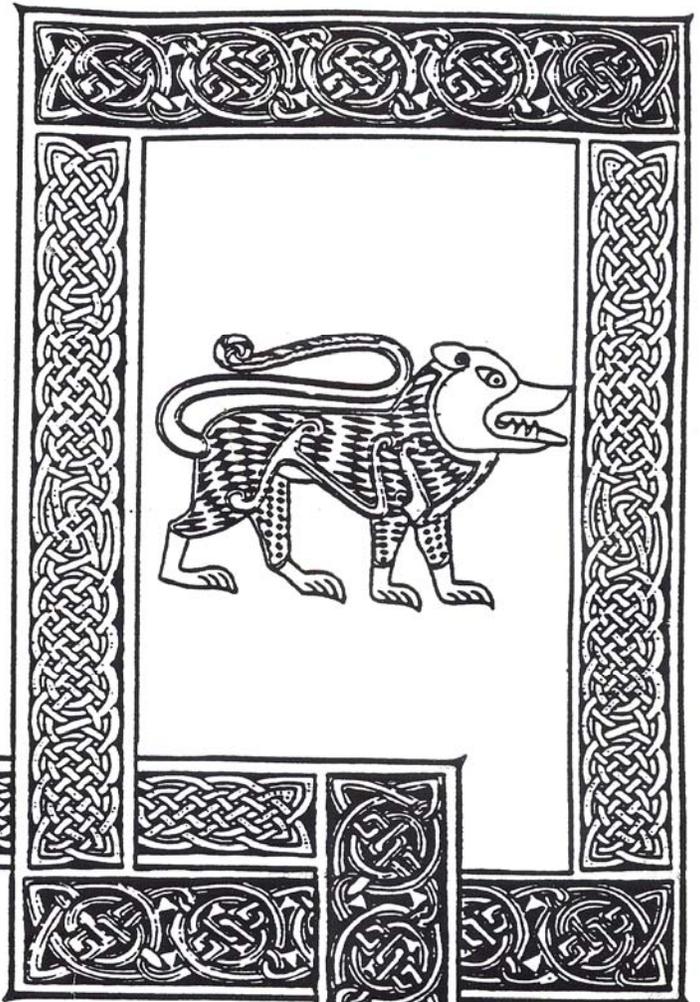
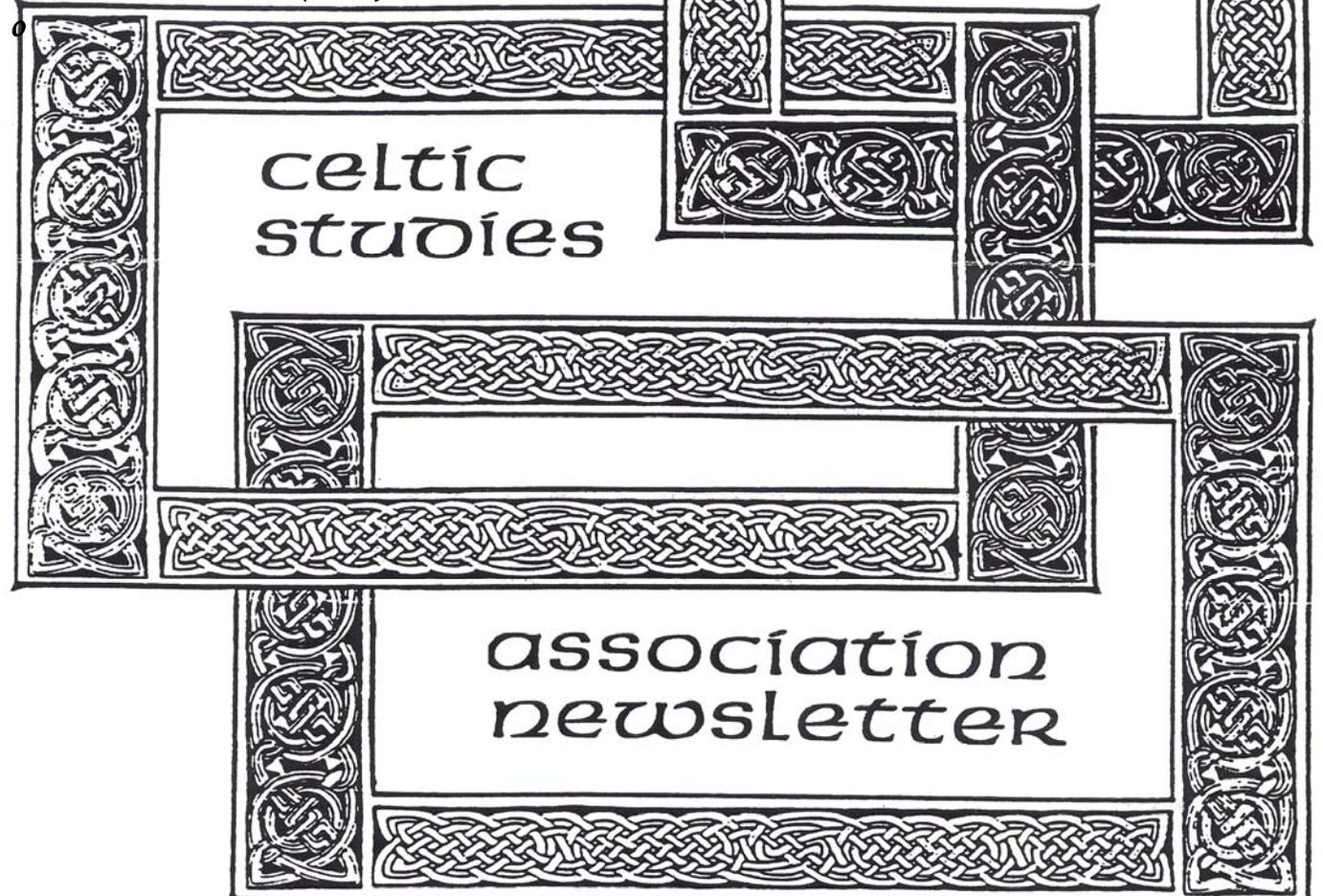


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Book Reviews

Saxons, Vikings, and Celts: The Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland.

Sykes, Bryan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. First American Edition.

306 + xvii pages. Illustrations (black-and-plates and figures).

ISBN: 978-0-393-06268-7. \$26.95 [first published in the UK as

Blood of the Isles: Exploring the Genetic Roots of our Tribal History,

London: Bantam Press, 2006]

Saxons, Vikings, and Celts is one of several recent publications in the emerging field of "genetic archaeology" (the other bestseller being Stephen Oppenheimer's *The Origins of the British: A Genetic Detective Story*, 2006). The author, Bryan Sykes, a professor of genetics at Oxford, is perhaps best known for his work in high profile DNA tests such as those conducted for Romanov claimants and upon prehistoric remains like those of "Oetzi," the Iceman of the Alps. He is also the force behind the growing genealogical enterprise that is "Oxford Ancestors" (<http://www.oxfordancestors.com/>).

In *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts*, Sykes attempts to explain Insular history through an examination of DNA evidence. From mouth swabs sent in by mail (he says they're surprisingly hardy) to finger pricks for blood at county fairs (he says they're surprisingly painless), Sykes and his team spent a decade gathering some ten thousand plus samples from all over the Isles (this sample later swelled to about 25,000 with evidence from immigrant populations in North America and Australia).

All in all *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts* is an enjoyable and informative work, and though there are definitely sections that will raise an eyebrow, the book nonetheless remains valuable. His sections on English theories of race, especially his discussions of the racial mythology of Robert Knox and the skull-measuring of John Beddoe, and his excellent exploration of what Patrick Sims-Williams has called "Celtomania" are entertaining and informative. Perhaps the greatest strength of *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts* is that Sykes makes some rather complicated science easier to understand, and, puts it into a context that is universal--the human experience. Whatever our conclusions about his book may be, the idea that genetics might inform our theories of the past is an attractive one, and one that I hope the scientific community will continue to explore and refine. His treatment of his topic is Romantic to be sure, especially his asides about fieldwork and misty mornings, but there are gems here too: I now know where to go for the best ice cream in Wales (Conti's Café of Lampeter, if you're interested).

As enjoyable as the book is, there are a few areas where his methodology and conclusions will raise objections. Much of his earlier work, particularly his research into mitochondrial DNA (mDNA), makes its ways into these pages, and everywhere the conclusions reached in *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, Sykes' earlier work about seven principal groups of mDNA he believes represent the maternal ancestors of Europe, echo in the background. Sykes encountered some fierce opposition when he first shared that evidence, and I suspect that some geneticists may react similarly to his findings here. Sykes believes that genetic evidence is neutral, and that may be true, but interpretation of that information is, of course, open to debate, since evidence, no matter how good, can be used in multiple ways, not all of them equally sound.

To his credit, Sykes knows that some of his conclusions will be controversial. Celticists, for example, may take issue with Sykes' supposition that large-scale migrations of Celts out of Central Europe into the British Isles never happened; at the very least, some, such as this reviewer, will desire some clarification upon this point. Relying upon the archaeological work of Barry Raftery, who questions the extent of La Tène culture in Ireland, Sykes posits that the Irish are not an offshoot of Continental La Tène culture, only a people enamored of the former's artistic skill. What we have uncovered in Ireland, then, did not belong to migrating peoples, but to skilled local craftsmen with a penchant for Swiss metalwork. Raftery's thesis is an important check upon facile assumptions about "folk movements" but on its own does not negate the possibility of migrations to Ireland. Certainly there is historical evidence to the contrary for Britain (e.g. the Belgae, present

in both Britain and Gaul), and given the close connections between the two islands, as established not only by the presence of "Beaker" artifacts but by Hallstatt sites as well, one cannot discount possible migrations to Ireland so easily either. While Sykes rejects historical and mythological accounts of migration, he does supply his own. The mDNA evidence in particular, according to Sykes, does not show a connection between the Irish and Celts from Central Europe, but indicates that the bulk of the population in Ireland must look back to post ice-age peoples who arrived thousands of years before the first millennium B.C. Migrations there were, only earlier. I'm no statistician, but as I read his argument, the numbers allow for several thousand years' error either side which, among other things, means that some migrations may have occurred in the period that proponents of traditional folk movement posit. Of particular interest in this regard is Sykes' premise, based on both mDNA and yDNA, that many of today's Irish population are descendents of Iberians who arrived in Ireland at about the same time as farming technology (about 6,000 years ago). It would appear from the DNA evidence at least that tales of the Sons of Míl may have some basis in fact, a point that Sykes charmingly notes.

While unqualified to make pronouncements upon genetic science--I'm a historian--I will say that despite a truly impressive sample population and prudent cautions about mathematical averages, there are jumps Sykes makes I have trouble following. Regardless of its general audience, in a study of this magnitude, and one certain to get some press, more of his published research ought to be present and transparent. We might at least have some clue as to more

exact numbers such as how many of his ultimately 25,000 people were male or female, how many were from a given area, how many were from the Isles and how many from those with ancestors from the Isles, and more detail about sample collection. To cite just one specific example, Sykes makes distinct links between the oldest DNA in the Isles and the Celts. He claims that the genetic pattern was set for the Isles by about 4,000 B.C. when Mediterranean farmers arrived, and that not much of it has changed since: "This is our Celtic/Pictish stock and, except in two places, it has remained undiluted to this day. On our maternal side, almost all of us are Celts." I think few Celticists will find fault with his conclusion identifying the Picts as Celts, but the association of pre-historic peoples with the label "Celt" may not sit so well. It seems dangerous to define the "Celts," let alone any people, by specific DNA and its geographical distribution. That Sykes attempts to do so is especially odd given how well he handles the debate over the term "Celt" among those in our field. Furthermore, mDNA and yDNA together represent only half the genetic picture, so only half of "our maternal side" might make the claim to being "Celtic." To illustrate this point further, I need look no further than my son--had he been among those in Sykes' study, some inkling that his mother's mother's people are from Ireland and England may have surfaced, and that his father's fathers are from Scotland, Wales, and England, but Sykes would not know that my son is a quarter Chinese, which he gets through his maternal grandfather, nor would Sykes learn that my mother's people were Irish, English, and Prussian. DNA is an important and fascinating part of the story, but it is not the whole story. To return to my own example, I know what I know about my

family largely through historic records, oral tradition, and language. It is the same with any history. Any attempt to define "Celticity" via DNA must take into account the evidence, pro *and* con, from archaeology, history, and linguistics if it hopes to get close to what a Celt may have been in terms of proteins.

These problems might have been avoided or navigated more effectively had Sykes worked more closely with experts in history, archaeology, and linguistics, the last of which is curiously absent from the bulk of his discussion. Perhaps he did consult these experts, but nowhere does he say so or list them; the acknowledgements only mention the Wolfson College (Oxford) historian Norman Davies and Robert Young, formerly of Wadham College, the source for his material about English theories of race. Sykes is, it seems, confident that the numbers will speak for themselves, and yet much of his book is given over to explorations and criticism of existing historical and archaeological theories. These at least he addresses, but missing is a discussion of the linguistic history of the Islands, a story every bit as important as that told on vellum or turned up by the trowel, and one that must be addressed in any attempt to identify "who we think we are." After all, DNA evidence does not explain the division of Celtic into P and Q, why English has so few Celtic loanwords, the connections between Brythonic languages, or the nature of Pictish. *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts* is intended for a general audience, but nonetheless consultation with experts in the various branches of Insular studies would make the book that much stronger.

Not every point Sykes makes based upon DNA will cause waves. Throughout *Saxons,*

Vikings, and Celts, Sykes provides a solid historical narrative for the major regions of his study, the modern sites of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, and he does so with obvious enthusiasm. While sometimes quick to criticize this history, many of his conclusions, if one applies the same imagination he does to the DNA evidence, do not seem so very different from that our histories tell. For example, the DNA evidence for the Hebrides and Orkneys reveals, not surprisingly, a large number of yDNA (paternal lines) originating in Norway. The surprise was that much of the mtDNA suggests that most women from these islands were descendents of Scandinavians too and not always prizes from Ireland and Britain.

Sykes approaches his topic with all the enthusiasm of a child whose science experiment actually worked, and this, perhaps more so than the sexiness of his subject, makes it easy for his reader to share in the excitement. He loves his topic and it

shows on every page; this makes the work both readable and entertaining. It is the sort of ardor that might well engender more widespread and earnest interest in Island peoples, interest beyond green beer, kilts, and Viking horns (not that I have any objection to these, save the food coloring in beer). *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts* raises important questions about Insular history, and, challenges us all to be open to reexamination of the evidence, and while there are problems with certain aspects of the book, it nonetheless has something important to say. One hopes that such a compelling topic and treatment will, in its later incarnations, provide a few more numbers and include the opinions if not actual assistance of those of us in fields with as much interest and enthusiasm for Insular history as Professor Sykes clearly possesses.

Jim Tschén Emmons
Maryland Historical Society

Irish Bardic Poetry and Rhetorical Reality

Michelle O Riordan. Cork: Cork University Press,
2007. 458 pp.

In this masterful study of Irish bardic poetry, in particular the praise poem, during the period 1200-1600, Michelle O Riordan convincingly demonstrates the associations of this literature with “continental norms” set forth in manuals of “instruction in the written arts” popular in England and in continental Europe (xvi). Noting that commentary over the past hundred years has been based on “the historical political context,” O Riordan in her study announces her intent to consider “the literary

contingencies which determined how the ‘facts’ are presented in the artefact—the poem” (xvii). The poetry that she is considering did not represent “a factual reality”: “At no point did the stylized formal praise-poem ‘mirror’ reality in terms of historical fact. Nor was it intended to” (xviii). These poems were the products of “a literary tradition which had achieved ‘classical’ status in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries” (xviii). This tradition comprised a “conservative aesthetic” which characterized

“Irish schools from the twelfth century, at least, to the mid-seventeenth century” (xix). The “conservative aesthetic” had for its context, according to O Riordan, a “European aesthetic” (xx):

Irish bardic poets showed a European aesthetic that was schematized and preceptive. Theories of invention and methods of formulating epideictic verse were written (based on material available since the classical era) and published from the eleventh century on. These could be regarded as manuals for writers, the recipe for a “future poem.” (xxi)

How were these precepts brought into Ireland? O Riordan observes that “in unbroken succession to the hybrid Irish-Latin scholarship of the earlier period,” these “norms” were brought to Ireland “with the monastic orders which flourished from the twelfth century and with the retinue of Cambro-Norman, Anglo-Norman, English and French settlers, again from the twelfth century” (xxi). In other words O Riordan calls for a modification of “the sense of a special or exotic identity for Irish poets and their literature” (xxii). Irish bardic poets should be viewed from a wider perspective:

They can be afforded a full and rounded life in the polychrome world of mediaeval literature. They need not subsist as shades of an overwhelming and druidic past, or of monochrome anachronism, but can be seen and read as active elements in an evolving and organically sound literary phenomenon. (xxii)

O Riordan, in the eight chapters of her study, discusses several poems in a detailed

manner, poems “selected because they have already been assigned a place in the commentary and discourse surrounding bardic poetry” (xxii). In her first chapter, “Continuity of Contrast,” O Riordan discusses the “Latinization of Irish Letters”; here she stresses the “continuity of literary engagement” between Britain, Ireland, and the continent during this period (xxiv). The role of continental schools and the widespread use of “textbooks concerning composition” are delineated (xxiv). Latin poetry and learning helped to provide a strong basis for the “artifice” which characterized the work of the bardic praise-poets (1):

In fact the genre of praise, blame, exhortation, complaint, elegy and so forth in the classical syllabic metres of the *dán díreach* was built on a very firm foundation. Latin poetry in Ireland and by the Irish abroad suggests that Latin and its attendant literary culture was embraced with enthusiasm in Ireland. (1)

In her second chapter, “Style,” O Riordan discusses three well-known medieval manuals of writing: the *Ars Versificatoria* of Matthew of Vendôme (c. 1175), the *Poetria Nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf (c. 1210), and *Parisiana Poetria* of John of Garland (c. 1230). For O Riordan, these works “provide an additional and likely reference point for characteristics in Irish bardic poetry” (26). That “reference point” is their wider European context. In her third chapter (“Beir Eolas Dúinn...”), O Riordan examines a poem by the 14th century poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh, composed for Domhnall MacCarthaigh, lord of Desmond. The poet exhorts the lord to undertake a journey to Cashel, which would be a “re-enactment of the mythical journey” of the

lord's putative ancestor, Conall Corc, to Cashel (74). In this chapter, she examines the journey in the context of the notion of "*inventio*, the discovery of an idea or subject to write about" (67). In her fourth chapter, "Poems of Complaint," O Riordan studies poems revealing estrangement between poet and lord; these poems, "forming a variety of the praise-genre, are the poems of complaint, reconciliation, and petition" (106). In particular, she focuses on an early 14th century poem, "Geabh do mhúnadh, a mheic bhaoith," composed by the poet Ádhamh Ó Fialán for Tomás Mág Shamhradháin (d. 1343), lord of Tullyhaw. O Riordan notes that "cattle have been stolen, offence given, and the poem steps artfully through the recriminations and reconciliations that form part of this subgenre" (xxv). In her fifth chapter, "Bardic Love, Troubadour Love," O Riordan analyzes "the themes of love slighted and love re-established" and notes "areas in which the themes overlap with the poetry of the troubadours" (xxv). *Amour courtois*, declares O Riordan, "has long been understood to have influenced Irish literature" (137). She points out, however, that the language of love was employed for specific purposes in bardic praise poetry:

The language of physical beauty and attempted seduction (including success and failure) used in the schools' formal praise/blame poetry, though it shares many features of male/female love-poetry, was put to different use. The use of the language "love"-poems by poets for lords extended the life of composition and allowed the utilization, by the poet, of the rich literary heritage of love-genres.(137)

The poet's "approaches" to the patron, however, call for a "discourse" that involves "a 'gender confluence' or a measure of gender ambiguity" (155). In her sixth chapter, "Lovers' Quarrels," O Riordan studies "the survival of these tropes and themes" in the work of the 16th century poet Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (fl. 1560-1590). Tadhg Dall "was on specially friendly terms" with a lord, one Uilliam Búrc; unfortunately, their friendship was damaged by "the despoiling of the poet's property" (171). The poem "Cóir Dé eadram is Uilliam" is thus "a poem of reconciliation" (171). In another poem, "A theachtaire théid ar sliabh," the poet describes the troubles that have assailed him "as a consequence of his being without a powerful protector" (172). O Riordan notes in these poems the "classic features of the complaint poem":

In any event, they display all the classic features of the complaint poem, the abandoned love, the puzzlement of betrayal and the earnest wish for reconciliation and, in their vagueness, they are perfect examples of the universal application of the features of the genre to any lord at any time between 1200 and 1650. (171)

In her seventh chapter, "Poems about Poetry," O Riordan sheds light on poetic compositions "in which the poets seemingly upbraid fellow-poets for weakness in their art" (xxv). Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh's "Madh fiafraidheach budh feasach," for example, sets forth "the poet/teacher as a man of letters providing material for students or peers about their shared profession" (181). This poem is background for a discussion of three "argumentative poems" (16th-17th centuries): Fear Feasa Ó'n Cháinte's "Mór an feidhm deilbh an dána"

and “Créad dá sealbhuinn damh an dán,” with Gofraidh Mac an Bhaird’s “A fhir shealbhas duit an dán” (xxv-xxvi). In her last chapter (“Conclusion: The Death of Poetry?”), O Riordan elaborates on “the notion of the ‘end of the tradition’” in connection with the poet, Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa, who announces in the poem “Iomholta malairt bhisigh” his “intention to release himself from the bondage of his strict training,” in “a subtle and humorous tribute” to a lord, the earl of Tyrconnell. O Riordan also examines a poem by the poet Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh in which he “accuses his fellow poet(s) of abandoning the sober narrow ways of scholarship for the slack open highway of easy verse” (xxvi). O Riordan reminds us, however, to study the poets’ interpretation of the jettisoning of traditional ways:

Our sense of the “end of the tradition,” meaning the abandonment by the poets— from the end of the sixteenth century—of the rigid discipline of the aesthetic we have discussed here, can be enlarged by rereading the poets’ verdict on what they were abandoning in the light of what might have been involved for them in teaching and in giving instruction. (249)

As literary tastes underwent a transformation elsewhere, notes O Riordan, “Irish literature and poets could be expected to maintain an energetic engagement with such literary movements” (250).

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Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages.

Westley Follett. Woodbridge and Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2006.

xii + 253 pages.

One of the long-held assumptions in a great deal of scholarship and collegiate education on religious matters in early medieval Ireland is that the Céli Dé (sometimes anglicized “Culdee”) movement of the eighth and ninth centuries was a “reform movement” dedicated to correcting the ascetic laxities of the Irish church, among other matters, which began with and centered on the community of Tallaght and its founder, Mael Ruain. (Worse still is the conclusion in much popular literature and modern spirituality, based on the Céli Dé use of the vernacular, that the Culdees were some sort of hybrid druidic-Christian group.) While this conclusion has been

challenged on occasion, by Nora Chadwick in 1961 and by Colmán Etchingham in 1999, the prevailing view still maintains that the Céli Dé were reformers. The study under review by Westley Follett sets out—quite ably and successfully—to not only question but to invalidate this assessment: the Céli Dé were neither “reformers” as such, nor was their way of life a “movement” in any meaningful sense.

The book begins with an introduction and a relatively short but extremely thorough first chapter on the historiography of the Céli Dé, from the sixteenth century up until the early twenty-first. The second chapter is nearly a

stand-alone short monograph, densely footnoted, detailing the ascetic practices of early medieval Ireland before the eighth century as they are visible in important literary works, including Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*, the earliest Irish penitentials, the *Amra Choluim Chille*, the corpus of Columbanus and his *vita*, the *Cambrai Homily*, the *vitae* of Fursa, Brigit, Patrick, and Colum Cille, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, *Bretha Nemed Toísech*, and the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*. Following this is a brief chapter examining the evidence from the Tallaght Memoir in terms of its support for the theory of the Céli Dé as reformers, with Follett concluding "we find ourselves at something of a loss to explain *céli Dé*; it is hardly accurate to identify them as ascetic reformers who advocated a return to older standards of monastic observance when those standards were never discarded in the first place and when there is no convincing evidence that they viewed themselves as reformers" (p. 99).

The next lengthy chapter is a survey of the various texts attributed by scholars to the Céli Dé "movement," relying primarily on manuscript transmission and internal textual evidence to determine whether each text is in fact a Céli Dé production, a Céli Dé-influenced text, or simply a text held in high regard by the Céli Dé. It is concluded that only a small number of texts can be said to be of fairly certain Céli Dé provenance, meaning they originated either from Tallaght or Mael Ruain/Mael Díthruib's circle: the Tallaght memoir (consisting of several texts descended from a postulated ninth-century original: the Old Irish *Monastery of Tallaght*, the Middle Irish *Rule of the Céli Dé*, and the Early Modern Irish

Teaching of Mael Ruain), *Féilire Óengusso*, the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, the *Rule of Fothud na Canóine*, the *Old Irish Penitential*, the *Old Irish Table of Penitential Commutations*, and the Stowe Missal. The extant manuscripts for these texts were mostly produced by scribes from the Lower Ormond area (especially those of the Mac Aodhagáin family), and many of these texts are found together in the same manuscript, including *Leabhar Breac* and Dublin RIA MS 23 P 3. The final chapter contains Follett's reassessment of what constituted the unique practices of the Céli Dé based on their identifiable literary-devotional corpus, which he concludes to have been a rigorous and even supererogatory ascetic practice (though in moderation, as excessive asceticism is castigated in their texts), a concern for pastoral care (including outlines for the duties of *anmcharae*—spiritual directors/confessors) and penitence, particular liturgical and devotional practices (including the "three Lents" fasts of the forty days before Christmas, the forty days after Pentecost, and the "Great Lent" before Easter, and daily recitation of the entire Psalter with accompanying cross-vigils and genuflections), and concern for particular Sunday observances.

Perhaps least importantly, their use of the vernacular in their texts to make penitential practices outlined in such Latin manuals as the Cummean and Bigotian penitentials available to the illiterate or non-Latinate members of monastic communities, is not as important as some scholars have hitherto asserted. Latin religious composition continued for centuries in Ireland, and Old Irish religious writing began before the Céli Dé came on the scene.

Ultimately, the Céli Dé as “clients of God” was a distinction outlining a particular form of individual devotion rather than an institutional affiliation, which could exist alongside more mainstream forms of monastic and lay religious practice in a particular community, as seems to have been the case at Tallaght. Concern with appropriate practice, depending on one’s state of life (lay, monastic tenants, monks, clerics, etc.) and one’s individual abilities and limitations, is a recurrent theme in many of these texts. Considering the work of Brian Lambkin on the possible relationship of Blathmac mac Con-Brettan’s poems to the Céli Dé movement (pp. 168-170), Follett ultimately questions whether this personal relationship of clientship with God can be considered a movement at all, since it does not have the “organizational cohesion and purposeful impetus” which that term implies. An appendix giving a detailed catalogue of manuscripts, editions and translations of different purported Céli Dé texts rounds out the volume, followed by an excellent bibliography and index.

While Follett has no pretensions of superseding previous work on the Céli Dé, nor does he believe that he has said the last word on the matter, this contribution to the subject ought to be a standard work on this topic in the future. The book, while always erudite, was also not difficult to follow, and would suit specialist as well as more general readers equally. Translations are quoted in the body of the text, with footnotes indicating where Follett has departed from the renderings of published translations, and original Old Irish passages (sometimes with further translations) are placed in the footnotes as well. The exception is in some of the Latin passages, often given but left untranslated in the footnotes, and a few

occurrences of short French quotations in the main body of the text that are also not translated. While it is safe to assume that most readers of this volume would have knowledge of these languages, and context can certainly give a sense to those who might not be able to read them, parts of the text might not therefore be totally transparent to some readers. There were very few typographical mistakes in the volume that I could detect, with one rather large one on the first page of the first chapter (9), which gives Columba’s *obit* as 595, but page 37 has it correctly as 597. Including modern scholars mentioned in the body of the text in index entries would also have been useful for future reference and easier navigation of the book.

On several occasions, Follett mentions the term *mac bethad*, “son of life,” in contrast to *mac báis*, “son of death,” in use in a number of Céli Dé texts, including the *Old Irish Table of Penitential Commutations*. The former is a designation for a good, practicing Christian who is “mindful of his liturgical duties” (p. 128), while the latter is a layperson, often an evildoer or perhaps even a pagan. Follett explains that the earliest usages of the term *mac bethad* are found in Céli Dé texts, and uses this diagnostic to conclude (along with Binchy) that the *Old Irish Table of Penitential Commutations* is a Céli Dé text. He later mentions briefly in a footnote the discussions of Richard Sharpe and Kim McCone on the distinction between these two terms, but does not quote their studies directly, rather referring to the treatment of their studies by Etchingham. As this term appears to be an extremely important one—even one of diagnostic significance for some of his texts—further investigation of it in the original studies might seem to be in order.

However, this does not invalidate the point, it is merely a small matter on which a bit more thoroughness, to match that of the remainder of the book, might not have gone awry.

On the whole and in its diverse parts, this is an exceptional book which I would recommend highly. It is “conservative” in a positive sense in terms of all of its conclusions and assessments of the evidence, never overstating a point nor interpreting the evidence beyond what can be easily and reasonably inferred from it. The *desideratum* of a modern synoptic

edition of the Tallaght memoir is expressed, and one might hope that such an edition would widen the discussion of this material further. With Follett’s book, and such an edition, students and established scholars interested in what should perhaps be called “Céli Dé spirituality” would have all the necessary resources for an informed engagement with the subject.

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Opening the Field: Irish Women, Texts, and Contexts

Ed. Patricia Boyle Haberstroh and Christine St. Peter
Cork University Press, 2007

This essay collection should be immediately appealing to anyone interested in Irish literature in general, and in Irish literature by women in particular. Ten prominent critics tackle an intriguing array of texts by Irish women writers, ranging from the well-known (Maria Edgeworth, Peig Sayers) to the up-and-coming (Mary Morrissy) to the (unjustly?) obscure. It is a disappointment, then, to find the introduction defensive in tone, as though editors Patricia Boyle Haberstroh and Christine St. Peter felt pressed to justify the book’s existence. “A conversation that excludes the voices of women,” they write, “a ‘canon’ that under-represents their achievements and a critical practice that does not include women’s scholarship can offer only a limited and exclusive educational experience” (p. 12). These are worthy sentiments, surely, but

ones that should by now be well established and beyond dispute.

Should. There, of course, is the rub. As Haberstroh and St. Peter argue, women’s writing remains a contested field, perhaps especially so in Ireland. Citing the ongoing reverberations of the *Field Day Anthology* controversy of the nineties and the continuing disproportion of male to female writers in Irish publishing houses, the editors insist that this collection is a necessary intervention intended to illustrate “the many ways in which women writers can be read” (p. 7). The result is a collection remarkably careful and self-conscious with respect to its own theoretical underpinnings; a trait that is at once its greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

At their best, the essays in *Opening the Field* are notably attentive to the literary texts under discussion while also illuminating the processes and goals of criticism itself. In perhaps the finest piece, Anne Fogarty skillfully weaves a discussion of postmodern modes of representation, especially of female subjectivity, into her analysis of Mary Morissy's novel *The Pretender*. Morissy, a promising novelist from whom I suspect we will hear more in years to come, is also the focus of Ann Owens Weekes' essay, which explores psychoanalytic theory while considering Morissy's novel *Mother of Pearl* in the light of Adrienne Rich's indictment of compulsory heterosexuality. Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin's "Becoming the Patriarch?" offers an absorbing reading of Maria Edgeworth's *Ormond* that limns the larger question of how a woman writer might approach and critique traditional constructions of masculinity. When the essays in this collection succeed, the critic illustrates how literary theory informs and enriches her reading of the text under consideration, without privileging the theory over the literary text itself.

At times, the balance in the essays shifts too far, for my taste, in the direction of explicating literary theory, sometimes at the expense of the literary texts under discussion. Heidi Hansson, for instance, describes the ways in which writers like Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz have troubled the binary division of gender, but then is forced to explain at some length the seemingly obvious point that despite such insights, "nineteenth-century Irish women writers were identified as women" (p. 45). The introduction to Butler and Grosz's work

may be useful to readers new to feminist theory, but in this account theory seems more an impediment to common sense than an aid to nuanced reading. One of the most promising essays in the collection, "Engendering the Postmodern Canon?" by Gerardine Meaney, suffers from a similar flaw. Meaney, one of the editors of Volumes IV and V of the *Field Day Anthology*, discusses the editorial structure and methodologies used in compiling these volumes, a fascinating subject given their unusual content and format. She is often lucid and illuminating when discussing the broad theoretical imperatives underlying the project, such as the editors' desire to remap the canon of Irish writing, but unsatisfying when it comes to the particulars of the decisions they made. I would have liked, for instance, to read about why the editors chose a thematic rather than strictly chronological order for the volumes, and how this decision related to the larger project of canon reformulation.

Despite such quibbles, *Opening the Field* is a worthy project with much to offer its readers. Although seasoned scholars might find some of the essays over-long in their explication of theory, students may well benefit from the transparency of this approach. More importantly, however, the collection offers fresh and intriguing perspectives on an impressive array of texts by Irish women – and that is something that even the most seasoned scholar *should* enjoy.

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**Call for Papers 2008
CSANA Conference**

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the Celtic Studies Association of North America will take place at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, April 17-20.

Twenty-minute papers on all aspects of Celtic studies are invited. Abstracts should be sent by 31 January 2008 to:

Morgan Davies
Department of English
Colgate University
13 Oak Drive
Hamilton, NY 13346-1398
USA

Or by e-mail to mdavies@mail.colgate.edu

Please cite "CSANA 2008" on the envelope or in the subject heading of your e-mail.

**Call for Papers
The 30th Annual
California Celtic Studies Conference
UCLA**

CALL FOR PAPERS—THIRTIETH ANNUAL UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CELTIC STUDIES CONFERENCE, MARCH 6-9, 2008, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

Sponsored by the UCLA Celtic Colloquium, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, the Department of English, and the Indo-European Studies Program

The conference, to be held in Royce 314, is expected to run from Thursday afternoon (March 6) until Sunday mid-afternoon (March 9). There will be a welcoming reception Thursday evening, entertainment Friday evening, and a banquet (see below) Saturday evening.

Invited speakers include:
Caoimhín Breatnach (University College, Dublin)
Geraint Evans (Swansea University)

Helen Fulton (Swansea University)
Geraint Jenkins (University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies)
Róisín McLaughlin (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies)
Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail (University College, Dublin)
Eve Sweetser (University of California, Berkeley)
Gregory Toner (University of Ulster, Coleraine)
Jürgen Uhlich (Trinity College, Dublin)

In addition, there will be special presentations on virtual resources of compelling interest to Celticists, including:

The newly completed digital model of the St. Gall Plan and related data base of the material culture of early medieval monasticism (*Patrick Geary*, UCLA);

The NEH “Ireland and Irish Studies” Project, part of UC Berkeley’s Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (*Daniel Melia*, UC Berkeley);

The digitization of the Royal Irish Academy’s Dictionary of the Irish Language (eDIL and PACDIL) (*Gregory Toner*, University of Ulster, Coleraine).

Paper proposals from scholars and students are welcome. Your proposal (250 words or less), on a topic pertinent to Celtic studies, may be submitted on line to the program committee chair Joseph Falaky Nagy at jfnagy@humnet.ucla.edu. Please indicate any computer or audio-visual needs. Proposals are due by or on Friday, January 7, and they will be evaluated later that month.

For accommodations, please see <http://www.cho.ucla.edu/housing/cholistf.htm>, under “local hotels.” Alas, our official hotel of yore, the Century Wilshire Hotel, is no longer with us, and its like will not be seen again. And so, of those on the list, we recommend the Hilgard House Hotel (which at least is much closer in walking distance to the campus than the Century Wilshire was), or (for the budget-conscious) the Claremont Hotel and the Tiverton Terrace (also close to campus).

There will be a field-trip to the Huntington Library and Gardens on Saturday afternoon for conference participants (March 8). Transportation will be provided free of charge, but seating on the UCLA bus will be limited. Those who would like to learn more about the field-trip or sign up for it should contact Nagy at jfnagy@humnet.ucla.edu. The conference banquet will be held at a restaurant near to the UCLA campus, and the cost (inclusive of gratuity, but exclusive of alcoholic beverage) will be \$35. Seating will be limited. You may register for the banquet by sending a check, made out to “Joseph F. Nagy,” to him c/o English Department, UCLA, LA CA 90095-1530.

The Ritual Year And Gender Conference 2008

Cork, Ireland, 22nd – 26th June

The Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) Ritual Year Working Group announces a call for papers for ‘The Ritual Year and Gender Conference’ to be held in Cork, Ireland, 22nd – 26th June 2008. This will be the fourth international conference in the series on the theme of the ritual year and organized by the Folklore and Ethnology Department, University College Cork.

We are pleased to announce that featured keynote speakers will include:

Gearóid Ó Cruaíoch (Professor Emeritus of Folklore and Ethnology, University College Cork, Ireland) and Henry Glassie (Professor of Folklore, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA).

The intention of this conference is to examine aspects of the ritual year that relate to gender in either a social or symbolic sense and thus empirical and theoretical contributions to the scholarly understanding of the interplay between calendar year events and gender are welcomed. Members of the Ritual Year Working Group and non-members alike are cordially invited to submit papers. Folklorists, ethnologists and scholars from diverse disciplines are encouraged to submit papers that would address the interconnections and complexities in issues of gender roles in rituals related to the annual cycle. Consideration will also be given to papers on related topics and those that address current discourses on ritual studies and gender.

There will be a special session on ‘**The Celtic Year**’ and on ‘**May Day (*Bealtaine*)**’

Those who would like to offer a paper are invited to submit abstracts of up to 200 words **both** to <ritualyear08@gmail.com> **and to** <butler.Jennifer@gmail.com> before the deadline of **Monday 7th January 2008**. When sending your abstract, please include your full name, highest academic degree, and Institutional/professional affiliation.

Unfortunately, no scholarship will be available for participants. Each participant, including speakers, will be expected both to pay his or her travel and accommodation expenses (though it should be noted that a special reduced rate of accommodation for conference delegates has been arranged at the conference venue: The Oriel House Hotel, Ballincollig, Cork). Speakers must register before being included in the final programme.

Notification of acceptance of paper proposals will be given by Friday 11th January 2008. Speakers will be allocated 20 minutes for their talks, with 10 minutes for questions. Plans are in place for the publication of selected papers as part of a collection of conference proceedings.

For further information, please email: ritualyear08@gmail.com

Discover Irish Website

A new website has been installed at Essen University in Germany which is dedicated to the Irish language. The site is arranged as a system of menus organised to reflect the different aspects of Irish. There is an introduction to the Irish language, both historical and contemporary, along with a number of overviews of Irish studies, the other Celtic languages, the interface between Irish and English, etc.. The two central parts of the website are concerned with the different dialects of present-day Irish as well as with the structure of the language, taking regional variation into account. Apart from these modules, there is a comprehensive glossary of linguistic terms, a set of reviews of linguistics for students as well as maps and illustrations pertaining to Ireland and Irish. Information on journals which cover Irish and the other Celtic languages is given and there is a large, internally structured

bibliography with up-to-date references appropriate for students and scholars alike. Biographical information on the main scholars in Irish studies can also be found.

The cultural framework in which Irish is embedded is also dealt with and coverage of the manuscript tradition in Ireland, of art and architecture and of Celtic culture in general is given. This provides easy orientation for those who have not previously concerned themselves with Irish. Many links to other websites of interest have been included, e.g. to universities with departments of Irish/Celtic, and also to institutions, broadcasting companies, libraries, government departments and book and/or journal publishers.

A special feature of this website is the treatment of spoken varieties of contemporary Irish. There are clickable maps of all the Gaeltachtaí with many sound files of native speakers illustrating current pronunciation. The chief characteristics of the dialects and the main differences are shown in tabular form. Appropriate sound files which exemplify these can be listened to while viewing phonetic transcriptions.

The website is fully searchable and the material it contains can be downloaded easily. Navigation around the website can be done either via a menu system or a tree representation of all modules. A full site-map and a list of themes with links is also provided.

The website can be accessed at the following address: <http://www.uni-due.de/DI>

Alternatively, you can simple google "Discover Irish".

This website has been designed and constructed by Raymond Hickey. All the texts and tables are his own and are put in the public domain under the assumption that if they are used by scholars and students, then appropriate acknowledgement will be made. The anonymous sound files stem from the project "Samples of Spoken Irish" and were collected in the Gaeltachtaí by the author during the past few years. At this point I would like to express my thanks to all the speakers who helped with this project: without their assistance and support this project would not have been possible.

YEARBOOK NEWS FROM THE EDITORS

CSANA YEARBOOK NEWS

It is membership support for the *Yearbook* that makes it possible for us offer issues at a discount price, **so please support the *Yearbook* and continue to do so**. Please send a check, made out to CSANA, and indicate what you would like to order (see below for available issues and prices), to CSANA Secretary-Treasurer Elissa Henken, Department of English, University of Georgia, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens GA 30602, USA.

Those of you who haven't obtained the latest published *CSANA Yearbook* (6, *Myth in Celtic*

Literatures—see table of contents below) are urged to **order your copy now**, at the special CSANA member's price of only **\$25**. We remind CSANA members that volumes 1, 2, 3-4, 5 of the *Celtic Studies Association of North America Yearbook*, published by Four Courts Press of Dublin, are still in print and available to them at the members' **fifty percent discount** rate (\$25 each; \$50 for the special double volume, 3-4, the *Festschrift* for Patrick K. Ford). The contents of the already published *Yearbook* volumes (1, *The Individual in Celtic Literatures*; 2, *Identifying the 'Celtic'*; 3-4, *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition*; 5, *Memory and the Modern in Celtic Literatures*; and 6, *Myth in Celtic Literatures*), acclaimed in various journal reviews, are detailed on the Four Courts Press website at <http://www.four-courts-press.ie/>, and in the On-Line CSANA Bibliography (<http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/celtic/>).

In addition to ordering copies for yourself, please be sure to ask your library to order the *Yearbook*, either at a discount rate with an institutional membership in CSANA, or directly from Four Courts Press.

Table of Contents for CSANA Yearbook 6: Myth in Celtic Literatures, ed. Joseph Falaky Nagy (166 pp., including index)

- 1) Phillip A. Bernhardt-House, "Horses, Hounds, and High Kings: A Shared Arthurian Tradition Across the Irish Sea?"
- 2) Rebecca Blustein, "Poets and Pillars in *Cath Maige Tuired*"
- 3) Ranke de Vries, "The Names of Lí Bán"
- 4) Denell Downum, "Suibhne, Citation, and the Myth of Originality"
- 5) Jessica Hemming, "Ancient Tradition or Authorial Invention? The 'Mythological' Names in the Four Branches"
- 6) Catherine McKenna, "The Colonization of Myth in Branwen Ferch Llŷr"
- 7) Antone Minard, "Colorful Monsters: The *Afanc* in Medieval Welsh Narrative"
- 8) Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Myth of Insularity and Nationality in Ireland"
- 9) Kathryn Stelmach, "Dead Deirdre? Myth and Mortality in the Irish Literary Revival"

The theme of Volume 7, due out in Spring 2008, is "Law, literature, and society," and it will contain:

- Paul Russell*, Poets, power and possessions in medieval Ireland: some stories from *Sanas Cormaic*
Michael Meckler, The assassination of Diarmait mac Cerbaill
Sara Elin Roberts, Emerging from the bushes: the Welsh law of women in the legal triads
Lahney Preston-Matto, Derbforgaill's literary heritage: can you blame her?
Karen Eileen Overbey, Female trouble: ambivalence and anxiety at the Nuns' Church
Timothy P. Bridgman, Naming and naming conventions concerning Celtic peoples in some early ancient Greek authors

CSANA members can pre-order vol. 7 at the discounted rate, just as with vol. 6.

All yearbooks can be ordered via the Paypal link from the CSANA web page. The Theme of volume 8 is 'Narrative in Celtic tradition' and interested contributors should contact Joe Eska at eska@vt.edu.

Books for Review

If you are interested in reviewing any of the following books, or if you have another title in mind for review and would like me to contact the publisher for a review copy, please contact the newsletter editor at cmacquarrie@csub.edu. Reviews for the next newsletter should be received by September 15.

ANZACS and Ireland. Jeff Kildea. Cork UP; Cork, 2006. **Paperback:** 295 pages.
Dictionary of Munster Women Writers, 1800-2000. Edited by Tina O'Toole. Cork UP; Cork, 2005. **Hardback:** 330 pages.

Emily Lawless 1845-1913: Writing the Interspace. Heidi Hanson. Cork UP; Cork, 2006. **Hardback:** 234 pages.

Empire of Analogies: Kipling, India and Ireland. Kaori Nagai. Cork UP; Cork, 2006. **Hardback:** 185 pages.

The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916, by M.J. Kelly. Boydell: Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2006. **Hardback:** 282 pages

Gearrscéalta ár Linne. Edited by Brian Ó Conchubhair. Cló Iar-Chonnachta: Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe, Éire, 2006. **Paperback:** 392 pages

The Idiom of Dissent: Protest and Propaganda in Wales. Edited by Robin Chapman. Gomer Press; Llandysul, Ceredigion, 2006. **Paperback:** 165 pages.

Ireland and the Global Question by Michael J. O'Sullivan. Cork UP; Cork. 2006. **Hardback:** 215 pages.

Llywelyn the Great. Roger Turvey. Gomer Press; Llandysul, Ceredigion, 2007. **Paperback:** 160 pages.

Map-making, Landscapes and Memory: A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland c. 1530-1750 by William J. Smyth. Cork UP; Cork, 2006. **Hardback:** 584 pages.

Megalith: Eleven Journeys in Search of Stones. Edited by Damian Walford Davies. Gomer Press; Llandysul, Ceredigion, 2006. **Paperback:** 126 pages.

Playing the Hero: Reading the Irish Saga Táin Bó Cúailnge. Ann Dooley. University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2006. **Hardback:** 298 pages.

Celtic Studies Bibliography

<http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/celtic/csanabib.html>

Be sure to visit the bibliography and to contact Karen Burgess with further updates.
kburgess@ucla.edu

CSANA Web Page

<http://www.csub.edu/~cmacquarrie/csana/>

There is an updated **CSANA** website at the above address which includes e-mail addresses, old newsletters, calls for papers, and announcements. Please contact cmacquarrie@csub.edu with any corrections, suggestions, or items to be included. Check the Website for updated calls for papers and other news.

CSANA Newsletter

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