new book of poems from the Dedalus Press, *Tráithníní*. Its one hundred poems lack titles, are many are even shorter than Dickinson's briefest works. The volume takes its title from the Irish word for wisps of straw left after the harvest—an apt word that serves to knit together the entire collection. The cycle of poems recalls the biblical injunction, "Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die. . . ." In Ennis's world, a field of grain is planted in order to be harvested, and all the stalks' individual strength is overridden by their conglomerate fragility.

The early poems of *Tráithníní* are suffused with a sense that "the meadower / little macho / man all machine" will come "cutting swathes / through our souls," but the farmer is a "ghoul," not a hero, and the visible deaths of other grains makes the speaking field beg: "Give us time, / time to pause / space to consider / your gullible leaves. / There will be plenty / (plenty to ponder on) / seeking shelter / in collapsing swathes. / Foragers. / Ourselves / like cringing / animals." Later, the fields rejoice in the threatening weather, because it postpones the inevitable: "Dew on us / in early dawn / late evening / those times / vulnerable / as swathes / hope we stand / here we fall / on your streets / waiting for / the rains / to show / pity / on us." But this is no escapism. Even in their

waning days, the grass-speakers have a vision of their end: "We are / the field / you saw / cut down / weeks ago / sodden, unmade."

The middle poems of the collection acknowledge both death and its rewards. Because the "Machinery / at the gap / has not mown / yet into us," the wind is welcomed to "move us / side by side / in a clover bed," to create its own intimacy as "one stalk leans / against another twinned / entwined," the whole field "never so / beautiful as in / [the] last days." This fullness as death approaches engenders, of course, the next year's crop: "I give and take / all life / in me / through days / that shake / the seed from me"; "My seed / spurt and sprout about me. / Winter / without me"; "The full beasts / in us move on / house us in fields / for copulation / birth, re-insemination"; "Says / the seed head / nodding to / itself— / poor eunuch / over the erection / it fought for: / 'I want to die, / I've shot / my bolt. This dawn I was. / This dark I am / not.'" It also engenders the ritual of acceptance, the necessary beginning of the actual end: "Nothing so becomes us / as our leaving."

In the closing third of the book, Ennis's poetry proclaims moments of refusal, flashes of disillusionment: "I knew / this hour / would come / when I'd / be cut off / from myself"; "Our days come down in / the snide of wind / the belt of rain / just when we thought / these blue forenoons / shone for good"; "this is wisdom / to be / cut off / at the root. / Don't expect to see life / in your own lifetime." But it is here also that the poet confers the root of his vision. The lives of plants and humans, we find, are not his only subjects. Insofar as the act of writing is an attempt to outlive our mortality, the collection of poems itself becomes scriptural, a testament. When the harvest comes, it is not stalks but "our voices falling / side by side in swathes," as if death—literal or otherwise—were to end story. The metaphor of the field gives way, dead stalks become words out of the writer's pen. But they feed "uncertain landscapes / surnames / new vowels." The next generation, the readers, become "our why / in word / and deed," the reason to go on "Imagining creation."

Though the author says of *Tráithníní* that "These poems / . . . [know] nothing / but their falling," they also "settle / as my one / testimony," prove that "this / shuddering / of stem" is not a final death. Or, ironically, that writing is a little death all its own, an attempt at survival, a "Maybe". Writers and stubbled fields alike are "hosts / most days," dependent on the hunger of others for their usefulness. And so John Ennis enters his own room where he might say, along with Dickinson, his "Message is committed / To Hands [he] cannot see." It is a message, and a collection, worth taking the slow route through—particularly to savor its great vocabulary of the earth of which we are all tenants.

nual anthology of entries from forty-odd poets for not only the poetry prize adjudged by Liz Lochhead, but also we note 'Jester to the Kingdom'—good to hear someone encouraging humorous verse, when poets all over Ireland are almost dying of seriosity. Apart from a rather heavy running head which gives it a commercial feel, this is well laid out, and is a fair sample of what poets are doing. They invite entries of six poems and/or one short story by 31 December, but there aren't any stories in the book. ** → * ✓✓

The Poet Within. ed. Sam Dunbar. Heatherbell Books (see also under *Young People*). 23 pp Stg£4.25 brochure 0-9528007-1-3. Apparently this publisher's second book, published in 1999 three years after their first (see *Portrush Pete*), this is a collection of tumpy-tum verse mainly on county Antrim places. ** ~ XX

Protestant Windows. Sam Gardiner. Lagan Press. 63 pp Stg£5.95 pb 1-873687-32-X. First collection from someone we'd guess (not told; all we know is that from Portadown he has adopted England) is mature if not getting on; that humour and that irony are not those of a young man, and as the blurb says are remarkably assured. Here is a civilised voice, a real respect for poetic forms and tradition, but fresh and crusty. If this is an exemplar of Northern protestant culture, what are they complaining about at all? If the previous book is more typical, you can see how they're culturally challenged. ** → * ✓✓

Revelations of an Ant. Phil McCloskey. Author at Killybegs, Co. Donegal, tel. 073-31188. 87 pp £5 pb 1-870963-04-0. Since she was Donegal Poet of the Year in 1991, Phil has been an inveterate prizewinner, while consis-

tently "tracking down the threads of truth that run through a woman's life," as a critic says in the blurb. Apart from sensitive, well-rounded poetry, this wins our prize for self-publishing so far this year—and perhaps the *Donegal Democrat* should share the glory with the author. ** → * ✓✓

Tráithnín Seirce. Bríd Dáibhís. *Coiscéim*. 62 pp £4 pb. An cheathrú cnuasach filíochta leis an bhfile ciúin géarchúiseach seo. Cúrsaí creidimh agus carthanachta sa treis ina bhformhór seo de dhánta. An tsimplíocht teanga a cheileann an saibhreas ina lár. Dán beag gairid ar nós 'Ciúnas', dob fhéidir gur suantraí traidisiúnta a bheadh ann: 'Báibín ina codladh/ I leaba bhog leis féin/ Aoibhneas ar a éadan/ Uis! Ná dúisigh é!// Súile beaga dúnta/ gáire ar a bhéal/ Aingil Dé ag faire air/ Uis! Ná dúisigh é! Tá blúrba fiordhúis ag Ciarán Ó Coigligh ina ndeir sé go bhfuilid ann a déarfadh 'gurb í aspalacht na héigse an aspalacht is práinní i láthair na huaire agus más ea is í Bríd Dáibhís an t-aspal fíor'. Ní beag san. ** → * ✓✓

Tráithníní. John Ennis. *Dedalus*. 104 pp £6.95 pb 1-901233-53-7; £10.95 hb -54-5. A hundred poems each with fourteen very short lines "memorialising our days as grass of the fields" and reading we think as a cumulative series, nostalgic for the most part of a rustic youth. Born 1944, Ennis in maturity has perhaps moved away from his intellectual concerns, but his taut economy with words has survived, which gives these something of the quality of haiku. ** → * ✓✓

RELIGION

Catherine McAuley and the Tradition

of Mercy. Mary C. Sullivan. *Four Courts*. 430 pp £18.95 pb 1-85182-558-4. Paperback of the magnificent work—a biography by letters, journals and other documents—first published by the University of Notre Dame Press and Four Courts in 1995, this constitutes not only the history of the order but also a showing of its spirit and rule and the charismatic figure of Catherine McAuley (1778-1841) whose work is not yet done. Critical apparatus and index: remarkable value. ** ✓ ** ✓✓

Patrick in his own Words. Joseph Duffy. *Veritas*. 147 pp £7.99 pb 1-85390-525-9. A perennially useful text which has been reprinted often since it appeared in 1972, by the man who is now Bishop of Clogher. It gives all St Patrick's writings in English in a pleasant and readable typeface, and then after chapters of commentary and explanation the texts are repeated facing the original Latin text (using u for v, which is unfamiliar to most readers but true to Patrick's own orthography) and a modern version in Irish. Though there is scholarship for those who want it, essentially this is a simple reader, and he new cover is particularly attractive. ** → * ✓

Pilgrims' Tales . . . and more. ed. Mary McDaid and Pat McHugh. *Columba Press*. 150 pp £7.99/Stg£6.99 pb 1-85607-297-5. A collection of memories and experiences of the pilgrimage past and present by all sorts of people—insights and sacred moments, including a set of photographs which say a lot about the spirit of the place. See also the little history of the pilgrimage below. ** → * ✓

St Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg. Joseph McGuinness. *Columba Press*. 91 pp £4.99/Stg£3.99 pb 1-85607-295-9. On the ori-

Book Ends

IRISH PUBLISHERS

IRISH publishing knows no border. Dublin's Dedalus Press not only distributes the established such as Thomas Kinsella (see main review) but continues to foster new work from such comparatively unknowns as Macdara Woods and John Ennis. In the same city, Sitrac, a new addition to Lilliput Press, dares to launch with a journalist biting the tail of the Celtic Tiger. In Belfast, Anne Tannahill's brave Blackstaff Press introduces a stunning poet in Siobhan Campbell while its neighbour, Laggan Press, succeeds to entertain with poems and satires from Dubliner Hugh Maxton.

KNOWLEDGE IN THE BLOOD: New and selected poems

Dedalus, £7.95

THE NIGHTINGALE WATER

Dedalus, £6.95

Both by Macdara Woods

THE substantial number of sinuous and sonorous poems dating from the sixties are testimony to the consistency over the years by this most musical of poets. There is an imaginative surge in his writing which is matched by his mysterious and often wild flights of fancy. The craftsmanship is acute, agile, and beguilingly invisible. Reading the poems aloud reveals concealed treasures. The second book relates to the poet's reflective moments watching his mother die. They are tender and self-revealing meditations on vulnerability.

Random quote: *I don't need forgiveness/ nor do you/ you poor old broken creature in the end/ we have come through/ pity and terror and fear/ it's done.*

John Ennis
Dedalus Press, £6.95

THE title translates as a darter an arrow, a blade of grass, or a withered stalk. Choice, ambiguity, and paradox bend to the poet's whim in the 100 beautifully metered poems that follow. Here the grasses, like the land that nurtures them, are "dependable/expendable". An assured and innovative departure for this Waterford-based teacher.

Random quote: *I live/ the tenderness/ of seed grass./ I salve/ dumbheads/ feel the blade/ write a hymn/ out of them.*

GLASGOW

The Herald Saturday March 17, 2001

HAYDEN MURPHY

New poetry collection published from Dr John Ennis

The 10th collection of poetry by the Head of the School of Humanities, Dr. John Ennis, was published earlier this year.



'Traithníní' is a collection of poetry relating to nature and the landscape and was the culmination of a year's writing.

The word 'traithníní' refers to blades of grass and this collection of poetry has been highly acclaimed by critics.

John Ennis has a long list of awards behind him. He won the Listowel Award 11 times and, in 1996, was presented with the Irish-American Cultural Institute Award by the American Ambassador to Ireland.

'Traithníní', which was launched by the Mayor of Waterford, Ald. Pat Hayes, at a reception in WIT in the Spring, is doing extremely well in Ireland, England, the United States and Japan.

A native of Westmeath, John Ennis has been in Waterford since the 1970s. He was appointed Head of the Department of Humanities in 1980 and, in 1992, became Head of the School of Humanities.

Fans of his poetry need not worry – he hopes to publish more collections over the next few years.

Win for Chamber Choir

The Waterford Institute of Technology Chamber Choir had an outstanding finish to their year when they won the Choral Section of the Irish Student Music Awards.

The 13-strong choir received an average mark of 87 per cent from the judges at the awards in Galway in March.

Their programme was taken from two musical eras – the Renaissance and Modern eras. It featured Byrd (Ave Verum Corpus), Victoria (O Magnum Mysterium), Negro Spiritual (Put on the Armour), Taverner (Song for Athene) and Gorecki (Totus Tuus).

A cheque for £400 was presented to Niall Crowley, on behalf of the choir, by renowned composer, Jane O'Leary.

The following month, Niall Crowley was named as the Societies Personality of the Year at the WIT Institute Awards.

Meanwhile, on Thursday 20th April 2000, the Waterford Institute of Technology Music Society represented Waterford at the AIB National Society of the Year Awards in the University of Limerick.

The WIT Society won a runners-up

prize of £100 in the Best New or Improved Society. This category was won by the Sign Language Society from Trinity College Dublin.

The overall award went to the Music Society from NUI Galway. The Simon Society from NUI Galway won the Best Event of the Year Award for 'The Simon Society Slave Auction'. Jarlath Molloy from DIT Kevin Street was named as the Best Society Individual.

News from ...

School of Science

It was a very busy year for the School of Science in 1999-2000.

A major upgrade of the laboratories was advanced during the year – two biology labs have already been upgraded and two chemistry/general science labs will be upgraded next year.

The first students in Forestry will graduate this year. They will be the first non-degree graduates in Forestry in Ireland for over 30 years.

A follow-on National Diploma in Science in Agricultural Science will start in September. This is a one-year add-on diploma.

There has been an upsurge in the numbers of those on Masters programmes over the past three to four years. Mary Sinnott this year completed her MSc in Chemical and Life Sciences. Her concentration was on Surface Chemistry.

The School is currently examining how best to attract further interest in Biology and Chemistry following the fall-off in interest in these areas over the past few years, in line with the national trend. Dr. Eric Martin, Head of the School of Science, said however that WIT was not as badly hit as some of the colleges along the west coast. Colleges are hoping to liaise with the Science Teachers Association with a view to attracting more students into these strands.

A number of public lectures were held through the School of Science this year.



One of the most interesting lectures was delivered by Ray Wilcock, Head of Manufacturing at Waterford Crystal. He spoke about the

Times Square Millennium Ball project. This lecture was organised jointly with the Institute of Engineers in Ireland and the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Astronaut Stephen Robinson addressed a Science Week event in WIT earlier in the year. Other talks included topics such as forensic science and chemical magic.



A team from the Sacred Heart of Mercy Secondary School in Ferrybank beat 80 other teams to win the Schools Quiz which was held in conjunction with Science Week.

Two WIT students were very successful at the IT Research Colloquium in Athlone in May. Their supervisor was Catherine O'Reilly.

WIT is looking forward to hosting the Irish Science Teachers Conference next Easter. Also, an International Forestry Conference will be held in the Institute around the same time.

Plans for the next few years in the School of Science include new diploma and degree courses, expanding research and development and working on more outreach programmes with schools and employers. The School also hopes to expand cross-disciplinary courses and applied research in all areas.

TSSG continues to grow

For the first time ever this summer, the WIT Telecommunication Systems Software Group (TSSG) is actively advertising for research assistants and Masters students across three of the Schools – Science, Business and Engineering.

The centre, which was set up in 1997, now employs 20 full-time people and an additional seven associated partners. Its turnover is now topping one million pounds per year.

The TSSG is a centre for research, development and consultancy services in telecommunications software standards, architectures and advanced software development methods and practices. The group is prominent in EU funded fourth and fifth framework programmes, including ACTS, Ten-Telecom and IST.

Since its inception, the TSSG, under the directorship of Dr Willie Donnelly, has been working closely with European academic institutions, research groups and industry.



Traithnini Launch