

SPECIAL CELTIC ISSUE!

Lite

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to residents of
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metropolitan area.

MARCH/APRIL 2001

Baltimore's Literary Newspaper



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TOP STORY

Seamus Heaney and the Bog People

*An Introduction to the
Poetry of Seamus Heaney
for the American Reader*

The central symbol of the Celtic-Druidic Religion is the severed head. It is a symbol out of the barbarous past, buried in history, in the collective unconscious, and literally in the peat bogs of Europe. For us, it evokes the horror of human sacrifice, but for the Celts, it had other meanings. The Celts believed the head was the seat of the soul and the severed, disembodied head was oracular. It spoke to them, the living, from the realm of the dead, linking the two worlds. It was also the source of poetry because the head of the inspired poet is, in a sense—disembodied, oracular—

linking our everyday struggle with boredom and necessity to the world of imagination and spirit. In the work of Irish Poet and Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney, the sufferings and griefs of the dead generations parallel and illuminate those of the present. Heaney excavates Celtic Ireland's past as a way of understanding and, hopefully, redeeming its violent present, and in the process, unearths many powerful metaphorical connections. His poetry is essential reading for its sensuality and resonance of sound, for the richness of its language, for both the delicacy and daring

force of its imagery, and for the depth and breadth of its vision of the human situation.

Catholic-born Seamus Heaney grew up on a farm in Northern Ireland, and it is apparent in many of his poems that he is intimately familiar with the daily and seasonal rhythms of farm life. Consequently, it is no coincidence that one of the central metaphors in Heaney's work is "digging." In a literal sense, digging in the dark loam to plant or harvest the potato crop, to harvest peat for fuel, to uncover the artifacts of a past history. But why, one might ask,

Continued on page 4

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Literary March/April

A Bi-Monthly Potpourri of Literary Events

(Available online at www.toad.net/~pkinlock/calendar.html)

Consecutive Reading Series

Friday, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

8:00 p.m. Friday Night Music Series and Open Mike. Mariposa Center for Creative Expression, 5000 Berwyn Rd., College Park, MD. Cover \$5. For schedule/info, call (301) 513-9422/(301) 881-8012.

Monday, March 5, 12, 19, 26

7:30 p.m. SLAMicide! downstairs at XandO, 3003 N. Charles St., Charles Village. Donation \$5. Open mic—local and national features—slam. Cash prize for 1st and 2nd place SLAM winners! Hosts: Baltimore Slammaster Nicki Miller and Granma Dave Schein. For directions, call (410) 889-7076. For more info, contact Nicki at: GalAengus@aol.com, or Dave at: grammadave@yahoo.com. *March 5: Taalam Acey/Newark; March 12: Sarah Cowie; March 19: 2000 National Indie Slam Champion Shane Koyczan; March 26: TBA.*

Tuesday, March 6, 13, 20, 27

8:30 p.m. Tell the World, open mic poetry and spoken word reading at the One World Cafe, 904 S. Charles St., Federal Hill. Hosted by Tom Swiss. For more info, call (410) 455-5325 or email tms@infamous.net.

9:00 p.m. Open reading at Funk's Democratic Coffee Spot, 1818 Eastern Ave., Fells Point. For more info, call (410) 276-FUNK.

Literary March

Thursday, March 1

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Timonium. Christopher Philips discusses and signs his book *Socrates Cafe: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy*.

6:30 p.m. First Thursday Evening at Carroll County Art Council Gallery, 15 E. Main St., Westminster, presents the poetic group "Quatrain," featuring Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka, Kathleen Corcoran, Norma Chapman, Liliane roy Anders and Denny Stein. The group will also read the poetry of Lidia Kosk in both Polish and English. Music by Piotr Kosicki and Helen VoDinh on cello. Free. Refreshments.

Saturday, March 3

2:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Novelist Sandra Jackson-Opoku reads and signs her book *Hot Johnny (And the Women Who Loved Him)*

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Woodholme. Matthew Olshan discusses and signs *Finn*, a modern-day retelling of Mark Twain's classic, with a teenage girl and a very pregnant young Mexican as the main characters.

Sunday, March 4

3:00 p.m. Bibelot-Canton. Diane Theil reads from her book of poetry *Echolocations*.

Monday, March 5

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. Student Writers Alliance. Hosted by Howard County teacher Sindy Parrot, students are welcome to participate in this advanced group of high school writers for feedback on their work. For more info,

call (410) 203-9001.

Wednesday, March 7

7:00 p.m. University of Baltimore, Thumel Business Center, Room 003. Usha Akella, a 1996 PubDesign grad, returns to UB from New York to celebrate the simultaneous publication in India of her first book of poems, most of which she wrote while a student. Of *Kali Dances. So Do I*, one reviewer writes, "The imagery is bold and forthright, exemplifying the presence of Kali...these poems speak to a definite and unmistakable feminine force." Book signing follows. Free.

Function@the Junction reading series, the Coffee Junction, 803 Frederick Rd., Catonsville. Selected creative writing students from Catonsville High School read. Open reading follows. Donation \$2. For more info, call (410) 719-7717.

Thursday, March 8

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Canton. Poets Felicia Morgenstern and Hilary Tham read from their latest books. They will be accompanied by the jazz group Spice.

Sunday, March 11

4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse at Minas. Kendra Kopelke and Jane Satterfield read.

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. Wine Glass Poets. Join this eclectic group of serious poetry lovers as they read and listen to each other's original work. For more info, call (410) 203-9001.

Monday, March 12

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Timonium. Mystery writer Tim Cockey will discuss his latest book *Hearse of a Different Color*.

Wednesday, March 14

7:00 p.m. Borders-Towson. Join hosts Mike Schirmer and Jodi Miller who explain how the Internet is revolutionizing the way many people are tracing their family roots.

Thursday, March 15

5:00 p.m. Loyola College, 4501 N. Charles Street, McManus Theatre. Author James Richardson reads from his work. For more info, call (410) 617-5024.

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Canton. POETS INK WORKSHOP™. The Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society invites both beginning and experienced writers to share their work in a positive setting. Poems and short prose are welcome. Please bring ten copies to share. Poet, teacher and editor Hugh Burgess moderates the workshop.

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Cross Keys. Morgan Llywelyn discusses and signs her newest novel of Irish history *1921*.

7:30 p.m. Borders-Towson. Photographer James Gleason discusses his new book and postcard set *Contemplating Ireland*.

Friday, March 16

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Cross Keys. Peter Adams presents a slide show exploration and discussion that will feature the history, archaeological digs, pottery, frescoes and sculptures of the Minoan civilization. Donna Crivello will discuss the olives and olive oil of Crete, and cooking with Greek olives and olive oil. First come, first served. No reservations.

8:00 p.m. Bibelot-Woodholme. An Evening of Lite Verse. A special evening with featured readers including Lalita Noronha-Blob, Marcos Castillo and Joan Yasenchka of the American Red Cross will discuss ongoing relief efforts to aid Indian earthquake victims. Open reading follows. Bring something to read, bring a friend, bring a donation. For more info, email lite@toadmail.com.

Saturday, March 17-Saturday, April 14

8:00 p.m. Maryland Ensemble Theatre opens its fifth season with *Romeo and Juliet*. Showtimes Fri. and Sat. at 8 p.m., with an additional 8 p.m. performance on Thur., April 5 and 2:00 p.m. matinee on Sun., April 8. Runs through April 14. Cultural Arts Center, 15 W. Patrick St., in downtown Frederick, MD (between Market and Court Sts.) Mainstage season subscriptions are \$60; individual tickets \$16/adults, \$13/students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased at the Theatre box office, by phone at (301) 694-4744, or online at www.marylandensemble.org.

Sunday, March 18

2:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Rom. Dr Gillian Gill lectures on Mary Baker Eddy, Agatha Christie and Florence Nightingale.

Monday, March 19

The Big Literary "Spot" Lites

- Bibelot-Canton, 2400 Boston St., Baltimore. Phone: (410) 276-9700.
- Bibelot-Cross Keys, 40 Village Square, Baltimore. Phone: (410) 532-8818.
- Bibelot-Timonium Crossing, 2080 York Rd. Phone: (410) 308-1888.
- Bibelot-Woodholme, 1819 Reisterstown Rd., Pikesville. Phone: (410) 653-6933.
- Borders-Columbia, 6151 Columbia Crossing Circle. Phone: (410) 290-0062.
- Borders-Towson, 415 York Rd. Phone: (410) 296-0791.
- Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, 400 Cathedral St., Baltimore. Phone: (410) 396-5494/396-5847.
- WordHouse Salon at Minas, 733-35 S. Ann St., Fells Point. Phone: (410) 732-4258.
- XandO, 3003 North Charles St., Charles Village. Phone: (410) 889-7076.

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle. "Writing Workout" hosted by members of the Baltimore Writer's Alliance. This month join Jane M. Frutchey for "Editing Your Nonfiction Manuscript for Publication."

Thursday, March 22

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Cross Keys. Amy Wilentz reads from and signs her novel *Martyr's Crossing*, set amid the contemporary turmoil in Jerusalem.

Wednesday, March 21

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Jonathan Lowy reads and signs his book *Elvis and Nixon: A Novel*.

Friday, March 23

2:00 p.m. Albemarle County Historical Society Talk (), part of the Virginia Festival for the Book (), Charlottesville, VA. Megan Smolenyak, lead researcher for the (2000) PBS "Ancestors" series and author of the companion book, *In Search of Our Ancestors*, takes part in a panel discussion addressing the use of primary sources to help tell genealogical stories. Of interest to family history writers.

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. Open Mic Poetry.

Monday, March 26

5:00 p.m. Loyola College, 4501 N. Charles St., McManus Theatre. Poets Julianna Baggott and Joe Wenderoth read their work. For more info, call (410) 617-5024.

Wednesday, March 28

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Primus St. John reads from his book *Communion: Poems 1976-1998*.

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Timonium. Cheryl Bernard reads from and signs her comic novel *Turning on the Girls* that envisions a world designed by women.

Friday, March 30

4:30-6:00 p.m. Loyola College, 4501 N. Charles St. Conference on the work of Andre Dubus. Keynote address by Rev. Patrick Samway, S.J., former literary editor of *America*. Location TBA. For more info, call (410) 617-2000.

7:30-8:30 p.m. Loyola College. Fiction Reading by Andre Dubus III, son of the conference's subject and an accomplished novelist in his own right. Location TBA. For more info, call (410) 617-2000.

Saturday, March 31

2:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Dundalk Ave. Branch, 912 Dundalk Ave., (410) 396-8547. Rochelle Alers reads and signs her book *Private Passions*.

Literary April/May

Monday, April 2

5:00 p.m. Loyola College, 4501 N. Charles St., McManus Theatre. Author Lydia Davis reads from her work. For more info, call (410) 617-5024.

Tuesday, April 3, 10, 17, 24

6:00-8:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Poetry Writing Workshops led by Melvin E. Brown.

Saturday, April 21

11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Maryland Poetry Fair. Meet

representatives of small presses, literary magazines, writers' organizations and network with other writers at this daylong celebration. Exhibitors and authors may reserve a table in the Main Hall by calling the Pratt's PR office at (410) 396-5494.

11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Main Branch. POETS INK WORKSHOP™. Meet with Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society editors Hugh Burgess, Rosemary Klein, Alan Reese and Barbara Simon in the historic Poe Room for an informal discussion of your poems. Bring several typed copies. Share your work, get new inspiration and possible publication.

11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Wheeler Auditorium. Baltimore poet and actress Jaki Terry will act as a dynamic poetry coach for the incurably shy. Bring two poems and get ready to stand up and read.

1:00-3:00 p.m. The Lite Circle reopens Poetry in the Shade, Something Special Coffee House, 504 Main Street, Laurel. Hosted by Hilbert Turner Jr. Featured readers: Karen Jelenfy and J. David Scott. For more info, email: lite@toadmail.com.

2:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Wheeler Auditorium. Reading and signing with poet Poet Allen Grossman.

Sunday, April 22

2:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Toi Derricotte, Cornelius Eady and local "Cave Canem" poets read their work.

7:30 p.m. Marshy Point Nature Reserve. Reader's Forum sponsored by the Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society. Bring some of your favorite poems to share after listening to featured reader Dr. James McKusick, Chairman of English at UMBC and editor of *Literature & Nature*. For more info, call (410) 744-0349 or email wordrite1@gateway.net.

Wednesday, May 9

7:00 p.m. "5th Annual Poetry Night" at Historical Old Salem Church and Cemetery, 700 block Ingleside Ave. (off Baltimore National Pike, Rt. 40), Catonsville. Five local poets from the group "Quatrain" will read: Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka, Norma Chapman, Liliane R. Anders, Kathie Corcoran, and Denny Stein. The group will also read the poetry of Lidia Kosk, a corresponding Quatrain member who lives in Warsaw. Musical organ interlude by Marshall Anders. For more info, call (410) 744-7844.

To Have Your Event Listed

please send information to:
Dan Cuddy, Calendar Editor
41 Odeon Ct.
Baltimore, MD 21234
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lite@toadmail.com

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NOTICE

Please note that our sequence of issues has changed. *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper* will now be published January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December.

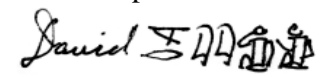
ONE OR MORE WORDS FROM OUR EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Cead Mile Failte!

A hundred thousand welcomes! In this, our Celtic issue, Lite presents work speaking to the culture and traditions of an ancient people who ranged from Ireland to western China and who settled the British Isles over a millennium before Christ. Over a quarter of Americans (including Lite staff members Sam Beard, Vonnie Winslow Crist, Patti Kinlock, Wendy Stevens, and yours truly) can claim descent from the Celtic peoples of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Man, and Brittany.

The Irish contribution to world literature is well-known, comprising part of a long tradition of Celtic artistry and craftsmanship which produced torcs, tams, tartans, tall tales, ballads, bagpipes, and harps. Our two guest editors—Irish-American poets Dan Cuddy and Michael Fallon—have carried on this grand tradition. We are grateful for their efforts in helping to make this special issue a reality.



David W. Kriebel,
Editor

An Evening of Lite Verse

India Benefit Reading

Friday, March 16, 8:00 PM Bibelot-Woodholme

Featured reader: Lalita Noronha-Blob
Featured speakers: Marcos Castillo & Joan Yasenchka,
American Red Cross

Open reading follows.

All donations benefit India earthquake relief.

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Myself and the man
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Poetry in the Shade

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Happy Birthday "Dr. T"



from the Tuna Patrol.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Cont. from front cover

this metaphor of digging? In Heaney's poetry, digging down becomes a way to link the conscious and the unconscious; to link the world of the present to the world of the past; to look for origins and answers; to find inspiration, understanding, hope, reconciliation—peace. But peace is exceedingly difficult to find in an Ireland locked in sectarian struggle with a long history of invasions, conquests, colonizations, famines, and rebellions. A little thought, however, leads us to see that this succession of catastrophes is not just the story of Ireland, but the story of Europe as well as America and just about everywhere.

Thus digging is a driving metaphorical force in Seamus Heaney's poetry. Reading the span of his work is to watch him deepen and broaden this metaphor and to go on to find others that make compelling and valuable connections. I do not say, however, that it is easy for the average American reader of poetry to feel at home with Heaney's work. His vocabulary and idiom are quite different from ours, and they take some getting used to. While one may not have to struggle too much with language and historical background in Heaney's first two books: *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark*; in the next six books—*Wintering Out*, *Stations*, *North*, *Field Work*, *Station Island*, and *The Haw Lantern*—it helps if the reader has a general knowledge of the major events in Irish history over the last 1300 years and knows something of the nature of the last thirty-some years of conflict in Northern Ireland. If this sounds daunting, I would hope that the poet's early work will inspire the reader to go on; besides, many of us have read Yeats, and certainly Yeats' language requires at least some adjustment, and one must know something of his spiritualism, his use of Irish Mythology, and his eccentric theory of history; and like much of Heaney's work, Yeats' poetry demands some knowledge of Irish politics and history.

There are, however, two reasons why Heaney's work is more difficult than Yeats' for the contemporary American reader. First, at one time or another, many of us have had the benefit of being taught Yeats in the classroom, as well as the benefit of all the biographical material and scholarship that has accumulated over the last sixty-some years since his death. Comparatively, Heaney scholarship has just begun and is much less well known. Second, Heaney often writes in the colloquial idiom of contemporary Ireland. This is self-consciously Irish-English, not the English-English with which we are much more familiar (in Yeats for example). Still, Heaney's language isn't as difficult to understand as a thick Irish brogue. It is more of an Irish lilt with the occasional echo of Gaelic, the lost language of the tribe.

I admit frankly that I had trouble reading Heaney's work when I first encountered it in *North* and again, when I came up hard against it in *Station Island*. The language immediately made me a bit frustrated, especially since many of the words I didn't understand were apparently "Irishisms" and weren't in my Webster's Dictionary. I was tempted at times to bury *Station Island* in the "get to later" pile, but there were poems that moved me very much like "A Kite for Michael and Christopher," and "The Railway Children." I had struggled with the work of many poets before and finally seen the poems run clear. I rea-

soned that a poet that could write pieces as lovely as these deserved the risk of more attention.

I find the lines from the poems mentioned above lovely for their rich sound as well as for their delicate imagery. I enjoy saying them, seeing them in my imagination, and feeling their meanings resonate within me, but I mention them not because I think they are necessarily Heaney's best, but because they are so immediately accessible. There are many poems that are richer in all these qualities and that have greater depth and complexity. I must add here, too, that after struggling a while with *Station Island*, I began to read Heaney's early work in *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark*. The work in these books is more accessible and less directly concerned with politics and history. It is the work of a young man, a farm boy from the North of Ireland, in love with the sensual world he was born into, who has an admiration for the poetry of Patrick Cavanaugh and Ted Hughes. The poems are concrete and immediate and delight in the guttural sounds of Irish-English and the Anglo-Saxon undertones still present in our language. These two books are the best introduction to Heaney's work. The way to go from there is to read the books in order as Heaney deepens and broadens his vision.

One of the chief pleasures of reading Heaney's work chronologically is to observe, as I said earlier, how he develops the metaphor of digging. Take for example these lines from the poem "Digging" from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), Heaney's first book:

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging...

To read this poem—where Heaney imagines his father and grandfather digging for various reasons: to plant flowers, to plant or harvest potatoes, to dig peat for fuel—is to witness Heaney's discovery of what will become the central metaphor in his early and middle work. On one level, the poem is an attempt to reconcile Heaney's chosen professions as poet and teacher with the hard, physical farm labor of his father, grandfather, and his ancestors as the two closing stanzas of the poem illustrate:

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap

SPOTLIGHT

Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

In intensely tribal Northern Ireland, a Catholic who ascends to a white collar job may be regarded with suspicion because he or she has crossed the barriers of tribe and of social class which have made it difficult for Catholics to rise to the middle and upper classes for centuries. Anyone who rises above his class may be at once admired and envied and/or viewed as a traitor to the tribe. It is important to Heaney to reconcile this conflict to make peace with himself, his family and his tribe. The leap of thought in the last three lines of the poem demonstrates how he accomplishes this. The pen becomes an instrument for digging. But digging for what? The poem is not just a realization that the pen can become a tool for a kind of digging. It is also a realization of what it is a digging pen might find. The spade cuts through "living roots." It digs down through the layers of individual consciousness to the unconscious, and further, into the groundwater of the collective unconscious to uncover what is hidden in memory, history and the past.

The digging metaphor appears again strikingly in the last poem in Heaney's second collection, *Door into the Dark* (1969), titled "Bogland." Here the bog that the "pioneers" dig down into clearly becomes a metaphor for the various layers of consciousness, memory, and history:

Our pioneers keep striking
Inwards and downwards,

Every layer they strip
Seems camped on before.
The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage.
The wet centre is bottomless.

A bog is the bed of an ancient pond or lake that has gradually grown shallow and filled itself in over time, as each layer of dead vegetation is packed down by the weight of what has grown up and died above it. Peat is the densely packed remains of this layering, and dried into bricks in the sun, it makes an excellent, clean burning fuel for cooking and heating a house. The Irish have harvested it for centuries, as have peoples in other parts of Europe. And with each layer of sliced sods, the digger of peat descends further into the living roots of history. A whole gamut of ancient artifacts such as swords, shields, crowns, and caldrons have been found in peat bogs (where the Celts often tossed or buried them as sacrificial offerings to their gods), as well as the bones of long extinct animals like the great Irish elk. But there is something else to be found down there far more enlightening and disturbing. It is clear that peat bogs were often the sites for the ritual murder of human sacrifice. It is here that we find the miraculously well preserved remains of the victims, their heads often severed from their bodies, stained black by the peat, and preserved so well, in fact, that we are astonished by the beautiful calm on the face of Tollund Man, one of the so called "Bog People" who was ritually hanged about 2,000 years ago.

Door into the Dark was published in 1969, an important year in Irish History. It was the year British troops were sent to occupy Northern Ireland, and it marked a turning point in the career of Seamus Heaney. The late sixties were

the era of the Catholic Civil Rights movement, and its clashes with police and Protestant extremists became increasingly violent. The situation escalated out of the control of the government and police until British troops had to be sent in to protect the Catholic community. The occupation, however, instead of calming things down, revived the old resentments between the Catholic Irish and the occupying British forces. By 1972, with the Bloody Sunday Massacre of Irish Catholics by British troops during a civil rights march, any small degree of trust the Catholics had for British Army had completely dissolved. The IRA, nearly extinct until the sectarian violence and occupation revived it, began an all out bombing campaign, which escalated the level of violence once again. The situation degenerated into a daily war in the streets with both Catholic and Protestant civilians caught in the crossfire between the IRA on the one side; and the Ulster Defense League (a Protestant extremist group), the police, and the British Army on the other. This is what began the latest cycle of murder and revenge in the North of Ireland, which endures even now, as the forces of peace try to overcome new outbreaks of sectarian violence. As a Catholic who was involved in the civil rights movement and as a citizen of Northern Ireland who had borne witness to the terror in the streets, Heaney could not help but become more directly concerned with the sectarian struggle itself and the place of a poet and a man of conscience within it. He remains loyal to the Catholic struggle for equality while refusing to endorse the violence of the IRA or to be co-opted by them. Heaney begins to address "the troubles" in the press and more directly in his poetry and so becomes perceived (willing or not) as a spokesman for the moderate Catholic faction in Northern Ireland. Yet he has insisted that he is speaking only for himself and refuses to become labeled as the voice of any faction. Again, he searches for a metaphor adequate to his task.

Somewhere during this period, Seamus Heaney came across Dr. P. V. Glob's book, *The Bog People*, which contains the black and white photographs of the corpses exhumed from peat bogs in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe. It is an eye-opening book, full of archaeological detective work as Glob tries to discover how and why the victims were sacrificed and came to lie in the peat workings where they were found. Glob's book contains photographs of Tollund Man, as mentioned above, which are particularly striking in that the man's face is so well preserved that he could almost have died in his sleep a few minutes ago; except that he is nearly blackened by the effects of tannic acid in the peat, and he still wears the braided noose around his neck that was used to strangle him. Upon looking at these photographs, one can't help but be moved to wonder how a man who died in this manner can have such an expression of beautiful peace.

Heaney empathizes with these victims of long ago sacrifice but is also aware of his role as a poet-voyeur who makes use of their sufferings to illuminate the cruelties of the present. However, the important element here is that, as hard as it is for us to understand, their very sacrifice was an act of hope. In the case of Tollund Man, the sacrificial victim was literally planted in the ground with a belly full of seeds, intended to impregnate the fertility goddess Nerthus. The ritual sacrifice was a wedding of sorts to make the earth fruitful. Here Heaney makes a valuable imaginative connection. These long dead victims of ritual

Continued on p. 7

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L I T E B Y T E S

ANNOUNCEMENTS

•We receive a calendar of events for children for the 29 branches of Baltimore's **Enoch Pratt Free Library**. Here are a few examples of events in March. Parents should contact their local library for a schedule of events.

Canton Branch, 1030 South Ellwood Ave. (410)396-8548

—"Here Comes Trouble"-Preschool Storytime. Thursday, March 8, 10:30 a.m. Ages 3-5. Stories, finger plays, and activities about being naughty.

Hollins-Payson Branch, 31 South Payson St. (410)396-8558.

—Leprechaun stories, Saturday, March 17 at 11 a.m.

Northwood Branch, 4420 Loch Raven Blvd. (410)396-6076.

—Read To Your Baby. Saturdays March 10 & April 14, 10 a.m. For parents with babies up to 24 months. Call to register

—Gossamer Wings. Wednesdays, March 14 & 28, April 11 & 25, 6 p.m. Float on the magic wings of words, their sounds and rhythms. A poetry-writing workshop for children 6-12. Call to register.

—St. Patrick's Day. Thursday, March 15, 3:30 p.m. Ages 6-12. Stories, songs, and crafts celebrating this very green holiday. Call to register.

—Bookercise. Thursdays, March 22 & 29, April 5 & 12, 11 a.m. Ages 2 to 6. An exercise program using stories and songs. Call to register.

•March is **Borders Explorers Month For Children**, a month-long spotlight devoted to reading & exploring the world around us. Join Borders Towson every Saturday in March (except March 3rd) beginning at 1 p.m. for science, dinosaurs, wildlife, and magis.

•**Flumpa, the wide-eyed adventurous tree frog & his friend Wendy Whitten** will be at White Marsh Mall 10 a.m. on March 13; at Borders Books & Music Towson on April 21 at 8 p.m.

•On Sunday, March 4 at 4 p.m., **Distilled Theatre**, an unincorporated collective, will present a dramatic reading of *Sexton Plays the Goddess*, a new performance text at Minas Gallery 733 S. Ann St., Fells Point. The reading is free and open to the public. Space is limited, so please arrive early. Call (410) 732-4258 for more information. (Note on the background of the play—in 1974 Anne Sexton traveled north to Massachusetts. She got off the train in Baltimore and visited a friend who managed The Goddess Strip Club. Her friend ushered the dancers offstage and charged on the lights. Sexton read unpublished works. The audience stayed to listen. Shortly thereafter, the poet continued north and gave herself to death.)

•**The Maryland Writers' Association** has teamed up with internet publisher **1st Books.com** to sponsor a contest for book writers, and promises the Grand Prize Winner that his or her book will be published as a bound "Print-On-Demand" book by 1st Books.com. That publishing offer has a value of \$4,000 to the winner. The contest is divided into 5 genres: Science Fiction/Fantasy, Mystery/Thriller, Romance/Mainstream Fiction, Non-Fiction, and Children's Books. The winner in each category will have his or her book published as an "E-Book," a value of \$500.

Contest Rules: Entrants must submit a cover letter & the first 3 chapters (50 pages maximum) to MWA by March 17, 2001. Manuscripts must be of an original unpublished book that shall be completed & available for review by April 10,

2001. Must be typed, double spaced, on 8.5 x 11 white paper with 1 inch margins, and title & page numbers in a header on each page. Author's name must not appear anywhere on the manuscript, but be in a cover letter that gives the title, the category of competition, author's address & phone number, & a brief bio of the writer.

Mail entries (postmarked no later than 3/17/01) to MWA & 1st Books.com Book Contest, P.O. Box 129 Arnold, MD 21012. There must be a check for the submission fee (\$10 for MWA members, \$15 for non-members. Must have SASE with sufficient postage in order to be returned. Winners announced at MWA's Conference on April 21, 2001. For more info, call (410)349-8614 or (301)899-2840.

•**The Smith College 43rd Annual Used Book Sale** will be held March 30 thru April 1 at the Towson Armory, Washington and Chesapeake Avenues. Hours are: Friday, March 30 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (\$5 donation from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. for rapacious book dealers and ravenous collectors who want to scurry from table to table gathering up the choice of the crop), and on Saturday March 31st from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Sunday April 1 from 12 noon to 5 pm when every item is half price, and then from 6 to 8 p.m. when the bargain hunters pay \$2 for all they can carry. For more information call (410) 821-6241.

•For current and upcoming classes at the **School 33 Art Center**, 1427 Light St., Baltimore, call Jan Razauskas at 410-396-4641 tues thru Sat *:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tell her Lite sent you.

•**Christopher T. George** has written the first modern transatlantic history of the battles for Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia that marked the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake Bay area. With an international perspective, George used sources in several countries to show what happened as the United States fought its way to respect among the nations of the world. The title of the book is *Terror on the Chesapeake, The War of 1812 on the Bay*. Published by White Mane Press, Hardcover \$39.95 If your retailer doesn't have a copy in stock, order it. You may want to try the Maryland Historical Society store first.

•**The 20th annual Artscape** will be held on July 13, 14 & 15. Will the weather be as good as the last couple of years or will the heat & humidity return like an overly ornate poem? Will there be celebrity readers to equal last year's Billy Collins and Ethelbert Miller? Will Rachel Eisler, a one-woman hurricane of energy, inspiration and organization, be able to duplicate last year's successful literary arts program? July will tell its tale.

•A trust fund has been established for the children of **John P. Darda**, the owner of the **City Cafe** in Baltimore who was murdered last month. Donations may be sent to: John Darda Family Trust Fund, c/o Mercantile Bank, 1100 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21210

Lite expresses condolences to Mr. Darda's family and friends.

•Artistic Director Michael Kahn and The Shakespeare Theatre Board of Trustees announced that award-winning actor **Ralph Fiennes** will receive **The Shakespeare Theatre's 14th annual William Shakespeare Award for Classical Theatre** (the "Will Award") on Saturday, March 3rd at a black-tie gala at the Library of Congress (101 Independence Ave., SE). The "Will Award" is an annual tribute given by The Shakespeare Theatre to persons who have made a significant contribution to classical theatre in America.

Top Story, cont. from p.5

violence are like the murdered victims of present day sectarian violence whose bodies are found in roadside ditches, in woods and farmyards, or with their severed limbs in the blackened embers of bombed-out pubs.

In the poem, "The Tollund Man," from Heaney's third volume, *Wintering Out* (1972), he imagines going to Jutland, in Denmark, to the museum where Tollund Man is housed and then musing on the corpse of this ancient murder. As the poem progresses, he is led to a kind of desperate prayer:

I could risk blasphemy,
Consecrate the cauldron bog
Our holy ground and pray
Him to make germinate

The scattered, ambushed
Flesh of labourers,
Stockinged corpses
Laid out in farmyards,

Tell-tale skin and teeth
Flecking the sleepers
Of the four young brothers, trailed
For miles along the lines...

The prayer here is that the deaths of these murdered victims in Modern Ireland could somehow be fruitful, and "germinate" in the way of sacrificial victims and lead to a healing of the land or, at least, to some hope. The tragic thing is that Heaney knows they will not. More than likely these deaths will lead to another round of killing and revenge. In the last stanza, Heaney concludes the poem by reflecting:

Out there in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy and at home.

The final triptych, "lost, Unhappy and at home," states the full paradox and tragedy of living with the weekly mounting death toll. One feels hopeless and lost in the face of it and, disturbingly, at home.

In his fourth book, *North*, published in 1975, Heaney begins to explore the connections made earlier in "The Tollund Man" in more depth. The title, "North," has many meanings and associations for him. First, of course, it refers to the North of Ireland. But also to the "The Northmen" (another name for the Vikings) and their invasion of Ireland, and finally to the route of the Normans and the various other English invaders of Ireland who have landed first on the beaches of Ulster, the part of Ireland that is closest to England. In this book, more than any other, Heaney tries to understand the present by looking back into the past: the long history of invasions, conquests, colonizations, and rebellions that are the basis of every Irishman's original sin, which is that he or she has inherited the birthright of either the conquered or of the conqueror.

The Protestants of the North identify quite naturally with the English conquerors. Traditionally, they have been England's bulwark against the Catholics.

Since the rebellion of the 1920s and the partition of Ireland into North and South, they have, with good cause, viewed the Catholic Minority there as a kind of fifth column of the Republican South who long for an eventual union with the Republic that would then put Catholics in the majority in an, at last, united Ireland.

The Catholics of the North (and those of the South as well) look at the Protestants of the

North as invaders, literally "planted" there by the English to keep the Catholic Irish from ever taking their island back. This is historically accurate. The North was colonized by the English primarily because the English grew tired of reconquering Ireland every time the Irish rebelled. Over the centuries, many of the Catholic Norman and English overlords became assimilated and sided with the native population, often to lead rebellions against the English. The English wanted a permanent hold on the land and needed a class of unshakably loyal subjects to hold it for them. Consequently, the largest and most permanent invasion of Celtic Ireland was the English settlement of the North by Scottish Presbyterians and English Episcopalians in the early 17th century. It is they who now hold most of land that was once forcibly taken from the original Catholic Irish. It is not, as many Americans believe, that the Protestants of Ulster outnumber the Catholics about 3 to 1 simply by chance. The English made a strategic decision to import enough Protestants to make sure that they did, indeed, outnumber the Catholics in Ulster, making a successful rebellion in the North or any attempt to retake the entire island by the South nearly impossible.

You see how it stands. Nothing stirs up hatred anywhere in the world more than a dispute over who ultimately has the right to the land. Consider, as Protestants do, how many generations must pass before they finally have the right to the land they have lived on and country they have lived in now for generations. Now consider, as Catholics do, how many generations must pass before they have more than second-class citizenship on what they see as their own land in their own country. Even an inspired optimist would admit that it is difficult to reconcile these contradictory points of view.

In *North*, Heaney explores these issues and others, sometimes directly in poems like "Act of Union" which compares England's relationship with Ireland to a rape with the Ulster settlement as its angry offspring; a kind of Rosemary's Baby in the womb of maiden Ireland, condemning her in perpetuity to struggle with herself. But most of the other poems are less direct, and many examine what the role of the poet and man of conscience might be in dealing with the current conflict or search for some small gleam of hope that the long feud may one day come to an end. The bog people reappear here in a number of poems. One of the most striking and controversial of these is "Punishment." In this poem, Heaney again contemplates the image of one of Dr. Glob's Bog People, a blindfolded girl who was drowned with a weighing stone tied around her neck, her body thrown in on top of that of an older man. Glob concludes that the girl and her lover were executed for committing adultery, and Heaney takes part of his cue from this. But one of the interesting things about this execution is that the girl's head was shaved, and a shock of her blond hair thrown into the bog on top of her body. A woman's shaved head can mark her publicly as a traitor to her tribe, even in our own era. One might connect this with the punishment meted out by the French during WWII, when they cut off the hair of women who slept with German soldiers; or more immediately, as Heaney does, to the punishment of Catholic Irishwomen who have consorted with British Soldiers in the occupied North of Ireland. As the poem progresses, Heaney addresses the victim directly, imagining the girl's kinship with her collaborating sisters in the contemporary North as exemplified by the last 5 1/2 stanzas of the poem:

Little adulteress,
Before they punished you

You were flaxen-haired,
Undernourished, and your
tar-black face was beautiful.
My poor scapegoat,

I almost love you
But would have cast, I know
the stones of silence.
I am the artful voyeur

Of your brain's exposed
And darkened combs,
Your muscles' webbing
And all your numbered bones:

I who have stood dumb
When your betraying sisters,
cauled in tar,
wept by the railings,

who would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge.

Here, the speaker of the poem admits that he would have done nothing to save the girl, as he has done nothing to save her contemporary sisters whom he has seen "cauled" (Their heads covered in hot tar, presumably after having their hair shaved off) for what he takes to be a similar crime. In the last lines of the poem, the speaker says that he would "connive" with those members of the gathered crowd who find the act outrageously uncivilized and cruel; yet "understand," as one of the tribe, exactly why the tribe reserves its most intimate hatred for those who are seen as traitors. The word "exact" comes close to the word "appropriate" which is, again, a shade away from the word "just." This choice of words comes perilously close to saying that the speaker condones the act and stops just short of it enough to make us wonder.

Precisely because of this bit of ambiguity, some Protestant critics in the North of Ireland have condemned the poem. It is not hard to see, given the extraordinary tension there, why this poem by a Catholic poet and spokesman from "the other side" can be read as if the speaker in the poem were, to some degree or other, condoning the violence alluded to in the work. This, to me, is another indication of the extraordinary level of suspicion between the two factions. To an American reader, it may seem hard to imagine that anyone can really think Seamus Heaney is condoning the murder or caulding of feminine "traitors." But considering the superheated atmosphere in the North, the real problem the poem creates and the unstated fear on the part of Protestant critics may be, not that they have misread and are offended by the poem themselves, but that some Catholics might misread it as if it were an endorsement of IRA violence and those who condone it. One might imagine the supposed conversation between two Catholics:

"You see, Pat? Heaney, one of our own, says it right here. We should give those traitors what they deserve."

It is true that in an atmosphere of suspicion, anger and violence many people see what they want to see, and this poem could be read by those on both sides who lack moral equilibrium as a justification for a lazy conscience. This is a risky poem, but I think the human situation the poem tries to illuminate is worth the risks it takes. I would argue that the speaker in the poem is not so much Heaney himself as that of an invented persona. The poem is

written in the confessional style in the American tradition of poets like Lowell, Plath, and Snodgrass. It is a kind of Mea Culpa and confesses the guilt of the speaker. But the connection of this guilt to the poet himself is likely indirect. While Heaney himself probably never witnessed anything exactly like the scene described in the poem, he almost certainly has found himself in situations where he was afraid to act in the face of violence and/or injustice perpetrated by his own tribe. And he knows full well how common this predicament is for the rest of us. Would our collective consciences have been pricked if Heaney simply had made the speaker of the poem into a hero who saves the girl or if he had only wagged his finger at the bigots who are capable of committing such an act? The speaker in the poem has mixed feelings: he recognizes that the act is wrong, yet part of him understands and may even sympathize, to some extent, with the tribe's desire to revenge itself on "traitors." The poem is a kind of self-criticism and is really aimed more at Catholic complicity in such acts rather than at the Protestants. Clearly, the poem illuminates an all too human collaboration in such acts of vengeance because of a failure of conscience or a failure of nerve or both.

It may be hard for us to imagine the depths of the suspicion, anger, and hatred in the North of Ireland. To begin to understand, we must recognize that the divided society in the North is partly an inherited cultural condition (as I tried to explain earlier). The issue is which historical/cultural tradition and, consequently, which set of grievances one identifies with and is not simply a matter of one's religion, as the following joke illustrates:

A man is walking home through Londonderry slightly drunk after having had a few pints at the local pub. As he turns the corner onto a darkened street, two rough looking men cross the street and confront him.

"Are you a Catholic or a Protestant?" they ask.

The man straightens up, his eyes widened in fear, and looking alertly from one man to the other says,

"I'm an Atheist."

Without the slightest change in expression, the two men continue to stare at him a moment until one of them says,

"Well are you a Catholic Atheist or a Protestant Atheist?"

Years of atrophy have led to a culture of opposition, which, in turn, justifies the violent extremes on both sides. Hatred becomes almost necessary as a matter of cultural identity.

A few weeks ago I witnessed an incident that occurred in Northern Ireland that took my breath away. I happened to chance on a show called "Real TV." Someone was using a handheld camera to film an IRA funeral in the North of Ireland. It was attended by hundreds of men, women, and children of all ages; obviously a Catholic crowd. All of a sudden, there was a series of explosions. The confused crowd began to run from the smoke in all directions. Finally, the cameraman zoomed in on the cause of all the commotion, and there stood a man with two fistfuls of grenades, heaving them into the surrounding crowd. As he began to retreat, the angry crowd pursued him among the gravestones of the cemetery while he tossed his grenades and then fired bullets into the mass of his pursuers. The mob finally caught him and severely beat, but amazingly, did not kill him. The man was a Protestant extremist who had just been released from prison. The act is all the more shocking because the man stood in the center

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of the crowd with his weapons, knowing that his chances of survival were slim and did not care whom he killed as long as the victim was Catholic. He obviously wanted a very personal kind of revenge; but more importantly, he probably saw himself as a kind of martyr, willingly giving his life to destroy the peace process by trying to jump-start the cycle of violence again, hoping that the IRA would not be able to resist taking its revenge upon his own people. If you find this emotionally incomprehensible, you must realize that it is IRA guns and bombs that have helped create this kind of monster and that "justifies" his existence to many Protestants.

In *North*, besides evoking the bog people, Heaney explores the parallels between the feuding Viking invaders of Ireland's 8th century past and the current feud between religious factions to find some augury of a peaceful outcome. In "Funeral Rites" he alludes to *Njal's Saga*, one of a number of Icelandic Sagas, chronicling the ongoing betrayals and feuds of the Icelandic Vikings and the few exhausted periods of peace between them. He imagines a long funeral procession made up of both Catholics and Protestant mourners, snaking its way "out of the gap of the North" to the Boyne valley in the South of Ireland; the site of the Protestant victory and catastrophic Catholic defeat at the battle of the Boyne in 1690, but also the site of prehistoric burial mounds of Ireland's ancient past. The mourners, in a sense, are on common territory that encompasses their shared history. Heaney then imagines the mourners on both sides burying their dead together in one of the burial mounds as they roll a great stone across its "mouth." The poem goes on to envision the buried victims of Northern Ireland's feud as like Gunnar, one of the murdered Viking chieftains in *Njal's Saga*:

When they have put the stone
back in its mouth
we will drive north again
past Strang and Carling fjords,

the cud of memory
allayed for once, arbitration
of the feud placated,
imagining those under the hill

disposed like Gunnar
who lay beautiful
inside his burial mound,
though dead by violence

and unavenged.
Men said that he was chanting
verses about honor
and that four lights burned

in the corners of the chamber:
which opened then, as he turned
with a joyful face
to look at the moon.

"Unavenged" is the key word here. The collective dead on both sides of the sectarian struggle rejoice, like Gunnar, in being unavenged, and the unbroken succession of retaliatory murders finally comes to an end. This is the only way that Northern Ireland's wounds can begin to heal. The alternatives are either the complete massacre of one side or the destruction of both.

It is important to remember here that "Funeral Rites" was written sometime before *North* was published in 1975, obviously during some of the bloodiest days of the troubles. Peace must have seemed almost a pipe dream at the

time, and the fact that today there is an ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland at all seems a kind of miracle in itself. It is the effort of many on both sides, and peace can only come about with an end to the desire for revenge, a lessening of suspicion, some mutual respect, and recognition of shared interests.

With *Field Work* (1979), the collection which follows *North*, Heaney is nearly finished with his archaeologies and the "digging" metaphor. He goes on to invent new metaphorical devices and explore new parallels to address the troubles further in *Station Island*, and *The Haw Lantern* and then on to his more recent work, which is well worth reading, but is less directly concerned with the issues I have discussed here.

What I have written is intended as an introduction to the work of Seamus Heaney for American readers. I want to stress the word "introduction" because *Field Work*, *Station Island*, and the *Haw Lantern* contain what many consider to be among Heaney's best work. *The Glanmore Sonnets* in *Field Work* are a particular favorite of mine because of their extraordinary richness and beauty of sound, but there are a variety of pleasures as intense in the other books I have mentioned.

I hope that I have provided enough background and provoked enough interest for you to share some of my enthusiasm for the poems sampled here and to inspire you on to read and enjoy the body of Heaney's work. For those of you who want more of a critical overview than the one presented here and/or wish to read beyond what I have discussed, I highly recommend *Seamus Heaney* by Neil Corcoran, published by Faber and Faber (1986). There is also a book with the same title by Helen Vendler (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA: 1998), which addresses a longer span of Heaney's work. These are the most reader friendly books that I have come by.

Through language and poetry, Heaney explores the history and nature of the wounds that divide the Irish people in search of understanding, redress, reconciliation, hope. It is hard to think of a more honorable task for a poet to perform. His accomplishment might serve as a clarification and an inspiration to us Americans, who often undervalue the resources of our own American-English and are often unsure of what role a poet can or should serve in our own divided society. In the poem, "North," (the title poem of the collection, *North*) Heaney places himself on a beach listening to the crash of the sea and imagining the oracular voices of the long dead Viking warriors mingling with the roar and hiss of the surf. They both counsel and warn him, saying, "Lie down in the word hoard" and "Keep your eye clear as the bleb of an icicle." What is the "word hoard" if not Heaney's inherited language? Not so much the lost Gaelic, but the Irish-English he himself writes and speaks. In the "word hoard," words from all of Ireland's peoples are mingled. The language itself reflects Ireland's long history of invasions and conquests. There is the Gaelic, the Norse, the Norman French, the Anglo-Saxon, the English, and the Irish dialect of English, which is the accumulation of all these influences. To "lie down in the word hoard" is to listen to all of these voices. The language, like the peat bog, has its stratified layers. But always the ancient is joined with the new, the Norse with the Gaelic, the Gaelic with the English. Surely, if one keeps a clear eye and excavates deeply and carefully enough, an answer to the troubles must be buried in the language somewhere. There is nowhere else a poet might find it.

MICHAEL FALLON

FEATURE

Telling Our Stories

A Celtic knot tattooed on a bare shoulder, a labyrinth laid out in stone on grass, a concert played on Celtic harp - all remnants of a culture which flourished for hundreds of years dating from 1500 BCE. In our high tech world why do remnants of ancient Celtic culture remain? Or any ancient culture for that matter. African Americans look for roots in the mother continent of Africa; children are instructed in the native language of their parents; Chinese, Greek, Korean, and Vietnamese festivals are held where ethnic dress and ethnic food is featured; groups form to learn Morris dancing; recipes are passed down through generations, all evidence that we are drawn to our roots because our modern, cyber-space, mega-data, hyper-link, electroendorphin, speedy, maxed-out world often leaves us hollow. We want what we have lost, or what we imagine we have lost to time because our homogenized consumer culture guarantees food that tastes the same in every town, clothes look the same in every store, and electronic gadgets that we cannot repair and do not understand. And so malaise descends. We are sated with possessions. We are exhausted with pursuing this fat lifestyle, and so we yearn for a simpler life, perhaps a purer life found in the wisdom of our ancestors. And what we find, regardless of the line we follow back, is that our heritage is not a tangible commodity. We can buy drums from Ghana, Celtic knots from Ireland, virgin olive oil from Tuscany and other trappings of the culture of our ancestors, but possessions do not bring us what we are seeking. To deepen our understanding of our roots, we must look further back into history and imagine a lifestyle completely foreign to the overwhelming thrum of modern life.

The Celts were a great ancient people who spread across western and central Europe from the 5th century BCE. They never had an empire, and they lacked a written language in the pre-Christian period. Their history and culture were passed on in an oral tradition. Seanachie (shawn-a-kee) were trained to memorize their stories and carried the culture in their memories. They were literary artists whose minds contained a collection of tales which embodied the traditions, hero stories, rhymes, and lessons that were the heart of the culture. These stories were once considered so valuable by the Celts that many were the property of the Celtic aristocracy. They were told in the great halls or on the baffle field by high-ranking men called fildh. After twelve years of training they became part of a privileged class. They honed their skills of memory and concentration to learn hundreds of stories and poems, histories, and genealogies. They believed the power of the spoken word came from Brigit, patron of poetry and divination.

In our information age it is inconceivable that one person could retain and pass on history. We have lost the ability to carry in memory what the caretakers of ancient cultures knew about their origins and the history of their people. Modern families count themselves lucky to know the names of great grandparents and perhaps a country or continent of origin of some ancestor. An intimate connection to our histories has been lost as we suck up the popular culture that is so seductive. And just as a muscle atrophies when it is not used, our ability to remember is compromised when storytelling is not a valued part of our lives. We have become dependent upon books and machines to carry our history so we do not own it anymore. The loss of an intimate connection to our history is at the heart of modern alienation.

Before the printing press, before the printed or even the hand-written word became the vessel our history, people made a place in their communities and in their own lives for storytelling. Not the kind of storytelling we are familiar with today. Storytelling today usually means children listening while adults read picture books. While this is a pleasant pass time, it is a shadow of the role storytelling once held in cultures before the written word became supreme. For the Celtic culture, the seanachie, or story teller, was the center of cultural life. The New Year, or Samhain, was celebrated on November 1st and marked the beginning of the season of storytelling which continued until May 1st when the lengthening days promised summer. Storytelling was an art best practiced in the dark while gathered around the hearth.

However, the urge to pass on our history is still strong and we indulge elder members of families occasionally when they sit back and reminisce about "the war" or "the depression" or "strange Uncle Henry." Usually little effort is made to preserve these memories and they die with our elders. Of course we have history books which record major events and dates and occasionally some anecdotes. But we are personally removed from these kinds of memories. These cultural memories are too large to become a part of who we are as individuals and families. They are part of the institutional memory of a society, not the personal memories of the people we come from.

Unlike the current tide toward homogenized culture around the globe with the almost irresistible influence of Western culture, ancient peoples drew their strength and identity from their immediate families and tribes. The ancient Celts were not unified as an empire. Instead they were grouped in tribes and clans and drew their sense of identity from these relatively small groups. They did share language, myth, ritual, belief, literature, and art however. And they did this without the printed word. They kept their history and identity through the seanachie. The oral tradition continued to be important even though the Celts had an ancient alphabet, ogham, created by Ogam, god of eloquence and learning. This alphabet was based on trees, which reflects their deep respect and connection to the natural world. Written language was not used to write stories or record history, but rather to commemorate the dead by inscribing their names on burial stones, to give information on boundary markers, and sometimes in divination. In fact, in the pre-Christian era when writing came to Ireland, it was forbidden to write the stories, so highly valued was the skill of holding the history of the culture in memory.

Imagine a time without written language. A time when story telling was entertaining but also functioned to pass on the history of a culture. And the stories were told over and over, the better to be remembered. In our information age we are bombarded with news (something new) at an alarming rate. No one can keep up with it. We don't have as much "memory" as our computers and so far we can't upgrade our brains. We rely on machines to access the information because our poor human brains are not sufficient to contain the soup of information we stew in daily. Imagine a time where news became a story and was repeated often, perhaps for generations, as a part of the rhythm of life. Storytellers held a valued place in the culture. Telling the story again and again, listening to the story again and again, was part of the fabric of Celtic life and the life of thousands of other cultures before the great advances of writing, mass production of the printed word, and near universal literacy.

When we look back to the time before this mass communication explosion we find a greater connection to family and community. Without disposable income people lived closer

to the earth. Matters of the spirit were not addressed at weekly seminars or in magazines, or in a chat room on the web, but were woven tightly into the fabric of every day connection with people who knew each other intimately. The stars were visible, before light pollution erased them from the sky, and provided guidance for travel and stories inspired by the constellations. The bite of winter cold and the oppressive heat of summer directed activity. There was time to reflect, to consider, to meditate, to pray, time to tell stories. The survival of the body required more physical energy, but there was more space for nurturing of the spirit in a world without books and electronics. Community was more intimate with a more immediate dependence upon others; people knew their neighbors well. They did not know what people were doing on the other side of the world or even 50 miles away, but they knew their neighbors and they depended on each other, felt a connection to each other that is absent from our lives, alienated as we are from each other by the for- tresses of our possessions.

Human history is informed by its advances. We are a driven species, never satisfied with the status quo, always pushing to do it better, faster, more efficiently. And so we rule the planet. Our facility with language and mass communication is the reason. The Celts first moved away from the tradition of oral history when they learned to use the Greek alphabet and then later Latin. As the influence of Christianity spread across Europe, Celtic culture and Christian traditions mixed. The dates for Christian holidays were determined largely by seasonal markers that the Celts had observed. For example, Christmas falls at the winter solstice when the birth of a savior is especially welcome to bring light into a dark world. And Easter, the time of resurrection and rebirth, is celebrated at the beginning of spring. The time of Easter is determined by the phases of the moon which was central to traditions of worship in many ancient cultures. Celtic culture changed enormously as well with the influence of Christianity and when the written word insinuated itself into their traditions. The *Book of Kells*, the Celtic masterpiece, was written in approximately the 8th century CE. It contains the four gospels of the Christian Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; prefaces; summaries; and concordances of gospel passages. All but two of the pages are elaborately illustrated with the fluid beauty of ancient Celtic geometric designs.

The progression of humanity is inexorably tied to advances in communication, but nothing is gained without some loss. And an intimate connection to the history of our families and immediate community has been sacrificed to more, faster, broader, communication which can circle the planet in a flash. In the hurry of our current lives, we are aware of a loss, however difficult it is to articulate it. We try to reach back into our personal history to find a tribe, a family, we can identify with. And so we light candles, we recite prayers, and we teach our children to be proud of their heritage, whatever it is, so we can retain some connection to the small, the personal, the origin of our humanity.

The next time your family gathers, ask for granddad's stories rather than just tolerating them. And then tell them to your children at bedtime and imagine the pictures of your own personal history.

How ironic that I found much of the information for this article on the web. For more information, visit these web sites, which I found especially helpful:

Freeman, Mara. "Word of Skill: The Celtic Storytellers." 1995. www.chalicecenter.com/wordsofskill.htm

Oostervink, Peter. "Celtic Art." 1997-2000. www.celtic-art.net/index2.thm

JUDY GREY

FEATURE

The Harp is the Heart of Ireland



When Saint Patrick's Day arrives on March 17th, everyone in the United States feels a little bit Irish. Green clothes, green food, shamrocks, and leprechauns seem to be everywhere. Many people enjoy listening to Celtic tunes played on the fiddle, tin whistle, bodhran (drum), Irish bagpipes, and the harp.

The harp is an ancient instrument. There are images of harps on clay tablets and seals from Egypt and the Middle East that are 5,000 years old. Celtic harps developed at least 1,600 years ago in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. According to local harper Kris Snyder, Irish legend says that the first harp was built after fishermen heard the wind blowing through a dead whale's ribs and skin.

"Early Irish harps were constructed from a single piece of willow," Kris explained. "Actually, any reference to a willow in Celtic songs or stories really means a harp." Lady Wilde, in her book *Irish Cures, Mystic Charms & Superstitions*, agrees and adds that the reason harps were made of willow was because "the willow is thought to have a soul in it that speaks in music."

At first, each small kingdom in Ireland had a bard who memorized the epic poems that told the history of the clan and a harper who memorized the music that would accompany the stories. The harper and bard, dressed in blue clothing, would also go to the battlefield in times of war to inspire the warriors and to record the outcome of the fight. Eventually, the harper and bard were merged into one position.

Keeping a harper around to entertain guests, record battles, and help put the household to sleep at night was an expensive luxury, so as time passed, the harper became a traveling minstrel. He was allowed to journey from court to court, harp in hand, at a time when most people had to ask the kings for permission to travel. Because of a minstrel's ability to visit many castles, manors, and towns, harpers became known as spies.

This reputation for spying led to harps being outlawed in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland by the English during the time of Oliver Cromwell. Harps were gathered and burned. If someone was caught playing a harp, they were put to death.

By the time it was legal to play the harp in Ireland again, there were few harpers left. Since the bardic harpers hadn't written down their music, most of it was lost. An exception was the music of the great Irish harper, Turlough O'Carolan, who died in 1738.

In 1792, the Belfast Festival gathered all the remaining harpers together to share their music and save what was left of traditional Irish harping. Only 10 harpers could be found in Ireland. According to *Legacy of the 1792 Belfast Harp Festival* by Ann Heymann: 97-year-old Denis Hempson was the oldest harper, 15-year-old William Carr was the youngest, Rose Mooney was the only woman, and 7 of the 10 harpers were blind.

In attendance at the Belfast Festival was a 19-year-old church organist, Edward Bunting.

He transcribed the music played by the Irish harpers. He also made notes on their hand positions and playing techniques, but he ignored the lyrics. Bunting devoted most of his life to preserving harp music, but he didn't record the words to those ancient Irish folk songs.

In the 1970s, American Sylvia Woods purchased a folk harp in Ireland and began to play it at fairs. Suddenly, there was a renewed interest in this traditional Celtic instrument not only in the United States, but also throughout Ireland, Wales, and Scotland.

Glenville resident Kris Snyder is a fourth generation harper. Her great-grandmother, Alma Miller England, played both the concert grand and folk harp. Her grandmother, Eleanor England Hoadley, played harp with the Chicago Symphony. Her mother, Marianne Hoadley Nystrom, is a pianist, music teacher, and harper.

After eight years of piano lessons, Kris discovered the folk harp was the instrument for her. She began playing the harp in 1984, and is primarily self-taught. Her performing debut was in 1985 at St. Mary's College and by 1990 she was playing regularly at weddings and parties. Her harping "hobby" became a fulltime business in 1995. Kris sometimes performs with her mother as the harp duo "Generations," and sometimes as part of a trio known as "Innisfree."

To add authenticity to her performances, Kris often plays the Celtic harp in costume. "I have one Medieval, one Empire, one turn-of-the-century, and two Victorian period-correct outfits," she said.



Kris Snyder. Photos by W.H. Stevens

In addition to playing the harp, Kris Snyder does historical presentations on Irish harping. She has performed and given programs on harps at many local sites including Hampton House, 1st Night York, Carroll County Farm Museum, Bibelot, Pickersgill, and at various historical societies. The public can catch her performances at Shrewsbury's Peppercorn Café on Thursday nights. In addition, special Celtic Harping performances are scheduled for March 10th at 8 PM at Mariposa, College Park, MD; March 16th, 7-9:30 PM at the Readers' Café, Broadway, Hanover, PA; and April 6th, 4:30 - 7:30 PM at York's Arts Eats & Beats, Strand Capital Performing Arts Center, 50 N. George St., York, PA. For more information, check out her website: www.handstoharps.com.

Kris points out that there are several well-known Americans who were harpers. "Benjamin Franklin played harp. And Harpo Marx was a gifted harper, but sadly he wasn't taken seriously. In old Marx Brother films, he was usually allowed to play one tune."

The Celtic harp holds a special place in Irish history as well as on the old Irish flag, but what about the future? According to Kris Snyder, "Live harping is being used for heal-

ing. I'm a member of the Music for Healing and Transition Program. Live harp music has been found to lower blood pressure, deepen respiration, and reduce the need for pain killers." Kris and other harpers are now ministering to the sick at Maryland and Pennsylvania nursing homes, hospices, and hospitals.

If you'd like to check out some books that feature harpers look on your library or bookstore shelves for *A String in the Harp* by Nancy Bond, *The Minstrel and the Dragon Pup* by Rosemary Sutcliff, *Gwinna* by Barbara H. Berger, the fantasy series by Patricia A. McKillip that includes *Harpist in the Wind*, and of course novels by former Marylander, Morgan Llywelyn, beginning with *Bard - The Odyssey of the Irish*.

On March 17th as you're pulling on your green socks and searching for leprechauns and their pots of gold in your backyard, listen to some Celtic harp music. This ancient instrument, placed on Ireland's coat of arms centuries ago, still sings Irish tunes from Glenville to Dublin.

VONNIE WINSLOW CRIST

Names in Lite

•**Sam Beard** writes from Glen Burnie, MD. He is the author of a chapbook, *Tapestries and Mirrors*. His work has appeared in the anthology *Lower than the Angels* and other literary publications.

•**Dan Cuddy** (Poetry: *In Memory of Mary Nolan; Five Years After Visiting Ireland*) is a contributing editor of Maryland Poetry Review and the News Editor/Calendar Editor of *Lite*. He is active in the local poetry scene and his work appears frequently in area literary publications.

•**Vonnie Winslow Crist** (Feature: *The Harp is the Heart of Ireland*) has Irish, Scots, and Welsh ancestors. Author-illustrator of the children's book *Leprechaun Cake & Other Tales*, she'll be listening to an "Innisfree" CD and wearing green on St. Patrick's Day.

•**Michael Fallon** (Feature: *Seamus Heaney and the Bog People*) teaches the writing of poetry and other writing skills at UMBC. His book *The History of the Color Black* was published by Dolphin-Moon Press. He has had work published in *The American Scholar*, *The Maryland Poetry Review*, *The Potomac Review* and the *Baltimore Sun*, among others. At present he is circulating a manuscript of poems titled *House of Forgotten Names* for future publication.

•**Christopher T. George** (Poetry: *Dominic Donnelly*) is the editor of the *Journal of the War of 1812 and the Era 1800 to 1840*, and is an editorial associate of the *Maryland Historical Magazine*. He is the author of *Terror on the Chesapeake*, *The War of 1812 on the Bay*, and numerous volumes of poetry.

•**Judith Grey** (Feature: *Telling Our Stories*) teaches English at Ridgely Middle School in Baltimore County. She spends her summers writing in Maine. She recently received a MAC (Maryland Arts Council) grant for writing.

•**John B. O'Donnell** (Feature: *The Nolan-Fahey Family*), a great grandson of Bernard Nolan and Mary Fahey, is a reporter for *The Baltimore Sun* who lives in Catonsville.

•**Mary Lou Quaid** (Feature: *The Nolan-Fahey Family*), Bernard & Mary's great-granddaughter, also lives in Catonsville and has conducted an extensive search for information on Bernard and Mary.

•**Dharmika Una Wijetunge** (Fiction: *A Dearth Filled By Dutcas*) is a former English major and graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). She is now a journalist residing in Dublin, Ireland.

FEATURE

The Nolan-Fahey Family *An Irish bond down through the generations; a search for roots*

It was a hot and humid day—typical of the Baltimore area. In Catonsville, along Frederick Road, spectators lined the sidewalks. It was July 4 and the annual parade, a major event in this way-station town turned suburb, was rolling east along the spine of the community.

The usual participants passed by—the military color guard, screaming fire engines, politicians, bands from as far as Canada, vintage cars, floats sponsored by local businesses.

One unit was unusual—perhaps a first in the half century of this parade. A van and three cars were escorted by six dozen walkers clad in shorts and T-shirts. This was a family reunion in the middle of a July 4 parade.



They had gathered from near and far. From White Marsh and Annapolis, from Vermont and California, from Florida and New York and the upper reaches of the Mighty Mississippi. They had come bearing names like Farrell and Rausch, Gillin and Miano, Toulan and Hock, Schneider and Rooney; Murphy, Cuddy, and Quaid, to name a few. And yes, Nolan.

Four generations bound together by Irish ancestry, these were the grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great grand children and great great great grandchildren of Bernard Nolan and Mary Fahey. The parade was the culmination of a four-day reunion, a renewal of contact with family—and with place.

For it was in Catonsville that this family began more than a century and a quarter ago. And it is in Catonsville that this family has lived since Bernard Nolan arrived from Ireland sometime after the Civil War.

And, so it was that Bernard's descendants found a special meaning and a special bond in the parade on July 4 of 2000. They wore T-shirts bearing the legend, "Nolan/Fahey Family Reunion: 130 years in Catonsville."

This is a tale of transplantation and of roots taking hold, of two people joining hundreds of thousands of their countrymen in a flight from privation. From impoverished youth they came with little education and fewer skills but with the grit and discipline to see dreams realized.

If Bernard and Mary could see the results of their modest beginnings—doctors, lawyers, nurses, writers, teachers, scholars, government officials, military officers, moms and dads—they would marvel in wonderment. If they could see the Catonsville of today, they would marvel in bewilderment.

This is a tale of one family that revels in its heritage. It is also the tale of America, of what transpires down through the decades after two humble immigrants meet, marry and bring five children into the world. There is also a subtext to this tale—a yearning to fill in the gaps, a search for answers, for connections, for roots, for "lost" relatives, the tale of a genealogical investigation that continues.

Family lore has it that Bernard arrived in the United States by sailing ship in 1863. The ports of departure and arrival are unknown. Why and when he ended up in Catonsville remain mysteries. We know that he was in Catonsville by 1870, when he was recorded in the census, thus giving his descendants the peg for their reunion, "130 years in Catonsville."

Even less is known of Mary's arrival. The 1870 census recorded a Mary Fahey in Catonsville, but the enumerator wrote that she was born in Maryland. Was this our Mary? Possibly, for when Mary Fahey died in 1898, her obituary reported that she was in Catonsville in 1870.

Bernard was born in County Longford, Ireland, Mary in County Galway.

Records of the Newtown Cashel parish tell us Bernard was baptized Dec. 11, 1841, the first of seven children born to Patrick Nolan and Margaret Burke 50 weeks after they wed.

Ireland was a grim place at the time. Rapid population growth and a declining economy had left many in poverty, dependent largely on the lowly potato for nourishment. When Bernard was four, disaster struck. The potato crop failed for three years, a victim of a plant disease. Three-quarters of a million people died of starvation or disease. Hundreds of thousands of others fled the country, many for the United States.

It no doubt was a difficult childhood, so difficult that in 1863 at 21, Bernard sailed for America, a nation then at war with itself.

The record on Mary Fahey is even thinner. A search of the records at a Galway history society drew a blank on Mary and her family, attributed to major gaps in the records.

The search continues. With the Internet, genealogical research sometimes produces gratifying surprises.

A request for assistance from County Longford researchers had brought records from Newtown Cashel parish, names and key dates for Bernard's family. The information contained a surprise, a heretofore unknown brother, Michael, who was Patrick and Margaret's second child. The records said he married Margaret Fox in Rathcline on Feb. 24, 1865.

The biggest surprise was yet to come. Just weeks after the mail brought this information from Ireland came an e-mail from Vermont, a response to a year-old Internet query seeking information on Nolans and Faheys. In Vermont, Don and Ann Nolan were searching for descendants of Michael Nolan who had married Margaret Fox and was from Parish Rathcline.

Bingo! "New" relatives had been found. Don and Ann journeyed to Catonsville for the 4th of July reunion.

The documented American record on Bernard Nolan and Mary Fahey begins with that 1870 census. It said Bernard was a laborer at Mt. de Sales, the Visitation Convent and School high on a Catonsville hill. Most of its vast grounds are now covered by post-war brick rowhouses, a development called Academy Heights. One of Bernard's great granddaughters and a great great grandson live there with their families.

Bernard and Mary were married on New Year's Day 1874 at St. Joseph's Monastery in Irvington, just east of Catonsville. How and when they met is unknown, though it is not hard to imagine them meeting at St. Agnes Church, the country parish where they worshipped, or in the village of Catonsville itself.

Thus did the Nolan-Fahey saga begin.

On November 1, 1874, ten months to the day after the wedding, their first child, Mary Helen, was born. She was nicknamed Mamie. She was followed into the world by John Daniel in 1876; William Patrick, or Will, in 1878; James Joseph in 1880 and Bernard Thomas, known as Bun, in 1888. All were baptized at St. Agnes, a mission of the Monastery parish, and attended St. Agnes School.

Bernard and Mary married at a time when the village called Catonsville served two purposes. It was a way station on the turnpike west. And, it was a summer retreat for wealthy Baltimoreans. In the pre-air conditioning days of the Nineteenth Century, the gentry of Baltimore lived in the city during the winter and moved for the summer to big airy houses called cottages—actually, mansions in some cases—in cooler Catonsville.

As the Nolan family grew, the seeds of Catonsville's transformation were planted with the arrival of a rail line and then a few years later, of electric street cars. A commuter suburb was born.

At some point, Bernard left Mt. de Sales and became overseer at one of the summer retreats, Craigieburn. The 24-acre estate on Paradise Avenue has vanished, overtaken by neglect, fire and progress—the property is bisected by the Baltimore Beltway and a cell phone tower stands just feet from the remnants of the mansion's foundation.

The Nolan children were born and raised at Craigieburn. It must have been an ideal setting for a servant of modest means. It was a spacious estate with abundant fruit trees and gardens, the site of many society gatherings and summer activities sponsored by its owners, the Taylor and Birkhead families of Baltimore.

The Nolans lived there for many years and as the children grew, they assumed some of the estate responsibilities. Mary frequently drove into Baltimore in a buckboard laden with fresh vegetables and milk for the needy. The recipients probably included family members who had followed Bernard and Mary to America as well as other Irish immigrants. This abundance may have come from the excess at Craigieburn or from the Nolan family's garden and cow.

Bernard's niece, Anna Nolan, who lived in Long Island City, New York, spent the summer of 1900 at Craigieburn with her Catonsville cousins. Anna was the daughter of Peter Nolan, Bernard's younger brother, who along with his sister, Ellen, had emigrated to Long Island City.

Anna was enthralled by Craigieburn, according to her son, Bob Gillin. He recalls his mother reminiscing about the beautiful roses. She told him, too, about once dipping her finger into a container of cream in the spring house, the refrigerator of the day. So rich was the cream that the imprint of Anna's finger remained, a telltale sign that someone had been naughty.

When they lived at Craigieburn, the Nolans attended church at St. Agnes, a mission parish on the Old Frederick Road. The children were baptized and began school there. In 1888, a new church, St. Mark, was built much closer to the village. The family changed parishes and schools. Bernard was active in the new parish, serving as an officer of the Catholic Benevolent League, an early version of the all-male Holy Name Society. His sons distinguished themselves in the school, winning accolades for their scholarship and work in the school. When they grew to adulthood, they became active in the parish.

Nolan descendants have been members of the parish continuously since its founding.

Mamie probably graduated from St. Agnes School before the new school at St. Mark opened. We don't know if she continued her education. It is highly unlikely.

For boys to continue schooling in those days was unusual, too particularly if they were the sons of Irish servants. Bernard and Mary obviously saw the value of education. They sent their sons to Mt. St. Joseph College—a private high school in nearby Irvington. Many of Bernard's descendants have followed his sons to the Mount.

In 1893, after many years of living at Craigieburn and saving their money, Bernard and Mary bought a house on a 1.5 acre lot on nearby Wade Ave., an easy walk from the estate. They paid \$2,500. The house is no longer there. The land has been subdivided and several newer houses occupy the first Catonsville property owned by the Nolan family.

The move to Wade Ave. came at a time when the Nolan children's ages ranged from 5 to 19. Why Bernard and Mary decided on this step is one of the many questions that lack an answer. What was their housing at Craigieburn like? Was this an escape to more comfortable quarters? Was this a step of independence for servants who had scrimped and saved to amass this princely sum? Today, homeownership is considered *the* American Dream. Was that the case a century ago? Were they seeking to fulfill that dream?

John, Will and Jim went to work after graduating from Mt. St. Joe. John held various jobs, including clerk, florist and, like his father, estate overseer. Will became a streetcar driver and Jim a pharmacist.

Five years—almost to the day—after Bernard and Mary bought the Wade Ave. house, Mary died suddenly of a stroke. We don't know how old she was because her year of birth is listed variously as 1846, 1849 and 1852. Whichever it was, by today's standards, she died young—eleven years before the birth of her first grandchild.

Bernard retired as Craigieburn's overseer in 1905. There was no safety net, no Social Security, in those days. Whether the Taylors and Birkheads accorded him a pension is unknown. Perhaps he relied on savings and his children for support.



Bernard's children, reaching adulthood, had begun to disperse. In 1902, Mamie married Christopher Dorsey of Long Island City. He was the nephew of her Aunt Ellen's husband, Johnny Chapman. Mamie lived the rest of her life in Long Island City while returning frequently to Catonsville for visits. At age 44, she died in 1918 giving birth to her sixth child, Helene.

In 1905, Bernard's youngest son, Bun, 17, moved to New York to be under the watchful eye of his sister, Mamie. Bun got a clerical job with a fire insurance company. He married Ilene Lillian Leavy, had three children and went on to own his own insurance firm.

John had moved to the Sowebo area of

Baltimore. Eventually, he worked for a Baltimore family that lived at a nearby estate, Alexandrovsky. The Hutton family, whose fortune came from building a railroad across Russia, also had estates on the northern edge of Catonsville and in Newport, RI.

In 1908, he married Mary Helen O'Neill, a seamstress at Alexandrovsky who had emigrated from County Wexford at the age of 20. That same year, Bernard moved in with the bride and bridegroom. Their first child, Mary Ellen was born on December 21.

Five months later, Bernard was stricken with pneumonia and died on May 29, 1909. He was 67 and had lived longer than would any of his children.

John died nine years later, aged 42, leaving his wife, Mary Helen, with three young children to raise on a domestic's wages. Her children, Mary Murphy, John Bernard Nolan and Kathleen Farrell Smith, eventually moved to Catonsville, where they raised their families. In her later years, their mother enjoyed being surrounded by her grandchildren and great grandchildren. She was an avid Oriole fan. Mary Helen died in 1982, a few months short of her 100th birthday.

Like his brother, Will Nolan died young. He was 36 and suffered from a number of medical problems when he died in 1914, leaving a wife, Walberg Maag, and a son, Bill.

Jim was the only one of Bernard and Mary's children to remain in Catonsville throughout his life. As a teenager, he clerked in Dr. J.K. Cullen's drugstore. After graduation from Mt. St. Joe, he got a degree from the Baltimore College of Pharmacy. In 1903, he opened his own drugstore across Frederick Rd. from Dr. Cullen. The competition was brief, however, and the two consolidated their businesses the following year at Dr. Cullen's store.

Jim was active in a number of religious and civic associations in Catonsville. In 1907, he married Mary Peddicord. They had three children. One of them, James J. Nolan Jr., now retired, was a well-known and admired physician in Catonsville for many years. Daughter Mary Catherine O'Donnell taught at Catonsville High School and St. Mark.

When Dr. Cullen died in 1923, Jim took over the business. Over the next nine years, competition increased. Jim installed a soda fountain to broaden the business. And he watched nervously as Read's, the first drug store chain, opened up in the same block of Frederick Rd. The increasing stress is suspected of contributing to his untimely death at age 50 in 1931.

The search for details on Bernard and Mary continues, hampered by a lack of written family records and a long-ago disinterest in orally passing along family history—a disinterest that leaves Bernard and Mary's grandchildren bereft of details. Perhaps by the next reunion in five years, additional information will have been uncovered providing family members with even more to celebrate.

JOHN B. O'DONNELL JR. &
MARY LOU QU Aid

Photos courtesy of the authors.

✪ Irish Folklore ✪

Leprechauns are fairy shoemakers
that dress in Green.

Leprechauns wear 3-cornered hats
and guard crocks of gold.

St. Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland.

Four-leaf clovers bring good-luck
and break fairy spells.

Holly is sacred to Irish fairies.

Fairy folks are in old oaks.

—Courtesy Vonnie Crist

In Memory of Mary Nolan

From the stone and green of Ireland,
and from the sheen of Wexford Harbor,
where the sun rises like a child's fantastical eyes,
a girl dreamed, matured, acquired a practical eye,
an eye of sunlight
that could turn almost anything green.

She came to these shores almost a century ago,
when this city was brick, smoke, mud,
and pennies were a just unjust living wage
paid by the most charitable
of ruffled women and starch-shirted men.
She earned her keep under the indifferent moon.

Yet in her heart,
that invisible pluck of sacred strings,
she kept the simple faith in the Grand Design
that a farmer has at seeding time,
and nothing,
not even the winters that embitter
so many of the poor,
could chill her Christian warmth.

She married, had a family, was widowed,
years gone
like ports on a two-week tour.
The world flew its wars
and dreamed its future wars
against the clouds where angels knelt.
Yet she endured. Her faith endured.

Her family grew, married, bore
new generations of her indomitable blood,
and through the riches of America,
the buttons and dials that save and entertain time,
were finally hers, inherited by her kind,
they never possessed her soul.

Dan Cuddy

When She Smiles

When she plays,
her music fills the room with colors:
The greens of the fields
that cover the countryside of Ireland
like a winter's quilt
on my grandmother's bed.
The blue of a summer's sky
after a gentle rain washes away
the weights of this world.
The reds, yellows, oranges, and violets
of wildflowers blooming on a hillside
as the morning sun bathes them in gold.

When she plays,
her music makes it seem real,
as if you're on that hillside
after a rain, among those wildflowers,
looking at those fields crisscrossed
with fences of stone.

But, when she smiles,
you are.

Sam Beard

Dominic Donnelly

*Dominic Donnelly, a homeless man, lies on
a Belfast pavement...killed by an unsus-
pected bomb contained in a transistor
radio which he picked up after it had been
left lying in a betting shop.*

Manchester Guardian

Dominic hugged his death to him,
the transistor radio
more prized than cigarette ends.

Dominic hugged his death to him,
"Sure if someone was daft enough
to leave it, they deserve to have it
took."

Dominic hugged his death to him,
and death snuggled inside his overcoat,
ticking.

Dominic hugged his death to him,
and death hugged Dominic:
it was one incredible lover,
it wrestled him to the pavement,
kissed him open like a watermelon.

Christopher T. George

Five Years After Visiting Ireland

I try to remember Ireland,
pebble-clouds above the sea's blue heaving,
the weed-haired strata of the cliffs,
a stone cross rough like the artisan's hands,
Pearse's cottage, a lone thought in the Burren,
but I celebrate St. Patrick's at a bar,
sing sentimental things, walk drunk into doors.
I try to remember but my song advertises
a postcard Ireland sold American
and little of quiet Glendalough.

Dan Cuddy

Beal Na Mblath

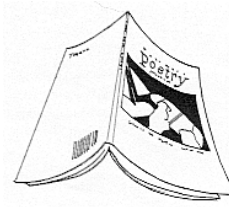
*"There seems to be a malignant fate dogging the fortunes of Ireland,
for at every critical period in her story the man whom the country
trusts is taken from her."* Michael Collins, 1922, before his own death

The gray stone cross on the lonely road, snow and sleet
in my face: Beal Na Mblath, this valley known in English
as the Mouth of Flowers, the place of assassination
that witnessed the death of the Big Fella, the Laughing Boy.
Sheep bleat in the fields, come running as I stare at the cross.
A fence of black iron surrounds the bleak monument,
like the mystery that surrounds your death.
Who killed you with a single bullet in the head
as you rode in your staff car through the Valley of Death?
An assassin on the green hillside here at the Mouth of Flowers,
an irregular? Or one of your own men?

Christopher T. George

Society's Page

Issue 6



Brought to you by The Lite Circle, Inc.
under the auspices of *Maryland Poetry Review*
and Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

The three programs we initiated for this year are up and running—at a pretty good pace as a matter of fact. The most recent Readers Forum took place at Bibelot Timonium on February 16. The theme was love and relationships. Ted Hendricks and Kathie Corcoran were the lead-off readers. In the Forum format, we ask writers to read not only the own work but also the work of others—and we encourage people who do not admit to being writers to join in and read favorite passages from their hitherto private reading.

The next Readers Forum is scheduled for the evening of April 22 at Marshy Point Nature Center. This new facility in Chase, Maryland is an ideal setting for the Earth Day theme of nature and the environment. Dr. James McKusick, head of the English Department at UMBC, will be the lead reader. This topic promises to bring forth several non-writers (or perhaps closet writers) as well as poets, fictioners, and essayists.

The first Poets Ink Workshop occurs March 15 at Bibelot Canton. Time: 7:00 pm. The intent is to give both beginning and experienced writers a chance to air their work in a positive setting. Although poetry is likely to be a preoccupation, other genres—or parts thereof—are welcome. Work may be presented in all stages of development, whether it is finished or “in progress.” A workshop discussion, for instance, could very well jump start a piece that has momentarily stalled. Participants should bring ten copies of each piece they are placing under discussion. Further, they are encouraged to be actively involved in offering commentary. The moderator of POETS INK just happens to be me. I am not going to scan through a resume to support my qualifications for this endeavor. Let us just say that I am interested and that I am looking forward to this event.

In the planning stage, incidentally, is a new publishing venture called—not so coincidentally—POETS INK. This folio effort will recruit work primarily from workshop participants and members of MSP&LS.

A variation on the Poets Ink Workshop will be a feature of the Enoch Pratt Poetry Fair on April 21. Alan Reese, former editor of *Dancing Shadow Review*, Rosemary Klein, editor-in-chief of *Maryland Poetry Review*, and Barbara Simon, managing editor of *Maryland Poetry Review*, and I will conduct “walk-in” critique sessions with interested writers from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. The setting is the Edgar Allan Poe Room at the main branch of Enoch Pratt on Cathedral Street.

In January, Barbara Simon, Clarinda Harriss, and Forestine Bynam inaugurated “Maryland Poets on the Radio Reading Network.” This network broadcasts on a special sub-carrier frequency of WBJC to the blind and handicapped. Transmissions are beamed to the areas of Baltimore, Salisbury, and Cumberland. Harris is well known as a writer and publisher; she is also head of the English Department at Towson University. Bynam is a strong force in the poetry world of Washington, D.C. and Prince Georges County and is very active as a volunteer for important service programs. In the spring, Simon, who is active in Poets-in-the-Schools programs, will bring students from Baltimore’s BrightSTARTS to the Network.

We have a membership drive going. Programs—especially publications—cost money. No surprise there. No surprise either that writers and readers join organizations for many reasons. Some want to support creative writing and all it stands for; some want to be in contact with like-minded people; some want news of events, contests, and workshops; some seek avenues and understandings for furthering their work. MSP&LS has a long history of providing all these services—locally, nationally, and internationally. We also have a short history of being in the midst of reorganization—and every bit of assistance at this stage is critical as we bring a data bank up on line, disseminate a newsletter, support our public events, and shape up our chapbook, review, and folio

publications. Basic membership for one year is \$18.00. We gladly accept donations of greater amounts. We are tax exempt. If I could yell HELP! in a thoroughly dignified way, I would. But, failing that, HELP!.

Hugh Burgess
President, MSP&LS

Call For Manuscripts

This year MSP&LS is again running its annual chapbook contest. With the change of the millennium, the contest too has changed slightly. Entries should be 20-25 pages in length, with a title page including name, address, phone and email as well as an anonymous title page, bio and acknowledgements. Send your manuscript, an envelope for winners only and a \$20 reading fee to **Chapbook Contest, Drawer H, Baltimore, MD 21228**

Previous winners are L.L. Ollivier of Reno, NV for “Albert Einstein in Las Vegas”; Elisabeth Stevens of Baltimore, MD for “Household Words”; George Bristol of Speedway, TX for “Borders and Barriers”; and Bertha Rogers of New Delhi, NY for “House of Corners” (see excerpted review below). Winners receive 50 copies of their manuscript as well as \$50 and a featured reading at the Baltimore Book Fair. All entrants receive a copy of the prize-winning manuscript. Email bsimon1046@aol.com for more information. By the way, copies of the Elisabeth Stevens manuscript **Household Words, Art and Poetry with Essays and an Interview** are available from Amazon.com Small Press Advantage or by calling 410-744-0349

Review of “House of Corners”

Next time you’re online, visit www.nycBigCityLit.com. Our fourth annual chapbook winner, Bertha Rogers, was reviewed in this classy online publication.

Rogers exhibits a poetic sensibility of the first order. . . . [She] looks at nature, views humans as nature, and looks through nature to something truer than flux. The joy she describes is not happiness, but rather, the paradoxical satisfaction gleaned from a moment of angled enlightenment. —*Diana Manister, Big City Lit*TM, Jan. 2001, www.nycBigCityLit.com.

Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society Continues Internship Program

For the last year and a half, Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society has found new energy and enthusiasm through an internship program. Using student “volunteers,” we have found new resources for ArtScape, the Baltimore Book Fair and, this semester, a variety of new reading and workshop venues.

Josh Bartlett, a senior at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County has been interning for MSP&LS since January 2000. A 1997 graduate of John Carroll High School in Bel Air, Josh is a senior, majoring in English with a minor in Creative Writing. While studying with Michael Fallon, founding editor of **Maryland Poetry Review**, Josh notes as his poetic forefathers Ginsberg, Kerouac, Brautigan, Whitman and William Carlos Williams. Beyond his May graduation, Josh’s plans include graduate school for Creative Writing, hopefully in New York City. For the next few months, however, you can find Josh participating in many of our upcoming activities. Look for the guy with the long hair, goatee and quiet smile.

In his capacity as managing editor intern, Josh has the opportunity to work with MSP&LS in all of its forms. Thus far he has been a first reader for our fifth annual Chapbook Contest (see entry information on this page), a critic for our **Readers’ Forum** at Bibelot on February 16 and will be a part of the reading at **Spoons Café** on March 22. A sample of his good work appears below.

Previous interns for Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society have been Whitney Kurtz and Victoria Crane. If you are interested in interning for MSP&LS, call 410-744-0349 or email Wordrite1@gateway.com. We are particularly interested in anyone with a technology background.

STILL LIFE IN BLACK AND WHITE

By Josh Bartlett

still
white
wrinkled

fingers strong as when
they pounded out chords
on a grand piano

in the lobby of
the Grande Hotel—
Normandy, France

now molded into
folded hands,
woven together

with the black beads
of a rosary.

We Got The Word!

If you read Society President, Hugh Burgess’s remarks, you probably noted his reference to “Poets Ink” workshops. While the name is formal, the intent is just the opposite. In our search to open up the conversation, we see these as talking opportunities. You bring what you’re doing and we’ll all get into the discussion—sort of like the old time quilting bees only we’re sewing with words instead of scraps of fabric. In fact, the ultimate product, **POETS INK**, we hope will be a pastiche of all of the myriad voices vying for attention in the Baltimore area. See you in Bibelot Canton on March 15. Get the word out!

Opening Reading

When: March 22, 7:30 pm
**Where: “Spoons,” Federal Hills’ newest café,
24 East Cross St.**
**Why: to hear Josh Bartlett, Matt Hohner,
Felicia Morgenstern & Barb Simon**
READ poetry

In the spirit of the Celtic theme this month and in conjunction with founding editor Michael Fallon’s essay on Seamus Heaney, we offer you one of an original poem by Michael Fallon.

FEUD

When the knife went into me,
I did not feel it.
I knew only that mine stopped him;

The long truth of his body
Slumped between my legs, and
I saw him stare at something sideways in the sky.

I have seen a look like that
In a mother’s eyes fixed on nothing
But grief.

But he’s dead and I’m not.
The crowd stepped aside,
And I walk away free,

Down my side of the street.

The most powerful of all emotional pistons known to man is a blazing love of place and a fond memory for the last generation. (O'Faolain 63)

"Grannie, where are Jimmy's things?"

"Eh?"

"Where are Jimmy's things?"

"They're there; they're there... somewhere."

I sighed and pulled another box from the pile. Around me were strewed the contents of a dozen other boxes. The back room of my grandmother's cottage was lit only by the light of the kitchen lamps which shone through the door. There was one window in the room, but the light of the moon was obscured tonight by the February storm that had been raging since midmorning. The contents of the boxes, and even the boxes themselves, were—in the weak light—more knowable by touch than by sight. I raised up my hands and took hold of another cardboard crate, lifting it clumsily from the pile against the wall. I cut through the packing tape at the top of the box with a dull-edged carving knife. I reached blindly into the box, wincing in anticipation of imagined encounters with moldy food or dead insects or decaying clothes. My grandmother stored all sorts of things in this room and then promptly forgot all about them. There was no telling what had been packed into these containers or how long they had been left neglected here, in this damp and dark room.

My hands came into contact with something brittle and rustling. I pulled the thing—using only two cautious fingers—from the box, and held it to the dim light. *Oh, just one of Grannie's old Sunday bonnets*, I thought with disappointment. I sneezed and put the dusty church hat, festooned with old-fashioned silk flowers and a ribbon of undisclosed color, back into the box before me. The package I was looking for contained only men's belongings.

"Grannie, could I light some candles back here?"

My grandmother called back from the kitchen, "Cem' out of tha' room now, child. It's nine o'clock, near." Nine o'clock was a farm-family's bedtime and Grannie still retired at that hour, although she had long since ceased participating in farm chores.

"Where are the candles, Grannie?" I insisted.

She always got a bit cross at this time of night. "Cem' out of there, Una. The funeral's tomorrow and yeh've got to be up in the morning for the service." She appeared in the doorway, blocking what little light I had. "What d'yeh want, anyway, with Jimmy's things at this time of night?"

Stooped on the floor, I looked up at her, and said, "I thought it might be nice—that is, if I found his books, we could, maybe, read something of his at the service. You said that he wrote well—once."

"Ah, so it's his po-hems you're looking for, is it?" Her face fell a little. "Yes, he was a grand one for writing when he was young, before..." She trailed off and shifted her gaze to the blackest space of the room.

"Mammy says I'm a little like him, Grannie."

She looked back at me, and after a moment's pause, said, "Aye, aye, so you are..." She chuckled. "Not in looks, mind, but in other ways—yes, you are." She turned and went back into the kitchen.

The Irish, especially the rural Irish, follow the proverb that says, "*Is treise dutcas na*

A Dearth Filled By Dutcas

by

Dharmika Una Wijetunge

Illustration by Vonnie Winslow Crist

oileamaint—What a child inherits is stronger than how he is raised." Like genes, *dutcas*, which means "blood" or "breeding," can lie dormant for many generations but will eventually break out in progeny.

I pushed the box containing my grandmother's hat back against the wall and went out into the kitchen, too. Grannie was sitting in the armchair by the stove. I opened the small, heavy iron door of the stove and threw a pair of peat brickets into the fire. "Tell me again, Gran, about Jimmy—and how I'm like him."

She chuckled again. "Well, he was always one for getting into trouble when he was young thing, the same way tha' thee was as a babe." She smiled at me. "Do y' remember all the mischief ye used to get into?"

"As though anyone in this family'd let me forget. In fact, it was on my first trip to Ireland at age 5, that I had been first compared to my great uncle, Jimmy McGrath. My mother and I had gone to the old stone cowshed to visit the new calves.

"Look at 'em, Mammy, all locked up in there. They've been in there for days, not getting to do nothing. Don't they ever take 'em for walks?"

"They aren't dogs; you don't take calves for walks," my mother replied. "Besides, they'll go out to the fields when they are older."

"But, Mum, can't we take them out—just one of 'em, even—now?" I began to reach for the latch to the stall door.

Seeing that I was getting a little too insistent, my mother grabbed me by the hand and began to pull me from the shed. "No, no. Let's go see what your cousins are doing in the big house." At my reluctant submission to her

lead, she added, "And don't let me see you around those calves on your own, d'yeh hear?"

A half-hour later, my mother was brought out of the cottage by the sound of calf-hooves on the cobblestones of Grannie's courtyard. I was standing at the cowshed, my head actually thrown back, I was laughing so hard. Nine or ten calves were making their way, with a great thumping of hooves, across the cobblestones and to the path that led to the mead where their mothers were grazing.

Mum was already prepared; even from inside the cottage, she had guessed that the rare sound of hooves in the courtyard meant that I must be up to 'no good,' and so as she was heading out the door, she had snatched up her favorite instrument of discipline—the (dreaded) wooden spoon. While two of my elder cousins grappled with the "shedsheded" (the name for livestock loose from their enclosures) calves somewhere behind me, my mother came toward her errant child, wielding the wooden spoon whose smack I could already feel on my rear.

Grannie appeared at the front door of the cottage, laughing. She yelled to me over my mother's shoulder, "Better run now, quick!"

I took off, my mother half-heartedly pursuing me for a few paces. As I raced across the field, I could hear my grandmother shouting, "Run, Jimmy, run!"

My aunts and uncles, and even sometimes my mother, soon took to calling me "Jimmy," too. I wasn't told exactly who Jimmy was or why I was said to be like him until I was twenty, studying for the year in Dublin. I had always known that he was my great uncle, my grandmother's mysterious younger brother,

but the adults of the family usually cut short the questions asked about Jimmy by the younger generation. Grannie had first told me about Jimmy's full history three months ago, in November, but there were sure to be new details added in this telling, and so I settled back to listen.

"He was a middle-child, like you... although, he was the middle of thirteen, not three." She drew a deep breath of satisfaction as the brickets caught fire within the stove. "I suppose he might have been a bit overlooked when he was young. Our Mammy had so many before and after Jimmy—thirteen of us, like the faces in a deck of cards—tha' he got a bit lost, sometimes, in the shuffle. So once in a while he had to act up, a little, to get some notice—although, I think 'twas in his nature, too, to be fond of mischief, like. He weren't suited to farm-life at' all, so he weren't. He didn't even look much like a farmer. Neither do you, sure" She laughed. "He was very thin and small as a child... fragile-like, they said of him. His hair was yellow and in great curly licks. He had a fine face, like an angel's—a wicked angel's when he was naughty, but, still, always very pretty and delicate—except for his nose. He had a nose like he had been born of the aristocracy (and t'isn't an angel to be found 'mongst that lot), very long, very prominent. A little strange it looked on a lad so young. 'Tweren't just his looks tha' decided he weren't fit for farm-life; Jimmy himself couldn't bear working 'round the farm. He was always looking for an excuse to get out of the milking or of doing the slurry. He was so often feigning some kind of injury or illness as a child, tha' when I think on his childhood, I'm forever seeing him tucked beneath the bed covers or with his arm all up in a sling of his own device.

"Eh, oh, and once, when he was very young—I was about eleven, so he must have been five—Jimmy disappeared for all the day. He came back just before nightfall and Daddy was roarin' mad because hadn't Mammy spent two hours looking for her little boy, and hadn't her little boy missed the milking, the feeding, and all? Well, we looked closer at Jimmy and saw tha' he was all covered so with tinsel and shining hings tha' ha' been pinned to his clothes or tied to him with silver thread. He went right over to Daddy, and, bold as brass, said tha' he had been taken by gypsies. Now, there was an encampment of shanties beyond the river, but they weren't given, sure, to bedecking themselves, nor were they very like to thieve a child as useless with his hands as was Jimmy. We looked even closer and saw that all Jimmy's finery was naught but pieces of aluminum foil from cigarette packages, and bits and bobs from Mammy's sewing kit. That set us all to laughing, and Daddy couldn't very well punish the poor cree-a-ture now, especially seeing how much trouble he had gone to garb himself gypsy-fashion.

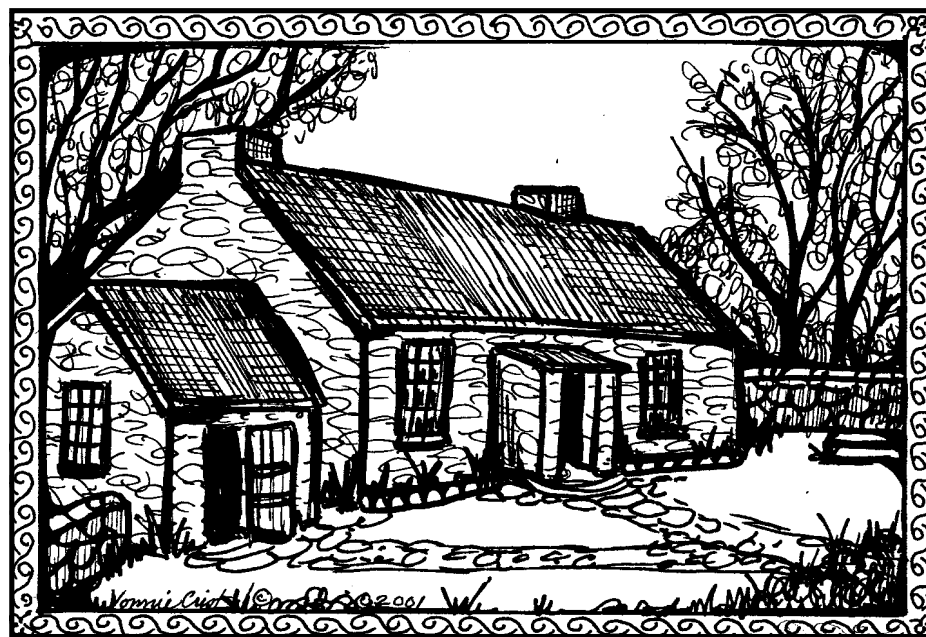
"Aye, Jimmy was a sly one. He was very good in his studies, too. He started helping Daddy with the bookkeeping when he was only twelve. He was very good at his Maths—very good at all his subjects, but especially at History and with his writing."

I broke in, "But I don't like history at all, Grannie, so I am not too like him, am I?"

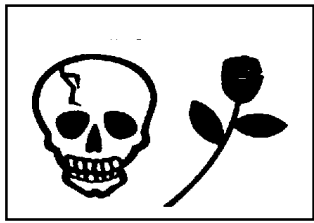
"Whist, child! You've interrupted me, and I've lost my place now." She looked suddenly up at the old chiming-clock on the wall. "Ah, well, it's past nine, anyway. Time for sleep. Come, we can talk tomorrow night, so we can."

"Ah, Gran, please just finish telling me

Continued on p. 14



The Lite Circle Announces
Through A Glass Darkly



New Mystery/Gothic Horror/Dark Fantasy anthology is open for submissions until June 20, 2001 (or when full). Needed theme appropriate: stories (under 2,500 words), poems (under 50 lines), and essays (under 2,000 words). Check with editors for other non-fiction. Editors: Vonnie Winslow Crist, David Kriebel, P.E. Kinlock. Assistant Editor: W.H. Stevens. Anthology will be issued in a 6" x 9" trade edition of about 190 perfect-bound

pages and will debut at Worldcon 2001 (Philadelphia, September 2001). First time rights preferred. Pay: in copies at this time. To submit, please send your work along with a reading fee of \$3 per poem and \$5 per prose piece to: *Through a Glass Darkly*, % Lite Circle Books, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. All reading fees will be waived with an advance order of 2 books at our low advance price of \$9.95 each (total: \$19.90)—final price after publication will be higher. **Please, original work only** (no copyrighted characters, e.g. *Star Trek*, *Dark Shadows*, etc.)

[To see the kind of work the editors selected for their 1999 anthology, *Lower Than the Angels*, which featured work from Neil Gaiman, Jack Chalker, A.C. Crispin, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Bud Sparhawk, Balticon Young Writers Contest winners (age 18 and under), and many more, send \$17 (check or m.o.—includes postage) to: Lite Circle Books, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. For more info, email: lite@toadmail.com.]

The Lite Circle Announces

The DarkLite Poetry Contest



Lite Circle Books is sponsoring *The DarkLite Poetry Contest*. Entries should be Mystery, Gothic Horror, or Dark Fantasy poems of 30 lines or less. First, second, and third place prizes and certificates awarded. Winners published September 2001 in the book, *Through a Glass Darkly*. All entries considered for publication. Deadline: Extended to **June 20, 2001**. \$5 entry fee covers

up to 2 poems, \$2 entry fee for any additional poems. Include SASE for notification. Send poems and a check/money order payable to *Lite Circle, Inc.* for entry fee to: *DarkLite Poetry Contest*, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. More information: www.toad.net/~pkinlock/lite or email: lite@toadmail.com. **Please, original work only** (no copyrighted characters, e.g. *Star Trek*, *Dark Shadows*, etc.)

[To see the kind of work the judges/editors selected for their 1999 StarLite Contest and anthology, *Lower Than the Angels*, which featured work from Neil Gaiman, Jack Chalker, A.C. Crispin, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Bud Sparhawk, and many more, send \$17 (check or m.o.—includes postage) to: Lite Circle Books, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. For more info, email: lite@toadmail.com.]

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Story, cont. from p. 13
about Jim," I pleaded.

"You've heard it all before; I don't know why you should be wanting to hear it all again, especially at this time of night. Go to bed. You'll have all day at the service and the funeral tomorrow to think on Jimmy." She rose and crossed the kitchen parlor to her bedroom. From the doorway, she called back, "And don't be burrowin' around in that back room anymore tonight. I think Jimmy's books are in Nora's house."

I sighed; my great aunt Nora lived in the very South of Ireland, in Kerry, but was staying here in Tipperary until June, now that Jimmy had died. I was scheduled to go back to the States in July. I switched off the lamps in the kitchen, put the dishes left on the table in the sink, and left the kitchen. I had to pass through a cold, narrow, unlit hallway to get to my bedroom. I fumbled my way through the hall and into my room. Inside there were two oak-framed beds. Once there had been four mattresses on the floor of this room. Four of my great uncles had slept here as children. Jimmy himself had slept in this very room until he reached adolescence. After three of his older siblings left the household Jimmy, at age 14 or 15, had moved into a room of his own on the second floor. The second floor, long unused and dilapidated, had been removed twenty years ago by one of my mother's grown brothers. Along with the second story memories of Jimmy's young adulthood seemed to have been eradicated. It was difficult to get the older generation to speak of Jimmy-the-child, but next to impossible to get them to speak of Jimmy-the-adult.

Back in November I had told Grannie of my intention to visit Jimmy in the hospital down in Kerry. "Wait until the weather's warmer, Una. 'Tis awful down in Kerry when the cold weather's round."

"No, Grannie. I have a long weekend; I should take full advantage of it."

"Stay here a few more nights. We'll go see Jimmy together in the spring. Come, I'll tell you a few stories about him to tide you over 'til then."

And so I had accepted the compromise and postponed my visit in favor of hearing my grandmother's account of Jimmy's history.

But Jimmy died before spring came. He was found rigid and cold in his hospital bed by a nurse making her morning rounds. A case of severe pneumonia—the second in his life—a year ago had weakened his heart, and the winter's wretched low temperatures had ravaged what little was left of the old man's defenses. He was seventy-three.

As I lay in the dark room, the room that had been Jimmy's as a child, I thought back to the rest of the narrative my grandmother had given to me in November.

It seems that even after Jimmy moved into his own room on the second floor, and was looked upon as a boy approaching the responsibilities of adulthood, he was still allowed to shirk most of his farm chores. His parents had long since begun to see their middle child as a "college man." He was tall—over six feet at 15—which was good for a farmer, but he was far too thin for fieldwork. His nose looked more aristocratic than ever, and was the subject of much admiring and amused talk in town. The curl had come out of his hair and fell to an unfashionable length at his ears. At age 13 he had been given for Christmas a set of seven notebooks, each slim volume bound in olive-green or wine-red leather. He was forever seen with one of those

notebooks in his hands. By the time he was 15 he had filled two of them with poems and fragments of budding poems.

Jimmy was no torpid, listless, lead-souled scholar. When he wasn't at his books, he was devising some prank or scheme of adventure. He could be made to work in the fields or at the milking only if his conscience were pricked: a few unshed tears in his mother's eyes or a weary look on his father's face, and Jim would be out the door, bending his long back to a plow or straining his underdeveloped muscles at bales of hay. But he never could bring himself to love working the land or tending the animals. Fortunately he was sure to get into university. His marks in school were excellent and his "O" Level results promised to be equally outstanding.

And then, when Jimmy was 16 and only a year from the university, his father at age 52 had a heart attack and died.

The family was, of course, grief-stricken, but even more pressing were the demands of the farm. Jimmy's two elder brothers had moved out of the house several years ago and now had farms and young families of their own. The next oldest boy, John, was only a year younger than Jimmy, but he had already decided to "dedicate himself to God" and become a priest and the pride of the family. The elder girl-children still at home, Kitty (my grandmother), Nora, and Mags—ranging from ages 18 to 24—were all able-bodied and more than willing to help with farmwork, but it would have been unseemly in 1940s Ireland for unmarried young women to be entirely in charge of a farm's operations. Their mother had little experience in outdoor work. And so the farm had fallen into the nescient and uninitiated hands of young Jimmy McGrath.

"He threw himself into the work, he did," my grandmother told me in November. "He couldn't go to school anymore, of course, and so he would work all through the day, ruining his lovely white hands and o'er-straining what little muscles he had. And then, come night-fall, instead of coming indoors and resting his self by the fire, he would just vanish. No one knew at first where he went or what he did. Sometimes we would hear him coming in at night, when it was nigh on 3 o'clock. Sometimes if it was storming terrible-like, he would only stay out for a few hours, then coming in drenched to the bone with rain, so tha' we knew he hadn't been in any pub or visiting any sweetheart."

"And then one night he came in early and sat down by the stove with the rest of us. He took one of those little notebooks from his pocket and began reading from it. Beautiful, so it twas, his writing—a po-hem about the new moon—but not too o'er-wrought with romantic turns or complicated words—and not too plain either. Very beautiful. It made us all stop in our eating, or whatever it was we had been doing, and listen. And after taking a sup of tea, he went back outdoors without another word."

"He lost all his love of living after that night, although he would often read beautifully to us from his books. Later, we learned that one of his classmates, Mike Lanty from up the road, had left for university. Poor Jimmy hadn't even been able to graduate from the secondary school. Aye, he began to act very funny after that night. He hardly ever spoke, only just to read a po-hem or two to us. All of the lovely color went from his cheek. He wouldn't eat a thing, and so, soon, when he went into the shop for Mammy, even the town girls tha' ha' fancied him for his intellect wouldn't look at his wasted body."

And finally one February morning, when Jimmy was 20, he didn't come from his room for the milking. The twins, John and Mary, went up to their brother's room to bring him from bed only to discover that he wasn't in his room. The day's work was done by the other McGrath children, but by evening Jimmy had still not made an appearance. There was nothing missing from his room, not even one of the little leather-bound books of his poetry. When he still had not been seen by the afternoon of the next day, my great-grandmother, five of her children and some of the neighbors set out, unhurriedly, to look for him.

It was late evening before they found him. "He was standing, stock-still, in the very middle of one of Corbett's pastures," my grandmother had told me. "Just standing there in his work clothes from two days past. And it was cold, very cold, and those clothes of his weren't much to keep the wind out. He was looking at something, staring hard up at something in the sky. And we looked up also and saw the moon that we hadn't even noticed before. 'Twere a full moon too—a new moon, just like in that po-hem of his. We called out to Jimmy, but he still didn't move. He looked, somehow, as though he had been standing like that for hours, perhaps days, even. Well, finally old Mr Corbett, with the rest of us following behind almost fearful-like, went up to Jimmy and touched him, light as could be, on the shoulder. Jimmy just fell to the ground—not looking over at us, or even making a sound. He just fell and lay there in the dewy grass. His eyes were open, so he hadn't fainted away, like. We took him home, half-carrying him between us. He was as cold as brook water. The moment we put him on the couch by the stove and drew a duvet over him, he began to shake all over, shifting and shivering like a new-dropped calf, sure. We hadn't money, back then, for a doctor, so we called to Cait Corbett—who had been a volunteer nurse in London during the First War—and she came to see Jimmy after he had been in bed for a few days. He had pneumonia, she said. That was the first time he got it, long before the bout that he had last year. He was very bad for two months. His constitution had never been strong to begin with, so he didn't fare too well with the virus in his system. We thought after the first month that we was on the mend, but then in March he fell into a terrible fever, and was all the night mutt'ring and mamm'ring to himself. And even, then, when the fever broke, he was still mumbling to himself, and rocking—he was always rocking back and forth, not still for a moment, and not able to speak sense to anyone. And, well, that was the end of poor Jimmy."

In fact, that wasn't the end of "poor Jimmy." At the age of 20 Jimmy was committed to a government-run hospital in Kerry for those deemed "mentally incompetent" or "insane." There were not enough doctors in the hospital, at the time of his committal, to allow for each patient to get individual care and attention. Probably Jimmy was never given a proper diagnosis. The general consensus amongst the members of my mother's family was that Jimmy simply had a nervous breakdown. Given the right treatment, however, most people recover from nervous breakdowns. Had Jimmy's pneumonia been administered to, the effects of the breakdown might not have been so detrimental. Prior to the breakdown Jimmy had probably suffered from depression, which several members of my mother's family, today, effectively combat with prescribed drugs.

The next night I saw Jimmy for the first and

last time. It was also the first time I had ever been to a funeral or even seen a dead body firsthand. The storm, still as blustering as it had been the day before, knocked out the power in the town of Rossmore. The small chapel in which Jimmy was laid out had to be lit by candles. More than 60 relatives, and another 30 or more neighboring farmers and townspeople, were crowded into the chapel, talking to one another over Jimmy's body. I went up to the long coffin at the center of the room.

He was pale, whiter than the oak paneling on the inside of the coffin. His nose was like the prow of some old ship, steadfast and regal. There was a presiding air of frailty about the rest of him. His cheeks were sunken and gray. His eyes, too, were sunken, the lids veiling them as wrinkled and as flimsy as crumpled paper. He hadn't lost any of his height with age: he must have been about six and a half feet set out in that coffin; but his frame was so spare that the size of the casket didn't seem justified. Across his body lay his two hands, the skin so attenuated that the exact ridges and angles of the bones beneath were clearly visible. His fingernails were translucent and almost dainty.

Taking a seat beside my grandmother, I turned to her and whispered, "Grannie, how can you say that I'm like him. He looks as though he'd break if you touched him. I'm made of much harder stuff than he."

She didn't answer for a moment, and then at last looked at me and said, "He would have envied your life, child. He would have done anything to be where you are now, to be doing what you are doing. Such a spirit he had as a child. And how he had wanted to study and to write as he became an adult. There weren't many choices, though, for poor Jimmy." She held a tissue to her nose, and looked over at her brother's coffin, and said to me, "He had your loves, Una."

At last I understood. I realized, suddenly, why the older generation likened me to my great uncle, why they delighted in making comparisons between Jimmy and his sister's granddaughter. Jimmy entered the hospital in Kerry when he was my age, when he was 20. He spent the rest of his life there, the next 52 years. My grandmother, Kitty, married soon after Jimmy was committed and ran the farm with her husband. By the time the farm was prosperous again and the family could afford better treatment for Jimmy, his mental deterioration had already progressed too far. Even if they had been able to pay for better care, the medical knowledge at the time was inadequate to diagnose and treat his condition. Grannie and the rest of us knew now that Jimmy might have been saved had the medicines of today been available back then. Perhaps Grannie felt that the family ought to have made a greater effort to find an alternative to having Jimmy run the farm.

I was a kind of assuagement for their guilt. No, it was more than that. They saw me as somehow completing Jimmy's life, as finishing it the way they felt it should have been finished—would have been finished, had they, too, not had their choices taken from them. I touched my Grandmother, who had by now bent her head to hide her tearing eyes, on the shoulder. I might never know whether I was as good with words as Jimmy, or whether I had his charm as a child, or even if I had his quality of self-sacrifice. I did have, however, many of the same passions that had so possessed Jimmy, and I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to pursue them.



Lite

The Lite Circle, Inc.

Guidelines for Writers

1. Founded in 1992, The Lite Circle is a non-profit literary organization devoted to the encouragement of emerging voices in the arts. *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper* is a bi-monthly publication featuring art, literature, and book reviews. Formerly a quarterly magazine, it is now a free tabloid publication carrying one story and several poems per issue. A literary supplement is published on the off-months. We seek to give emerging writers and artists the opportunity to reach a broad, literate audience, and to keep our readers informed of literary events in Central Maryland. *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper* is distributed in the Baltimore area and Central Maryland, with a press run of 10,000 copies. The Lite Circle also publishes book-length manuscripts in cooperation with authors under the imprints "Lite Circle Books" and "Sunrise Press." The "Guidelines for Writers" apply to all Lite Circle publications, and the term "Lite" as used here refers to all Lite Circle publications.

2. Lite holds one-time publication rights to all material accepted for publication. All other rights remain the property of the author. Terms of payment: For *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper*, 5 copies of an issue in which submission appears. For Lite Circle Books/Sunrise Press: 1 contributor's copy (unless other arrangements are made).

3. Electronic submissions to Lite are encouraged. Email submissions to: lite@toadmail.com (attachments OK; Microsoft Word or WordPerfect format preferred). Submissions may also be sent as ASCII text in the body of an email; special formatting such as italics or bold should be noted. We will also accept documents on disk (WordPerfect or Microsoft Word format preferred). Please include contact info/short bio. Hard copy submissions to Lite should be on plain 8-1/2" X 11" paper, double spaced, typewritten or computer printed, suitable for scanning with no handwritten editing or other marks anywhere on the document. Please include the file on disk, if possible. Notes concerning the copy may be made in legible handwriting on accompanying separate sheets. Illegible, poor-quality, or handwritten text will not be considered. Copy must include the author's name, address and telephone number on the first or last page; for multiple simultaneous submissions, each work must be a separate document, each with the author's name, address and telephone. Please include short bio.

4. Word limits—Poetry: generally no more than 30 lines, but up to 50 lines may be accepted for poems in stanza, section, or any divided format; Fiction: 1,000 to 4,000 words (longer pieces may be used in serialized form); Humor: 300-1,000 words. Reviews: 300 words. Due to the enormous amount of material we receive, response time averages 6-12 months.

5. Lite reserves the right to do all editing appropriate to maintain grammar, stylistic consistency, and standard punctuation without advance notification to the author. We suggest that deliberate deviations from standard grammar and spelling be noted on a separate sheet to avoid editing problems. Lite will do everything possible to advise writers in advance of publication of any proposed changes which may affect the author's meaning or stylistic integrity; writers may withdraw their manuscripts from consideration should they conclude that proposed changes are unacceptable, provided notification is made within three days of notice of proposed changes.

6. Lite will not accept manuscripts which contain the following: sexually explicit language or graphically depicted sexual scenes; gratuitous expletives; pointless or graphic violence; material denigrating any race, nationality, gender, or religion. Authors accept all responsibility for factual errors contained in any submitted manuscript. By submitting to Lite, author agrees to the the editorial policies and conditions as stated in these guidelines.

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- Limit: 3 poems/person, 32 lines each.
- No entry fee.
- Deadline: **EXTENDED**. Mailed entries must be **postmarked** and email entries must be **received** by April 30, 2001.
- First, second, and third place winners announced
- Please include your name, address, telephone number/email address and a brief bio with your entry.
- Entries may be mailed w/SASE to: "Man & Machine Poetry Contest," c/o The Lite Circle, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore MD 21210 or BSFS, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-2737. Email entries: lite@toadmail.com.

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