

summer 1996

iris mheiriceánach faoin gcultúr gaelach

# AN DORAS

an american journal of gaelic culture samhradh 1996

THIS ISSUE'S THEME:  
THE NEW WORLD

TEAMA AN  
EAGRÁIN SEO:



## AN TOILEÁN ÚR

Ainm draíochta atá ann, nach mór – abhar ortha nó bríochta. B'ionann agus ath-pharrthas é Meiriceá don Ghael bocht tnáite – lochrann an tsaoirse agus tobar an dóchais. Agus ní h'iolaitíocht an daonlathais nó deiseanna eacnamaíochta atá i gceist ach an tuiscint a bhí parrthaithe go domhain i gceol an Cheltigh go raibh Neamh é féin le fáil thar an naoi tonn.

In anallód bhíodh súil na nGael dírithe i dtreo éirí na gréine. Ba ón Domhan Thoir a tháinig na Sinsir, Meic Míled, a bhí lonnaithe dar le bréagstairithe sa Spáinn. Ba ansin a thóg Breogán, sinsear Míled féin a thír, a bhí a mhacasamhail de thír neamhshaoilte ag beirt de na Fómhóirí a luaitear sa Lebor Gabála: Tor Conaing agus Tor Bhalair (uaidh sin atá Tor Inis). I bhfinscéalta na ndaoine fiú déantar tagairt don Domhan Thoir, nó don Ghréig mar bhaile dúchais an fhathaiigh bhradaiigh, agus ceann cúrsa an laoiach.

Ach bhí traidisiún eile ann, leis – oileán draíochta sna farraigí thiar, áitreabh na ndéithe agus na mbandéithe. Go dtí le fíordheireannas chreidte go mb'fhéidir an t-oileán draíochta nó an chathair órga a fheiceáil uair gach seacht mbliain sior óna hOileáin Arannacha, agus tá seanchas na n-iascairí breac le scéalta na n-iontas a chonachas. (Tá an traidisiún sin gaolta, ar ndóig, le traidisiún na gcathracha báite, atá le sonru go hannamh ag tóin locha. Síchathracha atá iontu, gan dabht, agus iad siúd a fheiceann a leithéid, cuirtear cluain orthu, agus sé an bás nó mearbhall intinne atá dlite dhóibh mar luach shaothair.)

Is sna hionramha, na scéalta faoi na laochra (ab naoimh iad cúpla ceann díobh) a thug a n-aghaidh ar fhíantais na bhfarraigí anaithnid agus a rinne an turas scéintúil go dtí an saol eile atá na liostaí is líonmháire d'ainmneacha na n-oileán iartharacha. (Turas siombalach anam an mhairbh a bhí iontu mar ionramha, dar le scríbhneoirí áirithe.) Sé Tír na nÓg an ceann is fearr a bhfuil aithne uirthi. Leis an ainm sin meabhraítear dúinn saintreith na Sí: bíonn cách ann bith-óg, agus ní thagann aois nó tinnéas orthu go deo. Beag an t-iontas gurb é Tír na mBeo an dara ainm atá air.

Tá ainmneacha eile ann: Tír na nIonntas, Tír fo Thuinn (a thugas le tuiscint nach gá go mbeidh an t-oileán os cionn na n-uisc), Tír Tairngire (b'fhéidir faoi anáil na Críostaíochta agus an léinn Bhiobalta), Mag Mell (ionann agus mealltach nó tarraingteach), agus Mag Mon. Is suimúil go deo é an ceann deireanach seo – sé is brí le mon nó 'cleas' – sin le rá, Má na gCleasanna, agus is dócha go bhfuil gaol gairid idir é agus ainmneacha eile ón seanchas, mar atá Oileán Mhanann, Manannán, Forgall Manach, agus fiú Fear Manach. B'fhéidir go bhfuil gaol aige le Mòn – Angeley na Breataine Bige – neimheadh agus tearmann na ndraoithe Briotanacha, dar leis na Romhánaíthe.

Tír na mBan ainm eile, agus is iontach ar fad é an cur síos a dhéantar air sna scéalta. De ghnáth bíonn tobar ann (ar foinsé neamhshaoilte é de na haibhneacha naofa abhus – abha na Bóinne agus an tSionainn, mar shampla) agus sé an linn a snámhann an bradán feasa ann, ar ndóig. Bíonn crann mór taobh leis an dtobar a bhfuil ealta éanlaithe ann ag síorchantain. Bíonn an bhantocht iad féin ar na bhfaiche os comhair an leasa, ag sníomh nó ag fíodóireacht nó ag bróidnéireacht leo. Bíonn an Bhé i féin ann, agus ba mhaith léi i gcónaí an laoch a cheapadh ina gaiste agus a choinmeáil farae go suthain (dála Circe Hóiméir).

Ach tá oileáin níos fearúla ann, leis, mar a gcéillúrtar Fleá an tSinsir go síoraí, mar a ndéantar an t-oiltor a fhiaich lá i ndiaidh lae (agus mar a mbíonn sé féin ina bheo arís an lá arna mhárach). Ainm amháin de Thiarna an oileáin seo ab'eadh Breasail, agus bhí iomrá ar I Bhreasail i bhfad agus i gcéin. Más iontaofa na scéalta bhí tionchar mór ag an seanchas Ceilteach ar meon na hEorpa agus Ré na Taiscéalaithe ag faibhrí ag deireadh na cúigiú haoise déag – ar aon nós beidh buanchuimhne ar an seandia Éireannach seo toisc gur baisteadh a ainm dílis ar an dtír úd in nDeisceart Mheiriceá, An Bhrasail. Agus an raibh macallai de chlú shuibhreas an tSinsir (Breasail, mar shampla, nó an Daghdá) le cloisteáil sna finscéalta faoi El Dorado, An Fear Órga agus a chathair na n-iontas a bhí le fáil i nduafair Dheisceart Mheiriceá?

Sea, mar fuarthas amach, níor Pharrthas é an tOileán Úr i ndáiríre, ach mhair an aising agus tá seanchas na nGael caomhnaithe faoi cheilt ann go fóill.

— Míolchú ua Miadhacháin, Oidhche Bhealtaithe

## DID "RAFFERY THE POET" COME FROM OSWEGO?

by Owen McCullough

Anthony Rafferty was born in Kiltymagh, Co. Mayo in 1779. He was one of nine children until a smallpox epidemic killed all eight of his siblings and left him blind. Making his living as a traveling bard and musician, he composed (but never wrote down) thousands of lines of poetry which are still part of the Gaelic oral tradition: love songs such as Máire Ní Eihín, Bridín Bheasaí and Cill Liadáin, the tribute to East Mayo; the tragic and moving Eanách Chuan; political poems like Na Buachaillí Bána and Bua Uí Chonaill; and, the metrical history of Ireland, Seanchas na Sceiche. But the most famous of all those associated with him, he didn't compose.

Everybody who has studied Irish for even a short time is familiar with the poem "Mise Raiftearaí an File." It seems like such a natural summary of his life, it is surprising that it came not from him but an emigrant who settled in Oswego, Illinois. This man's name was Seán Ó Ceallaigh and he came from Loughrea, Co. Galway, where Rafferty himself died in 1835. Like many of the Gael he enjoyed writing poetry, and he would send his writing off to *An Gaodhal*, the Gaelic newspaper published in Brooklyn during the last century.

*An Gaodhal* printed his letter and poem as follows:

A Dhuine Uasail,

Cuirim an beagan seo chugat, mar do chuala mé Raiftearaí ag teach damhsa, in áit a raibh sé ag seimn cheoil. D'fhiafraigh duine cé hé an ceoltóir; d'fregair Raiftearaí:

Mise Raiftearaí an file  
lán dóchais is grá

Le suile gan solas  
ciúnas gan crá

Ag gabhail síos ar m'aistear  
le solas mo chroí

fann agus tuirseach  
go deireadh mo shlí

Tá mé anois  
le m'aghaidh ar bhalla,

Ag seimn cheoil  
do phócaí folamh.

go meastúil,  
Baile Chraoch  
(Sean's penname)

In English:

Dear Sir,

I pass on to you this little bit, as I heard Rafferty at a dance house. Someone asked who is the musician; Rafferty answered:

continued on back page 58

## FÁILTE!

Welcome to our premiere issue of *An Doras*, an American journal of Gaelic culture. In Irish, "an doras" means the door, and the goal of our publication is to provide just that, a doorway to the past, present of future of Gaelic life, including folklore, the arts, current events and most importantly, Irish Gaelic.

You will notice that many parts of this paper are written in Irish. In some places, direct translations are provided. In others, abstracts in English accompany the Gaelic. Our objective is to create a dual-language medium that meets the needs and interests of Gaelic teachers and students, while drawing English speakers into the world of the Irish Language Movement.

Each quarterly issue of *An Doras* will be devoted to a particular theme. This issue's focus is "An tOileán Úr," the New World. Contrary to popular opinion, there is a great deal of activity and growth among American "gaelgeoirí," that is, teachers and students of Irish Gaelic. Classes can be found in many American cities and regional Gaelic immersion weekends are a great way for beginners to jump into the language.

So forget about Ireland and the rolling hills of the "old sod." There's plenty to occupy your attention right here, *sa tOileán Úr!*

(Raiftearaí an File, cont.)

I am Rafferty the poet  
full of hope and love  
With eyes without light  
quiet without annoyance

Going down my path  
with the light of my heart  
weak and tired  
to the end of my way.

I am now  
with my face to the wall  
playing music  
to empty pockets.

Those who know the poem will recognize that there are slight changes between that and the usual version. This is because Douglas Hyde edited the work when he collected it (probably from the pages of *An Gaodhal*) and re-published it in 1903. There is no indication that anybody in the west of Ireland ever heard of "Mise Raiftearaí" until Douglas Hyde published it. Then it entered into the repertory of Gaelic speakers everywhere. This is a common interaction between the oral and written traditions. When scholars in the last century translated the Ulster Cycle from Old Irish, their comment was that these stories had passed away from folk memory. Even so, they soon came back with storytellers, regaling audiences with tales of Cú Chulainn at the ford and the sorrowful fate of Deirdre.

Unknown poets have been so anxious for the children of their imagination to live on that they often imputed authorship to someone famous. How many of the psalms were written by David? How many of Shakespeare's sonnets by the man himself? In Ireland, Colmille gave rise to a cottage industry of imitators.

It is pleasant to think that one of the most famous poems in modern Irish was made in America. But I wonder how Antoine Ó Raiftearaí would feel if he knew that his most famous poem was made by a farmer in downstate Illinois?

The information on the poem's authorship comes from Raiftearaí, Amhráin agus Dánta by Ciarán Ó Coitigh (*An Clóchomhar Tta*, 1987), a collection of his most famous poems with music, explanations of his meter, and highlights of his life. It is definitely a book for those with a reading knowledge of Irish and an interest in this great poet.

"GO FOR GOLD WITH KERRYGOLD IRISH CHEESES!"



AVAILABLE FROM:  
IRISH DAIRY BOARD  
825 GREEN BAY ROAD SUITE 200  
WILMETTE, IL 60691  
(847) 256-8289

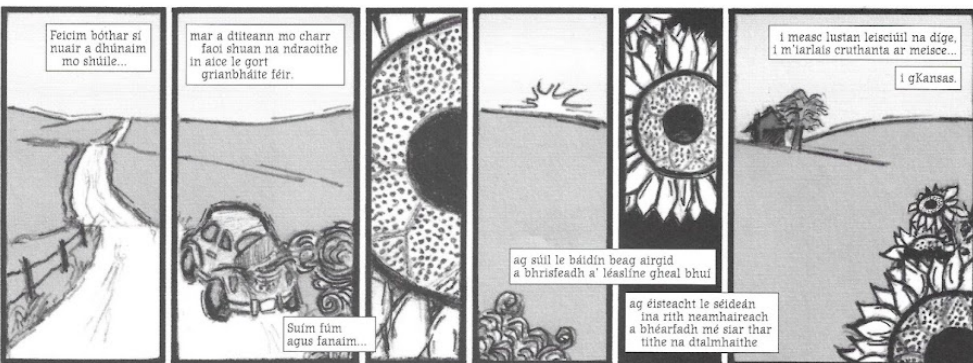
### The Irish Bookshop

580 Broadway, R. 1103  
New York, NY 10012  
Tel. 212-274-1923

Hours: 11-5 M-F, 1-4 Sat.



We have a large stock of Irish-interest books, in Irish and English.  
CATALOG AVAILABLE



### Tír Bhláthanna na Gréine dán grafach le Brian Ó Dubhghaill

The Land of Sunflowers, by Brian Doyle

I see a fairy road when I close my eyes / where my car falls into a magic slumber near a field of sundrenched grass / I sit and wait / hoping for a little silver boat that would break the bright yellow horizon / listening for a heedless gust of wind that would bear me west over the farmer's houses / amidst the lazy ditchweed, a complete drunken changeling / in Kansas.

The Land of Sunflowers, by Brian Doyle

Tír Bhláthanna na Gréine  
dán grafach le Brian Ó Dubhghaill

I see a fairy road when I close my eyes / where my car falls into a magic slumber near a field of sundrenched grass / I sit and wait / hoping for a little silver boat that would break the bright yellow horizon / listening for a heedless gust of wind that would bear me west over the farmer's houses / amidst the lazy ditchweed, a complete drunken changeling / in Kansas.