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Title: Review: "Poems on Marcher lords", edited by Anne O'Sullivan and Pádraig Ó Riain (London: Irish Texts Society, 1987)

Author: Ó Murchadha, Diarmuid

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post-holes. The larger hut contained traces of a hearth and was the only one to yield any finds — a utilized stone and two sherds of coarse, plain pottery. Analysis of cereal remains (by M. Monk) demonstrated the presence of barley and wheat (including possible spelt). This settlement site, apparently unenclosed, deserves further resistivity survey and excavation in the future. The second site, Ballyveelish 2, Co. Tipperary, also excavated by Doody, was a much-disturbed ditched enclosure. Only about a third of it could be examined but it produced an interesting sample of animal bones (studies by F. McCormick) and over 200 sherds of coarse cooking pottery (analysed by R. Cleary). Further notable discoveries (also at Ballyveelish) included a Bronze Age ring ditch and cist grave, with a timber structure interpreted as a possible mortuary house, and a medieval moated site.

Also of interest are investigations of a medieval corn-drying kiln and a linear earthwork in Co. Kilkenny, a section of the Pale boundary in Co. Kildare and a 17th-century house in Co. Tipperary. A chance find in Athgarret townland, Co. Kildare, consisted of an apparently undecorated, coarse, bucket-shaped pottery vessel (seemingly placed mouth upwards in the ground) containing a minute and presumably token quantity of burnt bone. Comparisons are offered with late Bronze Age Rathgall and other finds of coarse pottery. It may be added that cremations in plain bucket urns are now recorded from at least ten localities in Ireland.

The various excavation reports in this well-produced publication are augmented by an impressive number of scientific analyses of bone, plant and other materials. The editors and the authors of the excavation and specialist reports all deserve to be commended on the remarkably prompt publication of a large body of evidence. Flaws are few: the presentation of a location map of excavated sites inside the front cover is not very helpful and some sections are reduced to an uncomfortable degree. These very minor criticisms, however, in no way detract from a solid achievement. In an introduction M. Hurley expresses the hope that the publication vindicates the confidence the late Prof. O'Kelly had in the project team. It does.

John Waddell

Poems on Marcher Lords. Ed. by Anne O'Sullivan and Pádraig Ó Riain. Irish Texts Society, c/o Royal Bank of Scotland, 22 Whitehall, London SW1. 1987. Pp. 146 + xxviii. £12.00.

For four score years and ten this worthy Irish Texts Society has been efficiently but unobtrusively publishing volume after volume of native Irish literature. Their latest offering (vol. 53), while slimmer than of yore, is as beautifully produced as ever, in its distinctive gold-lettered green binding.

The Society was founded, and is still based, in London, but — perhaps because of its having met in Cork some years ago — the present volume bears a distinct Cork accent. The BL MS (from Co. Tipperary) on which it is based was purchased in 1891 from the library of W.H. Crawford of Lakelands, Cork, and the edition first prepared by Cork-born Anne O'Sullivan, whose greatly-regretted demise left its completion to UCC Professor Pádraig Ó Riain. Some of the historical details and place-name identifications were supplied by K.W. Nicholls, also of UCC, while Prof. Brian Ó Cuív (of a well-known Cork family) advised on the completed typescript. (For good measure, the Society's Hon. Sec., Noel O'Connell, is an exile from the South Douglas Road). Acknowledgements are also made to Canon (now Bishop) Empey, to local historian, P.R. Ryan, and in particular to William O'Sullivan, (himself a native of Bantry) who used his late wife's notes and his own expertise to draft the introduction.

Marcher lords dwelt in the marches or border areas, in this case between the Norman-Irish world and the Gaelic world of the O Briens of Thomond. The poems are of late fifteenth-century vintage, four elegies — for John Cantwell, James Purcell, Tadhg O Carroll and Philip Hackett — and a praise-poem for Piaras Butler.

As is only to be expected, the poems have been edited in line with the highest standards of scholarship. Text, translation, notes, indexes, even the separate maps provided for each poem, have all been meticulously prepared and intelligibly presented for both the scholar and the casual reader.

The latter category may not be too extensive, since there is no denying that the highly-stylized expressions of grief (or joy) and the inexorable rhyming laws of classical Irish poetry are largely alien to modern ears. (The only person I ever heard confessing to reading such poems for the sheer pleasure of it was that late, and great, Irish scholar, M.A. O'Brien). Yet a close study reveals examples of the 'sweet wit and good invention' remarked upon by Edmund Spenser. We sometimes tend to forget that these were flesh and blood people who sat (or perhaps lay) considering, composing, substituting, rejecting, as do all writers, until a satisfying whole could be penned. And on occasion 'some pretty flowers of their natural device' do spring forth, such

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as the opening line of the Cantwell elegy, *Lubhghart gan fhál in eagna* (Wisdom is like a garden without a wall), or of the Purcell one, *Mairg dar chumthach in chumha* (Woe to him with grief as a companion). Further on, James Purcell is described picturesquely (in ll. 397-400) as:

A' siubhal le soillsi mhaidne
mac Tomáis, nachar thuar geis,
do-chuaidh a firrainn Ó Faithi,
díraim dá mbuaibh laithi leis.

(Marching by the light of morning the son of Thomas, who did not expect obstruction, went from Offa by day taking with him a large spoil of their cattle).

In the face of expert editing one hesitates to offer an alternative translation, but since *laith* sometimes connotes 'milk', would not 'a large spoil of milch cows' make better sense in the last line?

The index of place-names is a joy to consult, with each name (apart from the half-dozen or so unidentified ones) accurately placed in its geographical and historical setting. (The only suggestion I would make here is in regard to Baile Póil (l. 414). If it is to be found in b. Gowran, might it not be Paulstown rather than Ballyfoyle?).

The copious notes are not confined to discussions on grammatical or morphological usage, but also provide valuable historical data on fifteenth-century Tipperary. Accordingly, this volume will be welcomed not only by Gaelic scholars but by anyone interested in the history of the area, since the poems supply such a rare insight into the native psyche, a counterbalance to the unsympathetic assessments more readily available in the state papers and various English-language documents of the period.

Atá d'urchra ar éigsibh Banbha, adeir fear caointe an Phuirséalaigh; nach ionann cás inniu dóibh in éagmais Neans Uí Shúilleabháin? Gura fada buan dá comheagarthóir léannta, agus go gcúitítear a saothar leo beirt.

D. Ó Murchadha

From Reformation to Restoration: Ireland 1534-1660. By Nicholas Canny. *New Foundations: Ireland 1660-1800.* By David Dickson. *The Dawning of Democracy: Ireland 1800-1870.* By Donal McCartney. *The Helicon History of Ireland*: general eds. Art Cosgrove, Elma Collins. 1987. IR£6.50 per vol.

The Helicon history of Ireland aims to make available to a wider readership a synthesis of modern research in Irish history, much of it available heretofore only to those with access to obscure, specialist and expensive journals. Ten volumes in the series are planned though they are not numbered, which helps to conceal the rather erratic publication: three volumes were published in 1981, two in 1983 and these three in 1987. The first volume on early medieval Ireland has yet to appear while the two dealing with the post-1920 Ireland have been available for four years. Anyone committed to a line of development approach to Irish history needs to develop patience in the first instance.

The present three volumes fulfil very impressively the aims of the series. A vast amount of recent research both by the authors themselves and their colleagues working in the periods under review is skilfully blended into easy flowing and intelligible narratives. Where the findings of the contributors are at variance with those of other scholars the conflict is acknowledged and evenly balanced comments and judgments are made. The surrender by the Gaelic Lords of their rights of sovereign jurisdiction in the early 1540s and the formal issue of Letters Patent regranting title to them under the sovereignty of the crown provides a useful illustration. This process has been universally referred to as 'Surrender and Regrant' following the terminology of W.F.T. Butler who coined the phrase in 1913 (presumably the anonymous 'nineteenth-century historian' mentioned by Canny). Butler's view of this policy as a device to create division among the Gaelic dynasties has been shown by Brendan Bradshaw to be quite false: a sincere attempt at reform and the creation of political stability was in fact the aim. Nicholas Canny, however, suggests that Bradshaw still places too much emphasis on land tenure, 'the impositon of a nineteenth-century obsession on a sixteenth-century situation'. What was at issue was not security of tenure, a concept alien to Gaelic Lords, but that of lordship, ruling over specific septs, collecting revenue from them and in return providing protection to them. The 'surrender' therefore involved acceptance by the Gaelic lords that they, and their people, were subjects of the crown, while in return they obtained continuation of their political jurisdiction with royal approval and, if necessary, support. Canny further cites the work of Ciaran Brady in refuting Bradshaw's suggestion that it was Anglo-Irish reformers who formulated this policy and persuaded the lord deputy St. Leger to implement it and as a consequence

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