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Editors' Notes: Notai na nEagarthoiri

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Editors' Notes

Nótaí na nEagarthóirí

We start the fifth year and the fifth volume of *New Hibernia Review* by printing on our first page “Irish Poetry,” Eavan Boland’s poem in honor of the art of the Irish poet Michael Hartnett (Micheal Ó hAirtnéide), who died in Dublin on October 13, 1999. Owing to her readings and lectures throughout the United States, Eavan Boland has become a leading poetic voice and a moral sensibility now well known to American readers. Indeed, in recognition of her collected poems *An Origin Like Water* (1996) and her critical memoir *Object Lessons* (1995), Eavan Boland received in 1997 the first Lawrence O’Shaughnessy Award for Poetry of the Center for Irish Studies at the University of St. Thomas. *Against Love Poetry*, her next collection, will appear in October 2001.

It is the sound of the Irish voice speaking that Boland’s poem commemorates, and that same sound is the key to Prof. Christina Hunt Mahony’s exploration of the remembered presence of wireless and radio broadcasts in, particularly, Irish dramas by such Irish playwrights as Tom Kilroy and Martin McDonagh, or Bernard Farrell and Brian Friel. Listening to the radio and the device itself figure in these plays, and the broadcasts came from Radio Éireann’s tower at Athlone, or from the British Broadcasting Corporation in the North and across the Irish Sea, and in the 1970s from “pirate” stations in Dublin. It is the sound of a broadcast that jogs the memory, and not always what the radio “says.” Now associate director of the Center for Irish Studies at the Catholic University of America, Dr. Mahony is the author of *Contemporary Irish Literature: Transforming Tradition* (1998). She is currently at work on a study of Irish autobiography since the 1960s.

Now serving as the Ireland Professor of Poetry at University College, Dublin, John Montague was first heard reciting “Like Dolmen’s Round My Childhood” in a broadcast of the Northern Ireland service of the BBC in 1960. Here, Montague continues to speak to Ireland North and South and to his native Irish America in a suite of poems from *Smashing the Piano* (1999), his first collection since his *Collected Poems* (1995). In these poems Montague records—in terser

language than he has used before, and in forms new to his work—the trials of marital discord. He also recalls warmly the family of his childhood and the civic conviviality of his life in Cork. Wake Forest University Press will publish a North American edition of *Smashing the Piano* in April, 2001.

While nostalgia for the “Great Emergency” years in the Free State has marked many memoirs published in the 1990s, the news media of Ireland have been replete with bitter accounts of state- and church-sponsored social services—orphanages, Magdalen laundries, and industrial schools, many ruled by the Christian Brothers. Drawing chiefly on the memoirs of Paddy Doyle, Bernadette Fahy, and Patrick Touher, and on novels by Mannix Flynn and Patrick McCabe, Prof. Michael Molino reveals that the industrial school experience—as remembered amid public controversy in the 1990s—hampered the student’s development of ethical autonomy. Often, these institutions denied their charges both personal privacy within the walls of the school and social integration outside those walls. Dr. Molino is the author of *Questioning Tradition, Language, and Myth: The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (1994).

Ireland figures in the life of the black abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) both because he was welcomed into Quaker and Anglican families there in 1846 and because his firsthand depictions of slave life and arguments for emancipation moved an Irish public aroused by O’Connell’s Catholic Emancipation and Repeal campaigns. The importance of Douglass’s speaking tour in Ireland sponsored by the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society has overshadowed the Dublin publication of a second edition of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Here, Prof. Patricia Ferreira recounts some details of Douglass’s visit to Ireland by way of highlighting the importance of this 1846 edition of *Narrative*, which lies in Douglass’s sophisticated rhetorical reframing of his narrative by printing and rebutting an anti-Abolitionist attack on the truth of his *Narrative*. Dr. Ferreira has spoken on Douglass’s tour of Ireland on Radio Telefís Éireann, and her current projects include studies of the American writers John Edgar Wideman and James Alan McPherson.

After Liam Miller died in 1987, his now legendary Dolmen Press ceased publication. Miller’s presswork had come to international prominence eighteen years earlier with the publication of Thomas Kinsella’s *The Tain* as the ninth Dolmen Edition in September, 1969. Of course, Kinsella’s prominence as a poet and his finely honed skills as a translator made the book a contemporary classic. However, it was the Irish artist Louis le Brocqy’s suites of ink brush drawings for

The Tain that fixed the aesthetic standards of the Dolmen Press in high, international repute. As Ailbhe Ní Bhriain shows here, the Dolmen Edition of *The Tain* is itself an art object, a *livre d'artiste*. The images that le Brocquy created for Kinsella's rich text have a powerful, primal effect on the reader, and from their making le Brocquy—Ireland's most renowned artist after Jack Yeats—derived both the impulse and motifs of his later tapestries and paintings. An independent artist and scholar, Ailbhe Ní Bhriain completed her study of le Brocquy's artistry with Prof. Vera Ryan at the Crawford College of Art and Design in Cork.

Commercial and popular art, genre paintings, watercolors, and newspaper engravings figure in Prof. Charles Orser's delineation of the archeological significance of finds of domestic pottery in Ireland. Such finds reveal much about Irish rural life before the Famine and the degree to which the Famine disrupted that world. Popular visual depictions of tenants driven from their cottages frequently include images of coarse earthenware bowls or "milk pans" and pitchers among belongings heaped outside the unroofed dwelling or carried by the destitute hoping for famine relief rations. Thus, images of plenty are transformed into emblems of destitution. Readers of *New Hibernia Review* will remember Prof. Orser's article on his County Roscommon excavations in our inaugural issue. Serving also as Adjunct Professor of Archaeology at the National University of Ireland, Galway, Prof. Orser has lately founded the Center for the Study of Rural Ireland at Illinois State University.

From our first issue on, *New Hibernia Review* has endeavored not only to promote an interest in the Irish tongue, but also to make use of it in each issue. The Winter, 1999, issue offered "The Irish Language in the New Millennium," and here we offer A. J. Hughes's "Advancing the Language: Irish in the Twenty-First Century." Writing from Belfast, Prof. Hughes surveys historically the evolving condition of Gaeilge in an Ireland long torn by discord in the North and lately roiled in the South by an overheated economy. Offering many points of departure, many observations that occasion hope, and some asides that are dispiriting, Dr. Hughes makes emphatic the simple point that Irish is passing from the hands of the Revivalists and regional purists into the hearing and saying of the urban, media-savvy young. In that passage, the language's conventions and powers of expression will inevitably change. An energetic scholar and vibrant lecturer, Dr. Hughes is currently at work on two books: *Colloquial Irish*, to be published this year, and *When I Was Young*, a translation of the first part of Séamus Ó Grianna's autobiography. Most recently, he edited *Armagh: History and Society* (2000).

In the last decade, Galway City has shed its flinty grayness for a carnival vitality partly because of the Cúirt and the Galway Arts festivals and partly because of the creative programs housed in the National University of Ireland, Galway. In the Michaelmas Term of 2000, the university hosted in its Old Quadrangle gallery an exhibition of works from the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Kilmainham, Dublin. And along with that the university sponsored a series of lectures on art arranged by Sheila Dickinson and Emily Cullen. Here, Dickinson describes the evolution of the exhibition and the lecture series, the contributions of the lecturers—Dorothy Cross, Dorothy Walker, Gavin Murphy, and Dickinson herself—and the enthusiastic response of Galwegians to the project, concluding with a renewed call for a permanent public space in Galway City for showing traditional, modern, and contemporary fine arts.

As we point out later in a headnote, this volume of *New Hibernia Review* introduces a continuing feature of the journal that we have titled—echoing Frank O'Connor—"The Backward Glance: Radharc ar gCúl." We hope to present regularly short essays on a book, film, or other work deserving of contemporary reassessment. Here, we begin with three views of Michael Davitt's *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (1904) by Professors Lawrence McBride, Anne Kane, and Donald E. Jordan, Jr. Dr. McBride's commentary underscores not only Davitt's economic aims based on the classicist views of the Land War, but also Davitt's idealization of Irish nationality as fundamentally racial, as Celtic. To Davitt's depiction of the Land War, Dr. Kane adds an historical sociologist's interest in cultural analysis, which reveals that *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* gives an essential starting perspective to Davitt's depiction of collective action. Davitt, of course, was a practical politician, an organizer, and activist, as Dr. Jordan stresses in his view of Davitt's polemic against the recent background of the "revisionist wars" in Irish historiography, pointing out that the impassioned Davitt was often capable of dispassionate social and political analysis.