poets like Peter Jay of Anvil Poetry, Michael Schmidt of Carcanet Press, and even James Laughlin of New Directions Publishing. This publishing habit that could bury any publisher-poet psychically seems not in the least to have limited or discouraged Fallon's own sense of a unique poetic self. If anything, publishing, like farming, has braced and broadened his talent. Seamus Heaney, always an astute judge of people, spoke about Fallon's essential character in a wise Abbey Theatre speech, now printed in the present volume: "Essentially he reveals the link between the growth of the poet's mind and the responsibilities as well as the rewards of keeping going as a publisher. Care, company, community have been fundamental concerns of Peter's writing in and about the world: care for people and place, for planet earth and the poetry of earth, for the values espoused by Virgil in the *Georgics*" (23-24). As the late Dennis O'Driscoll noted in "Peter Fallon Revisited"—"Peter's energising omnipresence lit a neon torch for a generation that had had its fill of staidness" (27). O'Driscoll quotes Fallon approvingly, as many other commentators here will do, from *Winter Work:*

> ...All I approve persists,
> is here, at home. I think it exquisite
> to stand in the yard, my feet on the ground,
> in cowshit and horseshit and sheepshit.

These words may haunt him, but their persistence is proof that his voice has found purchase and attached itself permanently to the tradition. A poet becomes what he's remembered for. What Fallon created in the long stretch of lively solitude from *The First Affair* (1974) to The *Company of Horses* (2007) was a journal of the poet's hungry eye; he literally ate the pattern off the royal plate of rural Meath. A Beatle became a Berry, as Dennis O'Driscoll records—"As two poets with practical farming expertise, unafraid to get their writing hands dirty—even dungy—or to lend them to cow-milking as well as lyric-making, there is a natural affinity between the Meath writer and his Kentucky elder" (31).

It would be a mistake to overemphasize the Berry bit, as I've just done, but critics always search out the neat synchronicity, the apparent associations. Richard Rankin Russell's essay "Nature's News: The Place (s) of Peter Fallon's Poetry" sums up the relationship brilliantly; and might indeed serve as the final word on this matter, one of emphasis and temperament where both poets because of the reality therapy of day-to-day farming successfully resist the ideal, the bucolic and the nostalgic in rural life. Justin Quinn in "The Obscenities and Audiences of Peter Fallon" takes a cold, wide look at the act of pushing the city away whilst tumbling into a common human darkness. Quinn brings a studied shrewdness to bear upon Fallon's communal and personal antennae, examining the evidence of poems like "Carnaross 2," "If Luck Were Corn," and "A Part of Ourselves" to find an observed pedophilia, suicide, infanticide, and, lastly, the downpour of personal grief at the death of the adored John Fallon:

> a word first whispered months ago
> and longed for longer tripped on the tongue,
> a stammer, now a broken promise.

Even when discussing the *Georgics* in Fallon's *oeuvre*, Quinn cleverly climbs in by the back window of Irish Latin, offering a different view, or at least another way of viewing the same material. It's a joy to read such prose from a poet of really heightened alertness.

There are other essays here of equal power. Poet John McAuliffe rotates his critique outward from Martin Gale's photorealistic landscapes to embrace that poetic duet between Paul Muldoon's *Quoof* and Fallon's method in *Winter Work*, the star books of 1983. Ed Madden's "Fellow Feeling: or Mourning, Metonymy, Masculinity" sets out to question the "constitution of emotionally pivotal female figures—beloveds, wives, mothers, grandmothers—" (to use Patricia Coughlan's words from her essay on Bog Queens in the poetry of Montague and Heaney in *Gender in Irish Writing*) in Fallon's work (127). What is that meaning of a "hoard" of women, how is the suffering mother a metaphor, how has the poet attached himself, or not, to the "unsaid" stories? "Whether the standing-with of fellow feeling is effective or not as political or emotional strategy, the wife's cry returns to gender difference, figured here as geographical (and emotional) distance: "miles away." As a reading of Fallon's great elegy, "A Part of Ourselves" this work is simply majestic in the writing, where a new method extracts new insights from settled material.

Bryan Giemza, probably the leading expert on Fallon's work, provides a summary of the Fallon-Berry philosophical arc, that view of theme and rhythm as an act of repossession in the deepest ecological sense. The Fallon poem, here in *News of the World* is the first space of recovery, a space where "Learning to love life, to find it in the midst of death, is the lesson" (222).

The final section of this book is a Gallery anthology, the best poets gathered in honor of their shepherd. From John McAuliffe's "The Shed" to Bernard O'Donoghue's "The Dark Room," from Medbh McGuckian's "On Cutting One's Finger while Reaching for Jasmine" to Michael Coady's "The Given Light," all the poets seem to fit perfectly, breathing their slim envelope of communal air. Vona Groarke and Alan Gillis, two young poets who have begun to burn very brightly, are also here in homage. Their work has given me the greatest pleasure in recent years, and because they continue to write I check the Gallery lists every springtime. I would never have encountered them had they not met a poet and publisher called Peter Fallon. This book, well edited by Richard Rankin Russell, is a handsome reminder of that Fallon harvest. •

—Cork City Libraries

The Always Difficult Joyce: From Heretic to Heritage

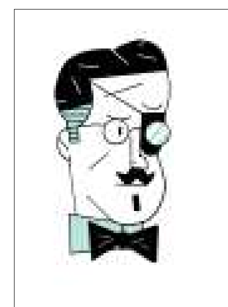
BY STEVE WATTS

IT TAKES A WHILE TO PRODUCE a collection of critical essays, but the decade between the celebration of the centenary of Bloomsday by a series of lectures in UCD, from which this collection sprung, to its current larger published form, speaks to the difficulties in dealing with such a diverse and divisive subject. Joyce remains "difficult." He remains particularly difficult in Ireland where the public recognition of his greatness has become a way of ignoring radical and liberating potentialities in the work.

Anne Fogarty and Fran O'Rourke, Editors
VOICES ON JOYCE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN PRESS, 2015.
€50.

The collection takes a neutral title, *Voices on Joyce*, and proceeds to offer a very wide variety of such voices, enabling what the Introduction terms "broader scope for the seemingly limitless ambit of Joycean textuality and the range of embedded knowledge that it addresses." There are, though, some limits and these are institutional. Most contributors to both the original lecture series and to the present volume have connections to University College Dublin, whose press publishes this work. As Joyce is a renowned (though not at the time academically distinguished) alumnus of UCD this is fair enough, and the essay on Joyce's UCD is full of rich anecdotes of his time there—while duly noting his conscious alienation from it. In some ways this volume is a record of how universities hold together heterogeneous colleagues with widely differing specialisms all of whom can, nonetheless, contribute by bringing their interest to bear on a shared passion for, here, Joyce. So we get Joyce and the law (an alluring account of three major cases in turn of the century Dublin, all of which are present in *Ulysses*), Joyce and music, Joyce and sport, Joyce and Irish Jewry. The potential problems with this are clear; the texts of a man with a mind like "a grocer's assistant"' allow a superabundance of opportunities for "Joyce and" exploration but are less useful in determining when it should stop.

Anne Fogarty's Introduction makes the point that Declan Kiberd's essay on "*Ulysses* and Us" can be seen as an attack on the whole enterprise of this book. Beginning with a bid to see Joyce in the light of the Celtic revivalism Joyce has so often been set against, Kiberd goes on to challenge the ways in which the corporate university has taken over the reading of *Ulysses*. The text Kiberd wants us to read is the epic that "like all prior epics insists on its own wisdom." He bemoans the idea of a special kind of difficulty, a radical disavowal of shared meaning, that *Ulysses* is, in effect, no more than the "uselessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles" of Shem the Penman, and thus requires endless specialist exegeses. I share his view of a novel that invites the reader in far more than it forbids entry to all but the "trained," that offers anyone who reads it a constantly refreshed and challenging account of living in the ordinary world. I also agree that the formal establishment of the study of demotic literature, with university courses devoted to that aim, used the difficulties associated with Modernism to secure its own validity. Kiberd's essay is richer (and odder) than the above suggests, and its inclusion in a collection coming from such a university is bold.



It could be argued, however, that this volume is precisely the kind of book that escapes Kiberd's strictures by its extraordinary range of subjects—rather than the more predictable literary topics. Take one of the "Joyce ands" mentioned earlier, Joyce and Dublin's Jews. In this essay on Dublin's little Jerusalem, we read of a Dublin Jewish world that Joyce's epic tale of a Dublin Jew misses out almost entirely. But it's nice to have his gaps filled by a quite independently interesting history. Similarly, the events of 1904, "Bloomsyear," offer pathways of historical interest only glimpsed in Joyce's *Ulysses*; and yet these events, such as the publication of Arthur Griffith's paper on the Hungarian model for Irish independence, remain in deep conversation with the novel. There is also the possibility of more direct connection to the plural democratic novel Kiberd writes about. In Adrian Hardiman's essay "Suspecting, Proving, Knowing: Three Cases of Unnatural Death in Joyce's *Ulysses*," he uses these legal cases to give warning about leaping to conclusions. We can admire, as Joyce seemed to have done, the grand oratorical skills of great lawyers and orators, but the "benefit of the doubt" argument these lawyers successfully used is presented, quietly, as something of greater importance to how we read Joyce. Hardiman cites the fallibility of "the daughters of memory," as evinced by Stephen in "Nestor," as an indicator of the forensic importance of the well-told counter-narrative, of the value of uncertainty.

Dublin is at the heart of this collection, almost as much as Joyce himself. The volume incorporates the remarkable photographs of the city taken by Lee Miller in 1946 for *Vogue*. These have considerable interest of their own, as does Miller herself as a modernist artist in her own right, capturing in still images much of the movement and street drama of the modern city. The city depicted is not so far removed from the Dublin of Bloomsday in 1904 and some of the images (those of Barney Kiernan's pub and the Sandycove Martello Tower in particular) spark rich associations with the novel. Though pointing out that Joyce's claim about reconstructing Dublin just through the pages of *Ulysses* is not entirely plausible, Joseph Brady, in his essay "Dublin: A City of Contrasts" gives us rich insight into the ways in which the middle classes might have spent their time: shopping in Grafton Street, then promenading; Dublin—a city for perambulations, as it was for Mr. Bloom. Essays and photo-

graphs together give us a strong sense of the energy of the city to set against the ghostliness and paralysis emerging elsewhere in accounts of Parnell's role in Joyce's re-staging of Irish history.

Joyce is, of course, a world author as well as an Irish one, so this volume cannot restrict itself to "dear, dirty, Dublin" but must also look out to what it calls "Joycean Intertexts." Many of these are predictable names, such as Aristotle, Vico, Dante and Ibsen, but the essays deal with the complex literary and intellectual relations with deftness and with some surprises. Frank McGuinness, in particular, brings an artist's vision to the love Joyce felt for Ibsen's work and example as an artist and ends with a resounding reading of *Exiles*. Joseph Long charts Joyce's fascination with Dante, before adroitly investigating the different ways in which Joyce and Beckett take on and transform the Dantean.

We, perhaps, don't need any reminders of Joyce's stature; nor of the multiplicity of approaches to his work that have been assayed. Yet the volume ends, rightly, with a series of essays "Contesting Joyce." Kiberd's provocative piece opens the sequence and it ends with an equally challenging essay by Geraldine Meaney on Joyce's role in contemporary Irish culture. She shares some of Kiberd's concerns about the movement of Joyce's reputation in Ireland from, in Edna Longley's quoted phrase, "heretic to heritage in one generation." The essay examines how Irish writers (and one South African) have coped with the pressure of having Joyce as a literary forbear. Her argument is complex as together with a predictable Oedipal anxiety of influence there is also a disavowal of "heritage" Joyce with Bloomsday badging on everything from leprechauns to T-shirts. The second strand of the essay concerns some current critical readings of "The Dead" as the cornerstone of postcolonial Joyce. Her own account of Gretta listening to the Lass of Aughrim raises the question of how historicist readings refuse to consider how futures are created from pasts. In its final phase Meaney's essay calls on Hugh MacDiarmid's magisterial "In Memoriam James Joyce" to show how Joyce's works are "a necessary preparation for a new way of seeing the world," and asks us to shift the concern of a postcolonial criticism from "the fetishised authenticity of the traumatic past to the problematic issues of the present."

Despite the eclecticism of *Voices on Joyce*, it addresses matters of weight and importance—and not just important to Joyce studies. The centenary of Bloomsday is now well past, but the combination it offered of celebration and commodification, of joyful acceptance and predatory incorporation is reflected in the differing arguments of these essays. Joyce remains a touchstone for literary criticism and theory, but more importantly his works offer a comic wisdom born of the delighted entanglement of the languages of high culture and low, as when we see Mr. Bloom, after escaping from the Citizen's den in "Cyclops," "amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness at an angle of forty-five degrees over Donohoe's in Little Green Street like a shot off a shovel." •

—Homerton College
University of Cambridge

With Friends Like This...

By Christina Hunt Mahony

In a recent Radio Éireann interview with Stephen Enniss, the biographer of Northern Irish poet Derek Mahon, Vincent Woods probed the thorny problem of writing biographies of living writers; in this case a living writer whose history with critics and commentators has at times been fraught. This is not the first Irish poetic biography in very recent times to have given rise to questioning the wisdom or feasibility of such projects. Sandrine Brissett's controversial biography of Brendan Kennelly was eventually self-published after the poet withdrew his initial benison. The book was also withdrawn from sale in some major Irish retail outlets. Let's hope it doesn't go that far for Enniss, whose sober approach to his subject suggests a greater reserve of wisdom and respect, not only for the poet, but also for all those who appear on these pages.

Stephen Enniss.
After the Titanic: A life of Derek Mahon
Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2014. €26.99.

Stephen Enniss is a curator by profession. After serving as Director of Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books at Emory University, a collection of pre-eminent importance to Irish Studies scholars, he was appointed Head Librarian at the Folger Shakespeare Library. He now serves as the Director of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, also noted for its stellar modern Irish literature collections. It was while Enniss was in his post at Emory, and in charge of expanding the library's Irish holdings, that he first met and befriended Mahon, the two men connecting in New York, Dublin, London and elsewhere in the coming years. As with the Kennelly book, this biographical undertaking was made with Derek Mahon's knowledge and his early co-operation and blessing, although that support has now been withdrawn and Mahon is reputed to be very unhappy about its publication.

The book begins with a brief enough account of Mahon's family background and early life, and intensifies in detail from the time he spent at "Inst" (The Royal Belfast Academical Institution). There the young Mahon acquired a reputation at first for his acting rather than his writing skills. The only child of a pair of quintessential Belfast workers—his father worked in the shipyards of Harland and Wolff, and, before marriage, his mother worked in the linen industry—Mahon was estranged from his parents from an early age, and exhibited an ongoing lack of patience with their culture and ethos. His first departure from Northern Ireland, to attend Trinity College in Dublin as a sizar, was a liberating experience from which there was, in a sense, no returning. Indeed departures feature strongly throughout the life and the work.

It was at Trinity that Mahon met Michael and Edna Longley (then Broderick) and their lifelong friendship was copper-fastened. The Longleys were obviously at Enniss' disposal and provide a good bit of insight and detail, especially of Mahon's years as a young writer. Another poetic friendship cemented at the time was Mahon's with Eavan Boland, which might have become more than a friendship at one point. A later meeting with Heaney helped to form a triumvirate, along with Longley, that would continue to function for decades, the poets remaining in regular communication (Enniss makes good use of both archival and published letters). The three writers vetted each other's work, dedicated poems to each other, and kept up a camaraderie tinged with competitiveness. Unlike Heaney and Longley who settled into regular jobs and secure domestic life quite early, Mahon's wanderlust and independent temperament meant his life was to be peripatetic and often hand-to-mouth.

Mahon's marriage to Doreen Douglas in 1972 seemed at first to offer a stability that would allow for greater artistic productivity, but instead their marriage was fraught nearly from the beginning, its volatility running like a twisted thread throughout *After the Titanic*. At the poet's request neither Doreen nor several other rather important women in Mahon's life were interviewed for this volume, and their effective absence likely accounts for their sketchy and at times wooden representation within these pages. The other twisted thread is that of drink, a recurrent problem for many years and one against which Mahon continued to fight. It is understandably argued that these combined problems of a failed marriage and a taste for drink interfered with the poetic gift, but if there is one thing that Stephen Enniss has illustrated in this biography it is that Mahon has been a highly productive writer for much of his life. The author does Mahon's readers a particular service when he provides detailed information about the *oeuvre* beyond the poetry. We learn, or are reminded of, the proliferation of television and radio scripts, screenplays, essays, newspaper articles, reviews, translations, and plays being produced all the while the poems were being written and published and also during periods when the muse deserted the poet. *After The Titanic* shows us Mahon as a very hands-on editor too, most notably at *The New Statesman.* Through the use of archival material, Enniss provides an additional insider's glimpse into machinations in the publishing world, particularly the tug of war between the titans, the academic presses and the independents.

Mahon's body of work, most particularly his poetry, is, and remains, among the finest of his time.

Unfortunately the writing in this volume does not sustain a level suited to its subject. When undertaking the task of writing the life of an accomplished literary figure there is always this risk, and Enniss, although a diligent biographer, has fallen short in this regard. Sentences are often repeated nearly verbatim, and more than once. The poet's constant movement from town to town, country to country, means the biographer must spend an inordinate amount of time giving his co-ordinates, which often change weekly. The composition and flow of other information can at times be difficult to fathom. After the reader has followed Mahon from one teaching post to another for decades during which he rarely fulfils the terms of employment—missing classes, being hospitalized during term for alcoholism, failing to submit grades, wilfully scaring off students, stalking out of rooms when he is slated to give public lectures—Enniss chooses to begin a paragraph near the end of the book with the following sentence: "Part of the difficulty was that his heart had never been in teaching." A similarly belated and painfully obvious observation—"There was something self-destructive in Mahon's behaviour"—appears long after the self-destructive tendencies have been laid out in page after page and page. There is a good bit of backtracking, transitions are often missing, and many figures who should be identified are not (Stewart Parker, for instance). The writing is at times just plain awkward. (Most translators, including Mahon I would guess, do not think of translation as an act of ventriloquism. If so, who's the dummy?).

Many of these problems can be laid at the feet of the publisher, of course. One wonders why an Irish publisher producing a book about an eminent Irish writer would overlook intrusive and unnecessary Americanisms in the text. Only in the Afterword—itself a sad, small document that relates the gradual fallout between biographer and subject—does the author rise to the condition of what could rightly be called style. (And style, considered quaint in some critical circles, probably retains a slot on the subject's list of priorities).

Enniss does not go into great detail about many of the poems. When he does his interpretation is basically sound, although given to monolithic biographical interpretation. He devotes considerable attention to the long gestation of *The Hudson Letter,* a highly autobiographical work written during Mahon's recurring stays in Manhattan in the early 90s. What emerges, finally, in *After the Titanic*, then, is the story of a troubled, difficult and rootless man, at times dissolute, whose considerable talent has not been supported by temperament or circumstance. There is not, though, enough of the wit, resilience, and exuberance for life, that is present, at times luminous, in his writing no matter how depressed or miserable Mahon was at the time of composition. These are the qualities that also assured that he would be rescued time and again by the loyal friends Enniss is at pains to credit for their generosity and patience, including Aidan Higgins, Peter Fallon, and Paul Muldoon. Although Mahon often takes the kindness of friends for granted, tests the patience of many and falls out with others, he remains fundamentally loyal and attached to friends and family in poignant ways.

Derek Mahon's body of work, most particularly his poetry, is, and remains, among the finest of his time. *After the Titanic,* a book begun in friendship and with good intention, does little to enhance or secure the writer's reputation, nor can it do much to detract from it. •

—Trinity College, Dublin