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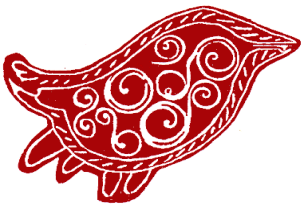

Title: Review: "The architecture of Ireland from the earliest times to 1880", by Maurice Craig (London: Batsford, 1983)

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That the onset of World War 2 brought pressures to bear from within and without upon that inertia is made clear by Professor Harkness. While the Northern war effort conjured up in time the felicitous tributes of British figures, the realism with which that same Britain had dealt with the conscription demand from Stormont and the difficulties that existed in imposing the welfare state upon a myopic Unionist junta, fearful of political consequences from greater London economic strings, was a contrast. The stimulus given to Nationalist and Labour parties to establish a political role and image for themselves and their constituencies represented also the current that was flowing against staid attitudes in Stormont.

The Terence O'Neill years and the debacles that followed provide Professor Harkness with his final chapter, showing how the polarizations that had been allowed to develop under Craig, Andrews, Brookeborough, proved to be too deep-seated to be replaced, although one is left with the question as to how much of the difficulty stemmed from the ambitions of new Unionist politicians and the leisure afforded by risen economic and social expectations for indulging in sabre-rattling.

Two very nicely-produced volumes, therefore, that provoke thoughts and re-readings more easily, perhaps, than turgid studies might.

Pádraig G. Lane

The Architecture of Ireland from the earliest times to 1880. By Maurice Craig. London: Batsford, 1983. Pp. 338. IR£20·00.

For Maurice Craig architecture is an adventure and building is seen to be imaginative, poetic, even magical, and when poetry and magic are appreciated by the eyes of the beholder we have a very valuable work indeed. The top British award for his book on *Irish Architecture up to 1880* is a high honour richly deserved by a man who has fruitfully given so many years of his long life to the study of architecture in England and here at home. Born in Belfast in 1919 he is a Fellow of TCD and of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. From 1952 to 1970 he was Inspector of ancient monuments in the Ministry of Works, London, but before ever going there he had completed and published his book on *Dublin 1660-1820,* a classic and a source book ever since. His interest in Irish architecture never waned and he wrote another classic, *Irish Homes of Middle Size*, a work demanding wide research.

The book under review is his crowning 'Magnum Opus' and will be accepted by students of architecture and critics alike as a first-class definitive work. Treatment of the prehistoric, early Christian and Romanesque and especially of the earlier castles, churches and tower-houses makes it a complete work that should prove to have a very wide appeal. Often I feel that our tourists are subjected to a spate of prehistoric remains and not enough of the architectural achievements of recent centuries. Maurice Craig is deeply interested in our heritage and in the actual evolution of different forms of architecture. He is seeing not change for the sake of change or that analogue of philosophy or history which runs through most subjects. For him, architecture is the structural use of stone with flat lintels between the stone columns, be they forming the facade of a courthouse or a church building. When the quarries had become denuded of their larger stones we reach the architecture of the Gothic idiom comprising the use of smaller stones and that of the pointed arch. This is evident in the treatment of early houses and castles.

The author jollies us along in his own inimitable style to an understanding and appreciation of the work of the greater architects of the 18th century. He takes us through the darkest famine era remarking: 'Jesus Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem and the parish priest of Tralee is trying to keep him there'. How right he is. He opens our eyes to the inherent beauty of the barn churches of pre- and just post-Emancipation Ireland including their fenestration, texture and plaster rendering as well as graduated slating. Often these buildings have been under-valued and those familiar with Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* will have read sadly the frequent termination of accounts of many of Ireland's towns: '. . . and there is an R.C. Chapel'.

Dr Craig is a most humble person and it is fitting that awards be heaped upon him for the trojan work he has done in awakening the Irish nation to an appreciation of its rich architectural heritage. No mere handbook indeed is this work but it is perhaps influenced in form by lectures in Edinburgh given as a discourse on Irish architecture. It can be read with the greatest pleasure as a literary work in its own right because the author has a turn of phrase which is at once felicitous, memorable and always revealing. Who would expect to read in a work of this calibre '. . . there are it is true a few categories of building which are peculiar to Ireland; such are e.g. Round Towers, Spirit Groceries and Ball Alleys'. Or: 'What I am most terrified of is piecemeal

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development, planning people just using their grid maps in the office and jumbling people together anywhere away from their old haunts'. He does think the streets should be more mixed agewise, classwise, sexwise and everywise and that all tenants should be encouraged to purchase from the 'Corpo'!

Dr. Craig has a good deal to say on architecture in Cork city. He tells how the Pains of London were trained by Nash and succeeded him with a spate of townhouses throughout Britain and that it was the sons of one of these Pains who came to Ireland, George settling down in Cork and James in Limerick. Perhaps it is too strong to say the Deanes and Pains of Cork wre rivals. On a number of projects we find that one did the design of some buildings which were built by the other party and vice versa.

The Church of Ireland's Bishop's Palace, Cork, is attributed to Thomas Ivory who made such an impact in Dublin and throughout the northern counties. Maurice Craig mentions (p. 307) the burning of Princes Street Market. It is now rebuilt and brought the Europe Nostra Gold Award to Cork and to Ireland for the first time. When St Finbarre's Cathedral (C. of I.) was completed it was reluctantly accepted by the people of Cork who considered it too far removed from the city to be of real use to them.

I disagree with the author's statement that Cork did not have a Catholic Cathedral because the Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Anne has existed since 1800. The building went through many vicissitudes but was rebuilt by James Pain, Church of Ireland diocesan architect to Munster in 1829, and has since then been colloquially known as 'The North Cathedral'. No doubt the author is also aware that Skiddy's Charity (p. 203) did include Bettridge's Charity. Skiddy's Home and charities continued parallel until recent times. I question the name of 'John Coltsman' because as I understand it he was George and a mason by trade. It was he who designed and built the first stone bridges at North-Gate and South-Gate, Cork, and was most likely the author of the jail-houses which were attached to them.

Sed facile est iventis addere and our differences of opinion are few relative to a valuable and comprehensive work which puts the entire architectural profession of our country in his debt. This is a gargantuan work, well structured, liberally illustrated and nicely produced. Its wealth of knowledge is cheap at IR£20·00.

T.F. McNamara

Gold Under the Furze. Studies in Folk Traditions. Ed. A. Gailey and D. Ó hÓgain. The Glendale Press, Dublin, 1982. ISB 0-907606-06-7. IR£17·50. 253pp.

This very ambitious and wide ranging collection of essays has been published to acknowledge the extensive contribution of Caoimhín Ó Danachair to Irish studies for over almost fifty years. Twenty-one contributors coming mostly from Ireland, but also Austria, Scotland, Sweden and Wales, have furnished chapters on a great variety of topics some of which have a non-Irish setting. An additional major attraction of the collection stems from the fact that the contributors cover material in their essays which extends from history to archaeology, geography, folklore and ethnology, reminding us of C. Ó Danachair's broad interests. The collection opens with a list of his publications followed by a selection of excellently reproduced photographs, which is a testimony to Ó Danachair's life-long commitment, particularly to the study of Irish material culture. The chapters themselves vary in topic, length and content and no effort is made to organize them in any systematic way.

A stimulating contribution is provided by G.B. Thompson who makes a general assessment of applied folklife studies in the recent past. He emphasizes the role of institutions, such as Bunratty Folk Park and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the 'healthy public appetite for the information and services they provide'. A study of the Smoke-hole and Chimney in Irish vernacular houses is provided by A.T. Lucas who makes a sweeping review of the literature and archaeological evidence. The omission of estate maps and documents as sources makes his coverage incomplete. The large farm in nineteenth century Ireland is the chosen theme of T. Jones Hughes whose aim is 'to identify and interpret the territorial preferences'. In a very convincing exposition he shows that there were two major core areas of this farm-size class associated with two different traditions; a tillage area in the east in Cos. Kildare, Meath, Louth and Dublin with outliers including some of the great river valleys of Munster while a pastoral core zone was in the West. Yet in spite of their size, but because of their fragmentation and patterns of ownership, these holdings concealed the fact that most of them were divided into various leaseholds hence these large units were not a stabilizing or integrating catalyst.

T. O'Neill introduces us to a topic which has been significantly under-researched in Ireland namely, Machinery in Irish Farms 1700-1981. His essay

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